

"In the Trail of the Ancestors" **Training Aboriginal Youth Workers**

"My work is being what I am."

Christine Joseph, Cree Elder

"Those working before us were far greater counselors than we will ever be. They knew how to reach people. They didn't need any special tools or techniques. They knew what to take out and use."

Mike Lickers, Mohawk Nation

Consultations with Aboriginal Elders and Youth Workers

Prepared by Julian Norris, April 1998, for the
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INTRODUCTION

I am a stranger in this land. I have lived here for less time than any high school student, and I know little of this place and its peoples. I was born and raised in Europe, and I do not know what is best for Aboriginal youth or Aboriginal communities. I do not know the best way to train an Aboriginal youth worker.

When I first came to this place, I lived with the Minnecojou band of the Lakota people in the tiospaye of Theophile Little Shield (Takes the Knife) on the Cheyenne River Reservation. With the encouragement of an Elder named Taşunka Zie (Yellow Horse) I began to learn a little. He would do things that seemed strange to me. We would go out on the land at dawn and he would say "*Do you hear that?*" "*Hear what?*" I would ask. A smile would light up his face. "*You're not listening!*" he would say. Or a meadowlark would start to sing beside his house. "*Listen!*" he would say. "*Do you hear what he said?*" When I shook my head he would smile. "*You're not listening to him!*" And so I learned to keep my mouth shut and listen. He made me listen, and he made me think.

These pieces of paper that you hold in your hands contain treasures. They are not my treasures - they belong to those who shared them with me. I have learned much from listening to the wisdom of the voices in this report. I believe that anyone who listens deeply to these voices, and reflects on what they have heard, will learn everything they need to know about setting up a training program for Aboriginal youth workers. I have drawn some conclusions from the words shared. They are my own conclusions, but they are not necessarily right. Yours are likely to be just as good, and as useful.

One of the Elders in this report, Captain Gold, shared his perspective on the Aboriginal way of learning. He believes one is open to learning when one is cleansed and their mind is still. Only then can one listen deeply and observe carefully. He claims that after every round of teachings, one should go off by oneself and reflect on what one has learned. This method of learning has proven to work – it is time tested and true. Readers should perhaps employ such modes of observation and reflection when reading this report.

As I was carrying out these consultations I had the chance to meet with Willie Paul, a Yup'ik Eskimo Elder from Western Alaska. It was his first time visiting the town of Anchorage. He spoke of his reaction after receiving his invitation inviting him to town. "*I got on my snow machine and drove to the next village. It's about four hours away by snow machine. I went and I talked to the elders there. I told them about my invitation. I asked them if I should go. We talked about that. Then I came home, because you cannot make a decision like that on your own. You have to think "If I do this will it harm the people? Will it harm our resources?" That must always be in your mind whatever you do. Is it good for the people? Is it good for the land and the animals?"*" Hesquiaht Elder, Dolores Bayne, nodded her head as he spoke. "*He's right*" she said. "*That's what our old people always did.*"

Cree Elder Christine Joseph told me about the first time she saw an airplane. When she was a young girl, she was once out snaring rabbits with her grandmother when a plane flew over their heads. She asked her grandmother what it was. "*There are people inside that. White people made it. That's why it's so noisy. One day you are going to travel all over in one of those my girl, and teach people.*" Christine was horrified at the thought, but today acknowledges the power of her Elders. "*I never underestimate the old ones. The ones who never went to school.*" She tells another story of an Indian Agent in Hobbema who made people bring in their

medicines, pile them up and set them on fire – apparently a strategy to discourage their use. She smiles at the memory. *"The old people thought it was so funny"* she recalls. *"They were saying to each other "The fool! Does he not see it growing right in front of his eyes?" It was as if they were dealing with a child."*

Dakota Elder, Phil Lane Sr. says *"It's a beautiful thing to realize what life is. It's a spiritual journey. But we have to walk that spirit path with practical feet."* I offer this document in the spirit of gratitude. It is my hope that it will play a small role in the practical work of training youth workers who are called to the spiritual task of working with young people and helping them find their way back home to themselves, to their place within their communities and families, and to the ancient and priceless traditions that are their birthright and which are still guarded by the Elders today.

All My Relations

OLD WAYS, NEW WAYS: **RENAISSANCE YOUTH WORKERS**

"The old ways are the new ways. We have to make them look at each other."

Phil Lane Sr., Dakota Elder

Yup'ik Elder, Willie Paul, had never heard of a youth worker before. *"What's that?"* he asked. It's a good question, and it's worth really thinking about the answer. The general consensus of those whose words appear in this report is that a youth worker is basically somebody who provides support and guidance to young people throughout their journey from childhood to adulthood. They are guides, and their guiding can take many outward forms. But the role of guide itself is as old as that of the human family, which no healthy society has done without.

Until recently – according to the accounts of Elders such as Christine Joseph and Hattie Westle -- every Aboriginal Nation had a viable and effective system for preparing young people to make the transition from childhood to adulthood. This successful system was part of a truly holistic, natural educational system that prepared people for life. With the colonial subjugation of Aboriginal peoples, however, this system was consciously and deliberately fractured. Its replacement, the colonial education system, which was equally fragmentary in nature, never intended to meet the needs of tribal society; rather, it functioned to sever links between the generations, undermining the very foundation of Aboriginal cultural continuity. This imposed educational system continues to profoundly shape life in Aboriginal communities as it functions to sever young people's connections with key aspects of their traditional life. The following serve as good examples.

- Knowing one's family and social history
- Intimate knowledge of and connection with the land and its eco-systems
- Speaking one's own language
- The oral culture: Song, story, dance, and drama, all of which function to record and transmit culture.
- Participation in the spiritual and ceremonial life of the community
- A connection with family, especially Elders
- Understanding the complex web of social relationships and responsibilities

- Experiencing the traditional and age old rites of passage
- Understanding and respecting yourself and your culture
- An ongoing relationship with mentors and guides

The “renaissance youth workers” interviewed in this report find themselves dealing with the accumulated and multi-generational consequences of this catastrophic disconnection, and are at the same time trying to rebuild it. They are at the frontlines of a growing movement to rediscover, re-interpret and renew the elements of the traditional system to meet the needs of a new time -- in essence they are attempting to draw a new picture using an ancient pattern. This is tremendously significant work, and its implications extend far beyond Aboriginal Canadian communities. Renaissance youth workers need a renaissance training program. Although the pieces for such a program already exist, they have yet to be assembled. The voices in this report say it is time to give it a try.

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Training youth workers involves engaging them in a journey of learning. Students graduating from the program would be trained in the following four key areas.

1. **Self and Culture**
Students would leave the program with an understanding of who they are and where they come from. Throughout the course of the program they would work on becoming the kind of person that makes an outstanding youth worker.
2. **Maps and Models**
Students would gain a practical understanding of the issues facing Aboriginal children and youth today. They would learn how to support young people and how to build and sustain a successful program. They would also learn to have a clear and realistic picture of their own community and its youth.
3. **Community and Connections**
Students would leave with the ability to work both within and outside their own communities. Students would learn how to create and draw upon support networks that exist within their communities; in the broader external community they would have access to appropriate resources and services.
4. **Tools and Skills**
Students would leave the program with the skills, qualifications, experience and confidence required to work within a particular area of youth work.

PROGRAM FORMAT

The program would be two years in length. The first year would focus upon the acquisition of foundational skills, which would be delivered in a series of modules. During this year in addition to classroom time, students would be required to spend time both on the land and within the community. Year two would be devoted to specific vocational training, and the completion of an extended practicum. The training modules would include the following elements.

- **Four two week camps.** Held on the land at traditional locations, the camps would provide an intensive learning experience delivered in the traditional manner under the guidance of elders. Teachings would focus upon: traditional knowledge, spirituality and ceremony, connecting with the earth, personal health and wellness, developing team skills, initiative and confidence building, judgement and leadership skills, facilitation skills and a solo/vision quest.
- **College Modules.** The “Institute” format has proved successful where the learning modules are typically two-three weeks in length. Each of these learning events contains a variety of workshops, courses and experiences. Over the course of a year there might be five three-week learning institutes. Specific themes to be addressed could include:

Youth Issues:

Youth perspectives
 Youth participation
 Understanding youth culture
 Child and youth rights
 Legal issues
 Child development
 Specializations within youth work
 Youth health issues

Community Work:

An introduction to community development
 Program development and management
 Overcoming obstacles
 Building support
 Program skills
 Facilitation skills

Relationships and Funding:

Communication skills
 Introduction to fundraising
 Proposal writing
 Finding resources
 Learning from other programs
 Financial management
 Research skills

Indigenous Perspectives:

Indigenous child and youth development issues
 Aboriginal history
 Indigenous family systems
 Traditional knowledge
 The role of culture in healing and development
 Traditional learning and rites of passage

Conflict and Crisis:

Youth in crisis
 Conflict resolution
 Abuse issues
 Addictions issues
 Introduction to counseling
 Crisis intervention
 Suicide

- **Self-Directed Research Projects.** Each student could be expected to carry out assignments requiring them to apply the skills they have learned. Such exercises would give students the practical knowledge they would need to be effective within their own communities. Each student would receive supervision while developing their research project and would be

required to make a class presentation on their topic, an activity that would serve as part of their assessment. Research project topics could include:

A Youth Mentor: Students could identify a young person who has successfully overcome significant obstacles and challenges in their life and interview them to discover the key elements of their journey.

My People, My Homeland: Students could research and prepare a presentation on their own culture and territory.

My Community: Students could explore their own community and the resources that are available to youth. During this process they would develop an understanding of the different agencies and groups that address youth issues. They could also research the history of past initiatives within their communities by asking questions such as what has been tried, what worked, what didn't, and why?

What do our youth need? Students could spend time listening to the youth within their own communities to gain an understanding of the issues that youth typically face today. Such an activity would also allow students to gain insight not only into the personal needs of youth, but also into the types of solutions youth see as relevant.

Learning from others: Students could identify a particular area of youth programming, researching what services exist and of those that do exist how appropriate/effective are they. Questions such as the following could be asked: What was learned? What works? What has been tried? How can I apply this?

CHARACTERISTICS OF MODEL YOUTH WORKERS

The youth workers interviewed for this report shared a number of common personal characteristics. What is interesting is that few, if any, of these characteristics are explicitly addressed in youth worker training programs, yet all those interviewed believed that personal character was the most important quality a youth worker could possess. **In essence, who you are is much more important than what you know or what you can do.**

- All those interviewed were basically **healthy and balanced** people. They had dealt with their issues, and continue to work on a regular basis balancing themselves.
- They have a remarkable level of **commitment**. In many cases their commitment goes far beyond anything that would be expected in most careers. They view their **work as their life**, or as a vocation rather than as a job.
- They are stable and **consistent**. They are people that can be relied on.
- They are strongly **connected to their cultural identity**, and in many cases passionate about it.
- Many of the people interviewed have **deep connections to the land**, and several had spent extended periods of time alone in the wild.
- They are very **resourceful**. These are people who can use whatever they have at hand to create what is needed. They tend to be multi-skilled generalists rather than specialists.
- They have a high level of **integrity** and have **strong characters**. They don't give up and they can say no when necessary.
- They are **natural educators**. Most of these people can focus upon one thing and transform it into an interesting lesson for youth. Others may know more but may experience difficulties communicating what they know.
- They have high levels of **energy, enthusiasm, charisma** and **vitality**.
- They have all had a broad range of **experiences** and training, but above all, they know how to learn from their experiences. They have lots of **common sense**.
- They are master **bridge-builders** and they are effective **team players**. They know how to connect with diverse groups of people and involve them in what they are doing.
- Most have had significant and long-lasting relationships with **elders**; all have had **mentors** in their lives
- Most have had the experience of being **outsiders**, even within their own communities. For some this is due to their upbringing; for others it is due to the life choices they have made. Essentially they are swimming against the tide.
- They are people who are excellent **listeners**. Several of them are very still inside.

- They are **older**, most falling within the age range of 28-38. Those that are younger tend to have a great deal of life experience.
- Most of the men interviewed have **children**. Most of the women either don't have children, or their children are older or no longer live with them.
- They are **open to learning**. They tend to be confident about their abilities and are therefore not threatened by the abilities of others. They welcome the individual from which they can learn.
- They are **spiritually motivated** people. Many of those interviewed quietly but actively follow the traditional spiritual ways of their people.
- They have an extensive life experience, which often includes **travel**. **All have lived outside of their own community**.
- They are young at heart, playful and have a good sense of **humour**. They **genuinely like youth**. They like hanging out with youth and they **reach out**. They notice if someone isn't getting involved and they look for ways to draw them in.
- They have a **good support network** around them. In many cases this is their family, and for a number of people their spouse or immediate family are “part of the team”.

FRONTLINE CHALLENGES

People interviewed for this report spoke very freely, saying exactly what was on their mind. In nearly every interview, people spoke about matters that they could not speak about in public. This work discusses numerous issues that are typically complex, difficult, and painful in nature. It is not easy being a youth worker, especially in one's own community, and it is crucial that those trying to support youth development in Aboriginal communities understand these issues and the dynamics that characterize them. Individuals training to be youth workers must address and understand issues such as the following.

- **Family rank:** People from many Nations agree on this issue: It is hard enough to work in your own community, but if you come from the wrong family, it may be impossible. If you come from a strong family, with status and respect in the community, it is easier to get support for youth initiatives. If you come from the wrong family, you may struggle continuously against opposition and lack of support, which may be expressed both subtly and overtly. It is not uncommon that the best person for the job, who possesses the skills, commitment and credibility for youth work, to not be hired due to family issues. And in other instances people are hired but fail to get appropriate community support. Sometimes politicians campaign openly on a ticket of family conflict, vowing to remove people from their positions because of their family affiliation. These are real issues. Typically people who are most effective in building community-based youth programs are either from high ranking or powerful families, or they are outsiders. Participants generally agree that if you come from the wrong family, you may be better to go and be an effective outsider, somewhere else.
- **The challenges of being in a leadership position:** Most of the youth workers saw themselves as role models within their own communities. The challenge for them was not to fall into the ego traps that often accompany positions of power and influence. Some people have had experience with this and have learned the "hard way." When you are in a position of leadership, there is power and responsibility that comes with that, whether one likes it or not. It just comes with the territory. It can be very hard for a younger person hired by their community to avoid such traps. Some communities have lost individuals that showed enormous potential as youth workers, simply because they were hired before they had the maturity to handle the responsibilities that characterize this role.

- **Sexual abuse:** In a number of cases, people spoke about the challenges of working with traditional people who were also sexual abusers. Deep sadness was expressed over the fact that certain individuals within each community, who are a known threat to young people, may be the only ones that can teach select parts of their cultural heritage. What is especially frustrating is their denial of their adverse behaviour. In some cases, well-known cultural leaders are such figures. Youth workers, especially those that youth confide in, get to hear the dark side of community life, and this can be extremely challenging. Some people spoke about the futility of working with cultural and healing initiatives in communities where the real issues are never talked about, where everybody knows, but nobody wants to come out and address the issue. The whole development of such communities is paralyzed by the fear of what would happen if the lid were to be taken off the box of community secrets.
- **Unhealthy adult role models:** In some communities it is very hard for the older people to address their own healing issues, and it was stated that this has a direct effect on youth development. One can not expect the youth to go through a journey that the older community members won't take themselves. In some cases, cultural leaders are actually inoculating their youth against any kind of involvement in their culture because their actions are so at odds with their words. Sometimes people spoke about situations where cultural resource people, especially those that operate outside the constraints and guidance of their own elders and community, would get caught up in elaborate power trips, carrying out unethical behavior with claims of spiritual authority.
- **Cultural initiatives** within communities are often managed by specific families, a level of control that typically arises from either their unique cultural knowledge, or their level of influence within the community. Such initiatives tend to adhere to the agendas of these specific families. In some instances they are healing for the entire community and the results are incredible. On the other hand, there are instances where the implementation of such initiatives serve only to increase the levels of power and influence a family may have. Under such circumstances youth workers face great difficulties getting anything accomplished. This is especially true if the family in question is their own family.
- Communities and **political leaders** will say that they want to see youth initiatives, youth development and youth healing. Yet, in reality there have been cases where such figures spend all of their energy actively blocking initiatives that might have a beneficial impact. It is not uncommon to see positive youth initiatives and projects abandoned because someone in a position of power did not give them their approval. Nor is it uncommon to see an individual who is doing a really great job with the youth fired because they crossed someone more powerful. The reasons for such actions vary. The hostility between religious and political factions can play a role. People in position of great power and influence with vindictive agendas also figure prominently. The realities of youth healing can be very threatening in some cases, especially when the status quo is challenged. Under some circumstances it is "safer" for a youth worker to organize a basketball game than to ask, for example, why none of the agencies working on youth issues cooperate.
- **Disunity:** Many communities are fraught with internal divisions, with points of unity occurring when there is a death in the community, or when individuals must bond together to challenge a common enemy. Communities who have experienced tremendous trauma and suffering are continuing to perpetuate war zones. It is under such circumstances that youth workers ability to function effectively is severely undermined. Sometimes a youth initiative can inspire people to work together; yet there are other times when such initiatives fail to generate a collective vision for youth development, and, as a result, good initiatives suffer.

- **Lack of Support:** Youth workers tend to be expected to "fix" the youth problem perceived by the community. It is rare for them to receive much sustained support, unless they actively create it. The most effective youth workers, those that have worked for an extended period of time and have avoided "burn out", are individuals that have built and maintained networks of community supporters and volunteers. If a youth worker is spending the majority of their time without the appropriate support, they are likely to burn out.
- **Lack of Funding:** Most community youth initiatives are under-funded. Those that are well funded usually have people with fundraising expertise and the time to dedicate to the activity. This is not the case for youth workers. In addition to their direct work with youth, they are expected to organize a team of community volunteers, as well as raise necessary funds. The best youth community-based development processes have a "team" of differently skilled individuals who are free to do their part as required.
- **Burnout:** They don't call it the "frontlines" for nothing! Youth workers often feel isolated within their community, face huge and overwhelming social problems, and work from crisis to crisis. In short they often play too many roles, and don't know when to say no. Factors such as these are what lead to "burn out" – a common phenomena within the youth worker population.

THE BEST PROGRAMMES: WHAT'S WORKING OUT THERE?

"The best programs are processes that come from connectedness, to community, to future and past generations....You don't have a program if you don't have a person coming from that place. They are the program."

Rupert Arcand

"Any ordinary program can work if you have the right person leading it. And the most awesome program in the world will be useless with the wrong person leading it. The program is secondary to the person."

Patience Pederson

Youth workers reach out and connect with youth; they also provide opportunities for youth to connect further, whether that be with, for example, local health services, cultural teachers, educational activities, or community initiatives. A youth worker is not a program. Although they may run programs, above all, they are human beings and the greatest skill effective youth workers possess is the ability to be real – to be themselves.

The human element sometimes gets overlooked in the quest for model program initiatives. There are many good youth programs that exist. Repeated studies have shown, (strongly echoed by the participants in this report) that the best youth programs are those that are sincerely loving and caring. But a program can not be loving and caring, only human beings within such programs can exude these qualities.

The best programs, therefore, have the right kind of people involved in them. The section on youth worker characteristics outlines in detail the kinds of qualities that the best youth workers exhibit, but basically such individuals are healthy, committed, consistent, genuinely loving and caring, culturally connected, spiritually motivated, resourceful, and playful. They are full of common sense and possess the ability to work everybody. If an individual is unhealthy and inconsistent, driven solely by financial gain, they will adversely affect the program they are involved with. In short, the best programs are built upon the best people.

"Basically what you are doing is building a traditional extended family right in the community." Mike Lickers

It is important to note, however, that the just having the right people may not be enough. Many of the difficulties youth experience result from the deterioration in their web of traditional relationships. Essentially youth programs attempt to replace or build upon these damaged relationships. The best programs, therefore, encourage the building of a **web** of relationships for each individual youth and discourage the development of a singular relationship between a youth and a youth worker.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A YOUTH WORKER TRAINING PROGRAM

- Trainee selection is crucial.
 - Trainees must take the journey they will be leading for youth.
 - The training should pay particular attention to personal wellness.
 - It is better to train a team than just one person.
 - Spend time outdoors.
 - Trainees need to connect with their roots.
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- Build the program on a traditional Aboriginal learning model.
 - Include practicums within the training.
 - Make it long enough.
 - The training should be accredited.
 - Support youth workers after they have left the program.
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- Communities should have input and be involved in the program.
 - The curriculum must include community development.
 - Part of the training should take place in the community.
 - Trainees should carry out their own community research.
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- Trainees should develop relationships with Elders and mentors.
 - The training should involve youth themselves as educators.
 - Get the best possible instructors to run the course.
 - Trainees should experience different types of youth work.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING ABORIGINAL YOUTH WORKERS

1. A good program ensures that **youth workers experience the journey that they lead for youth**. In essence, youth workers will take youth where they have been themselves. The program must model and expose participants to the practices, values and principles that underlie good youth work. If the journey for youth is a healing journey, or one of connecting with the culture, then youth workers should also participate.

“We can only bring our children as far as we have gone ourselves”
Barb Jeffries, Blackfoot/Chuckchee

2. **Use a traditional Aboriginal model of learning as the foundation for the program.** Do not try and disguise or patch up an academic model and then refer to it as traditional. Do the real thing. Elements such as the following should be considered when endeavoring to create a traditionally-based model.

- Ensure that the program honours and acknowledges the protocols of the Nations in the territory in which it is run.

“In our culture protocol is so important.”
Tommy Wammiss, Kwagiulth

- Tailor the program to the individual rather than “one size fits all.” This requires taking the time to get to know individuals and understand their learning needs. This in turn will help students to understand themselves and encourage them to attempt new things, as they try to find their own way.

“...A person connected with himself can connect with anything, anywhere anytime. If I can produce that kind of youth worker then I'd know I'd done a very excellent job. You have to train a trainer to train, not just like you, but just like him.”

B-Boy, Cree

- Focus on building character rather than on teaching techniques or skills. Character is the foundation on which everything else rests, and it starts from knowing and being comfortable with who you are.

“Personal qualities and values are more important than just skills.”
Susan Powell, Lakota

- Value the oral tradition with the same seriousness that is accorded to the written tradition.

“The oral history tradition is what keeps you from making a mistake.”
Captain Gold, Haida

- Pay attention to the preparation that precedes learning – the opening and cleansing process

“Participants would open themselves to the learning. They would participate in the cleansing ceremonies that we have in our Aboriginal traditions.”

Susan Powell, Lakota

- Make the training practical, hands on and experiential. Learn by seeing and doing. Promote mentorship and the completion of practicums over lectures.

“I learn best by listening and by doing. Not by reading.”

Lisa Watts, Tseshah

“Training people...should be based around actually doing something. It shouldn't be fake. It should be experiential and realistic.”

Kim Haxton, Ojibway

- Make time for stillness and reflection as part of the learning process.

“Go to an isolated location and reflect. That's one of the best things. To go out by yourself after a round of teachings. To really understand.”

Captain Gold, Haida

“Give people quiet time, time to meditate. Time to think.”

Christine Joseph, Cree

- Acknowledge and make space for the spiritual dimension of experience.

“Everywhere that I have been where there is a successful program, there is a spiritual core to it.” Michael Bopp

- Elders and traditional people should be integral members of the teaching staff. Honour them accordingly.

“You have to work with the elders. You need to be connected to learn the protocols, the basics.” Tommy Wammiss, Kwagiulth

- Key traditional Aboriginal values, such as respect, must be evident in all of the relationships and processes that characterize the training process.

“Respect, caring, sharing, trust. That's the core...So if I remember the core, I can work anywhere...The only way to get it across is to live it.”

Doug Dokis, Ojibway

- Involve the families of trainees in the learning process.

“You need to involve the families. The family is your primary support network. You want your family as your support and have them understand what you are doing.”

Rob Avedutti

- Provide the opportunity to address healing issues.

“If I was teaching youth workers, first of all I'd have to tell them to clean themselves inside. To know themselves. Who am I? Before they can tell others who they are and what they are.”

Christine Joseph, Cree

- Involve the community.

“It would be good to have a module of the training where youth workers identify their support network in the community, and then they go through part of the training as well.”

Doreen Angus, Gitksan

- Build a rite of passage into the learning process.

“You need some defined rites of passage that people can pass through.”

Carrie Avedutti, Cree

- Integrate Aboriginal history from an Aboriginal perspective. Be prepared to support students through feelings such as anger and grief.

“If you are going to do it from a Native perspective, it needs to focus on Native history and why our people are the way they are. There has to be indigenous history from an indigenous perspective.” Doug Dokis, Ojibway

- Make space for the personal. For the training to be effective it has to be a journey of learning that is tailored to the personal needs of the learner.

“There is not one true way to teach them. Sometimes the best way to teach someone to swim is to throw them in the water. If you did that to another person, they might never go near water again.” Rupert Arcand, Cree

- This is by no means a complete description of what the traditional system of education and training involves, but it includes some key elements

3. **Train a team** rather than individuals. Teams - whether they be formal groups, families or loose alliances - build and sustain successful initiatives in communities. Youth workers who have trained together and support one another have the ability to impact a community in a much more significant way than if they were to work individually within each community. Training the "super youth worker" promotes an unrealistic myth of how things get done and leads to burnout.

“The goal of this program would be to train teams of people who can intervene and work with youth, not just individuals.”

Patience Pederson, Similkameen

4. Most effective youth workers point to individuals that have served as mentors in their lives, and claim that their most significant learning experiences occurred while involved with such individuals. The training process should **expose trainees to respected mentors**, through practicums, shadowing, and/or community-based research.

“I’m impacted by someone who doesn’t know all the answers. They search together with you, and you feel more equal.” **Rupert Arcand, Cree**

5. The training process should include one or more significant **practicum placements**.

“It’s got to be practical. Hands on.”
Willis Parnell, Haida

6. Most interviewees suggested that the training process take place over the course of **two years**.

“It’s got to be two years, and it needs to have an optional specialization within it.”
Rob Lind, Kwagiulth

7. The curriculum needs to include a strong component on **working with the community and building a community support network**. Building and sustaining community support and participation is crucial to this type of work. There should also be an opportunity for members of the community to take part in the training.

“It would be good to have a module of the training where youth workers identify their support network in the community, and then they go through part of the training as well.”
Doreen Angus, Gitxsan

8. The training program should be **accredited** and recognized, both within the world of academia and the within the community. Factors such as the following should be considered: giving credit for prior experience, the requirement of specific certifications (such as first aid, counseling, suicide intervention, outdoor leadership etc.), and enabling students to continue with their education.

“We walk in two worlds. So it should be recognized - accredited - on both sides. Good people will participate then. There needs to be academic and community recognition.”
Rupert Arcand, Cree

9. **Youth workers require support after they have left the training program**. Those offering the program should ideally continue to support graduates by helping them network and connect with key resources and services within the community. The program is about building a community, and so, its responsibilities do not end when certificates are handed out.

“We are asking a lot from these people...a key issue is to provide support for these workers.”
Rupert Arcand, Cree

10. **Training should be community-based**. The community is where most of the learning will take place and where the lessons need to be applied. Participants need to go out of their communities and experience others during their learning process. In short, the

program should focus upon the needs of the communities, and a significant portion of the trainees time should be spent within these communities.

“It's key to have it in your own community, even if it's accredited by the University.”

Captain Gold, Haida

11. As part of the training process, **trainees should carry out their own community research** looking at such things as: What has been tried in the community before with youth initiatives? What worked and what didn't, and why? What do the youth really want? How would the elders like to get involved? If trainees could present to their classmates what they had learned while engaged in this learning process, the knowledge would be extremely valuable.

“They need to learn about their community. What's already in place? What's already been tried? Why did things fail in the past?”

Mike Lickers, Mohawk

12. The training process should pay particular attention to **personal wellness** – an element that should be evaluated on an on-going basis. It must prepare participants to face the rigors required of the work, and to help them work through the issues that youth typically face.

“When one area of your life is neglected, you are going to suffer in other areas. So you need a balance. A sense of what you need and what the community needs.”

Eric MacPherson, Gitxsan

13. The training process should **involve the youth** themselves. Meaningful youth participation is a key element to any successful youth program. The only way for a youth program to be truly successful is to involve youth directly in it; essentially youth should be seen as educators in the making.

“It's important to get youth involved right from the start...Everyone says it, but no-one really does it” Rob Lind, Kwagiulth

14. Particular attention must be paid to **selecting and training quality trainers** to coordinate the process. The training will only be as good as the trainers themselves, and ideally the instructors will have not only appropriate qualifications, but also significant work experience in the field.

“They have to be genuine, and take the time to teach me in a way that works for me.”

Lisa Watts, Tseshah

15. Particular attention must be paid to the **selection of trainees**. Most of those interviewed stressed that picking the right people to train is as important as the content of the curriculum. Some of the suggestions for selection included involving youth, the community and elders in the process; having a selection retreat; having some kind of initiatory selection experience which participants selected themselves; and exposing participants to the realities of the job itself.

“...The selection is almost as important as the training itself...take time and build selection into the program as a really important part. Think about it carefully.”

Michael Bopp

16. Almost everybody stated that the training process should encourage students to **connect with the land** in a profound way. It was suggested that trainees learn to live from the land and/or learn how to spend time alone in the wild. It was also felt that a rural camp setting would be more appropriate as a training location for certain parts of the training program, since urban settings and environments are full of distractions.

“The land helps people to connect, with Spirit, the Creator. It puts things in perspective.”

Eric MacPherson, Gitksan

17. Give participants the opportunity to learn about and experience **different specializations** within the field of youth work. The program should also include training and practicums in the area of specialization that a student chooses. Outdoor leadership, counseling, and recreation serve as good examples.

“In year two you would specialize in an area...You would train and gain the confidence in leading those activities.” Mike Lickers, Mohawk

18. Participants need to research and connect with their own **cultural heritage**. This is especially important considering that is what they will be encouraging youth to do.

“You need to research the history of your own people.”

Kim Haxton, Ojibway

19. Ideally the program would be **part of a wider community development process** and would not occur in a vacuum. Communities need to have input and involvement in the program and its development. Youth development initiatives which are part of a more wide-spread community-based development projects have the potential to be far more effective than those that take place in isolation.

“No matter how good you are at working with youth, if you can't get support, it won't work.”

Michael Bopp

CAPTAIN GOLD

Captain Gold is a Haida from the Na7ikun Q̱igawaay Raven's Village on Rosespit, on Haida Gwaii. Before he took the name Captain Gold, he used the name Wanagun. He was involved with the very first Haida Rediscovery programs. Since 1973, he has spent nearly every summer at the historic old Haida Village of Sgan Gwaii, which was recognized in 1981 as a UNESCO World Heritage Living Cultural Site. Deeply committed to his responsibility of maintaining the ancient Haida traditions, Captain Gold learns from the elders and teaches

what he knows to youth. He also helped start the Haida Gwaii Watchmen in 1983. The Watchmen train and employ Haida caretakers and guides of ancient villages and traditional cultural sites.

Arriving at Sgan Gwaii

Incorrectly named Ninstant in the 1800's by European explorers, Sgan Gwaii ("Red Cod Island") has the largest number of standing poles of any village on Haida Gwaii. Having worked as a logger for many years, Captain Gold left this profession in 1973. Never having canoed before he ordered a 16 foot open canoe from Ontario. After receiving it, he paddled the canoe over 100 miles along the coast, finally arriving at Sgan Gwaii – a voyage that required him to navigate a three mile open ocean crossing in blustery winds. *"I felt so good "* he says. He describes being able to see kids diving off the rocks, and as he got closer *"the whole village opened up. I could see longhouses, smoke, people walking around. I could hear the voices of children. I saw a lady packing water in a bent cedar wood box."* He describes landing his canoe in the traditional way, stern first, feeling the power of the ancestors behind him. He offered prayers to the ancestors to let them know that he only wanted to honour them. *"I felt like I would be back. Nobody was taking care of the place, and everything was overgrown. There were trees growing out of the poles."* He has been the guardian of Sgan Gwaii ever since his inaugural journey, having spent more time there than anyone else alive has.

The Spirit of the Land and Healing

Captain Gold considers himself fortunate to have avoided the residential school system. Always on the ocean or in the bush with his father, he never seemed to be around at registration time. He sees the destruction that this educational system has caused. *"The residential schools totally destroyed the culture. Now we're trying to get it back. Rediscovery is one of the many tools that we are using to do that. The spirit of the land keeps us going. Our natural abundance here on Haida Gwaii pulled us back after the residential schools. There were enough people still living from the land, so when they came back from the residential schools, the land drew them back in and healed them. There are many First Nations who have lost their resources. Other places are not so lucky. Without the abundance of natural resources, people didn't have the opportunity to reconnect with the land and heal, so they suffered for a long time. Maybe they are still suffering."*

For Captain Gold, there is a spiritual part to this. *"Spirituality comes from the land"* he says. *"It comes from your relationship with the natural cycles of life. If you take that away, then all you have left is materialism. The old people understood their part in it. You only take what you need. They talked about that every day. So Rediscovery gets the young people back in touch with that. Rediscovery is a healing process. You have to understand it spiritually. The whole idea of Rediscovery is as a teaching tool for the kids. You are taking them out there into the wilderness, away from the TV, where they can learn to work together. You have to keep that going all the time. So now the first participants are themselves the teachers."*

Captain Gold stresses that one might not see the results of their work with young people for ten years or more. *"Young people go through a crazy phase, get involved with drugs and alcohol. When they straighten up, the teachings start to bear fruit. After they come out of the crazy phase, they start to make sense of the teachings and the words they have received. It's getting better and better."*

The Traditional Role of Youth Workers

Captain Gold believes that those working with young people have a responsibility. *"It is the responsibility of each generation to build a bridge from the past to the future. That's the role of oral history. This is how you understand your history. Keep telling people that. You are in the role of those in the past. We must look at the past so that we can have a future. You have to learn from the mistakes so you don't repeat them. How you relate to the rest of the world - the foundation is your culture. With the knowledge comes a responsibility and a commitment to use it in the right way."*

The Land as a Classroom

It would be a mistake to run a training program for youth workers in the city Captain Gold believes. *"The majority of the training modules should take place outside the city. There are too many distractions there, and people lose their individuality. The wilderness is your classroom - you can see where you fit in the natural cycle, whether that be on the prairie, the ocean, in the mountains or the forest. Everything works in cycles. You can't do that in the city - it sounds like a dream there. So you have to do it in the natural world. Bring them out into the wilds. If you can stand in a forest, in front of a tree, and describe the community that you see, or the community in an inter-tidal zone, then you can start to piece it all together."*

Speaking with Truth

"In the traditional way, people were born into the right to be a chief. You are then raised accordingly. You are taught to be able to speak to people. You get taught by your maternal uncle. And when you are teaching young people how to speak, you get them to stand in front of the group and address the group. You teach them to be truthful in what they're saying. That's most important in the teaching, and that part carries on in their life afterwards. Truth and honesty. If something is bothering you, don't keep it inside. In the past, in our oral history tradition, when we would go to different potlatches and speak in front of all the clans, we dare not claim what is not in our world. We don't claim a crest, or territory, such as clam beds or salmon spawning streams. In the past if someone made a false statement, it could escalate into a fight. The oral history tradition is what keeps you from making a mistake. Everybody knows who you are. In Haida we say that they look right through you, if you try and make yourself what you are not."

Teaching Youth Workers: A Traditional Perspective

Captain Gold stresses the importance of instructors working as a unified team when teaching youth workers. *"Any of the trainers in the program have to sing the same song. That's how it was in the past. Wherever you went, you heard the same thing, so you knew it to be true. It's hard to do that in the city. You would only have certain trainers and elders, but they all have to say the same thing. Then the trainees will do the same thing in the community."*

He points to the traditional Haida stories as teaching tools. *"In the oral tradition, you are teaching people the history, and how you fit into it. Most of the stories have a statement, a teaching, such as man being disrespectful of the salmon, and you have to keep repeating it. If the teacher doesn't know, then they should go to the elders. That's part of the homework. Part of the commitment as a teacher. The elders will design what you need to understand. You use the stories to answer people's questions. I will answer the same question in different ways. You must have five or six ways to understand a question. When a teacher can do that, then they understand fully and their training is complete."*

Captain Gold talks about the way repetition is used in traditional teachings. *"People today, their associations aren't the same as they used to be. They have fast cars, they go off to*

Hawaii, or to Las Vegas. The world isn't just Haida Gwaii any more. When you are trying to teach them, you have to remember that. The trainers and the elders have to repeat things even more. You have to keep repeating to them, from different angles." Captain Gold talks about using this principle to teach one of the most vital qualities for those doing this work - common sense. "To teach common sense, you might start with the weather. You would explain about the cycles, the clouds, the patterns. Then you make them use that. Then you get them to explain it. The important thing is to get them to understand and think about things. After a while, they start to think that way, and they will use what they have learned about the weather in other areas. You have little tests all the time - not one big test at the end! That's the way it was with the elders. You learn to repeat what they say. The test is remembering every day what they said. And you need to praise people when they get things right. Acknowledgment is important. Even a teacher has to learn how to do that. Not enough of them do that. Even a teacher can learn from the student. You keep an open mind. If the student has an insight, bring it out and explore it. You might find some surprising insights."

As well as stressing the importance of having an engaging curriculum, Captain Gold speaks about another part of the traditional learning process: digesting the knowledge. *"Go to an isolated location and reflect. That's one of the best things. To go out by yourself after a round of teachings. To really understand. This goes on all your life. Elders do that all the time. To reflect on your experience."* As part of this tradition, Captain Gold introduced a time of solo reflection each day for young people to experience at the first Rediscovery camp. This has since become a tradition that is used by all camps around the world.

He describes the traditional pattern for teaching. *"You teach them so far, and then get them to share what they understand. It works the same way in all teaching. It's really important that they share what they are learning. Everyone will have a different perspective. You have to get them to understand what is being taught. You can see if they have a twisted interpretation. Then you can correct and guide them."*

Captain Gold feels that in addition to that which takes place on the land, part of each participant's training should take place within their own community. *"It's key to have it in your own community, even if it's accredited through the university. It'll take a bit of designing, but it's important. And we've got to get respect in there. Respect for the storyteller, for the circle, for the traditions. If they want to join the circle, then they have to respect it."*

SUSAN POWELL

Susan Powell is a Lakota woman, well known for her work in the healing and wellness field with Aboriginal communities across Canada. She currently chairs the Council of Directors of the Rediscovery International Foundation, and her work with Aboriginal youth has taken her from the bush to the boardroom, from the backstreets to the frontlines. She has a quiet, still presence and carries the name "Abiniskim" meaning "White Stone Woman". This name was given to her by the Blackfoot Elders of the Buffalo Woman's Society, which has been described as probably the oldest woman's society on earth.

Her Work

Susan is currently working with a training program that prepares youth workers to work with street entrenched and high-risk youth. Based in Vancouver's East Side, the program is organized in partnership with Douglas College and Watari Training. Ten years ago, Susan developed one of the first Native Youth Worker training programs in Vancouver. She has worked for the Vancouver School Board as a cultural resource person, introducing youth to basic Aboriginal concepts and values. She uses humour and a variety of games and exercises that she has gathered over the years to keep young people interested and energy levels high. *"I find that I have to use my sense of humour and almost cajole the young people sometimes to help them keep their focus."*

Susan has been invited into many Aboriginal communities to work with both youth and adults looking to find balance and healing from the pain and trauma that has been caused by, for example, sexual abuse, substance abuse, family violence, suicide or residential school experiences. She has also run and worked at many different cultural and healing camps that have taken place on the land. As part of her own training, she lived alone in a tipi -- the traditional dwelling of her people -- for two years in the mountains.

Susan works with the ceremonies and traditions of the Lakota tradition: the Sacred Pipe, the Sweat Lodge, the Medicine Wheel, and the Circle. She works from her tradition while encouraging others to connect with their own. *"For some of our young people, the ceremonies can be a doorway for them to see what things would be like for them if they explored their own ways. It can inspire them to find their own teachings from their own culture. So many of the young people are missing an abiding connection that tells them who they are, where they came from and where they might go."*

Raised by her grandmother, Susan grew up as the only visibly Native child in a white community, and understands the need for Aboriginal children to connect with their heritage. *"I hear about some of our young girls scrubbing their bodies with Ajax so that they can become more white, and see them wearing blue contact lenses and dyeing their hair. They don't know where they fit in and they don't feel comfortable within their own skin. They are disconnected from who they are. That is why our names are so important. It is a very powerful thing to say your name. There are a powerful set of connections and responsibilities that come with our names."*

Youth Programs

"I don't see much concerted effort to build youth development programs in Aboriginal communities. Lots of adults forget what it was like and don't do anything - they just complain that the youth are irresponsible and out of control. Many times they are at a loss because they don't know what to do. People want something to work right now."

Her Training

Susan is a formally trained holistic health educator and bodywork and massage practitioner. She has taken many workshops and training programs in the fields of personal growth and healing. She acknowledges several key individuals who helped her along her path, people who "gave me enough hope to keep going."

Susan's medicine teacher was an elder called Mahad'yuni, who she refers to as "Grandmother". Mahad'yuni's way of teaching was by example. *"She **showed** me. She loved the Creator and the Earth so much. In her later years she was in great pain. People would come hundreds of miles to see her and seek healing. When they came, she would put aside the pain and be completely present with them. There was no pain - just the person and the moment. It was very inspiring. She would show me things and explain things. And there was another part that is hard to describe. I was fortunate to be helping to look after her during the last part of her life. When she died I felt as though she passed something on to me."*

About Youth Workers

"I find that the best youth workers have a strong sense of commitment and lots of enthusiasm. Young people respond to that energy. Unless they are an elder, the youth worker has to have a lot of energy to connect. Youth respond differently to elders. And they have to have done some kind of healing in their own lives. If their buttons are easily pushed, the youth will find them. The more present they are, and in touch with themselves and their teachings, the more they have to offer. They will be able to respond to what is needed instead of coming in with a know-it-all attitude because they have a degree or certificate."

It's always better when people work as part of a team. The more community involvement the better. Part of the job of a youth worker is building relationships between people, and you have to be able to maintain good relations with everybody in the community. They are all part of the solution you are seeking, and you must be able to connect with them."

Susan feels that the team approach is key to preventing the burnout that is so commonly found amongst those individuals working with Aboriginal youth. *"People get such a sense of urgency to help all the kids. They start to feel that it is their personal job to help and heal all the wounds of all these children. Then they become overburdened, overwhelmed and overworked. The work starts to get harder and it's already challenging to start with. The more that they take it as **their** work, the more likely they are to get burned out. There is a fine balance of being committed and over-committed."* She talks about the teachings she has received from the elders in doing this work. *"The more I've experienced healing in my life the more I get to be the witness. **I'm** not doing the work; the **Creator** is. It's like the flute thinking that it is making music. It can do nothing without the breath. Grandpa Fools Crow (a spiritual leader of the Lakota people) talked about being like a hollow bone, and just allowing the energy of Wakan Tanka, the Great Mystery, to flow through him. So preparing to do this work is a spiritual journey. It is about clearing away the blocks that we have to being authentic."*

Training Youth Workers

Susan stresses the need for character development, a collection of qualities that are essential when one is learning to become the type of person that can work in a culturally centered way with Aboriginal young people. *"Personal qualities and values are more important than just skills."* She believes that a training program for doing this kind of work should have a very thorough selection process. *"People may have good intentions, but don't have the infrastructure to see it through. If you can't deal with your own feelings what will you do when you are faced with hard issues? How will you respond when your star basketball player comes to you battered*

and bruised because she has just been raped by someone in her community? It is not enough just to be available and financially able to take the training. There should be a selection process that exposes people to the rigors of the training and the realities of the work. What will be expected of them?"

She talks about the tradition within Aboriginal cultures of testing those who seek to be trained. *"I was told that our elders would test those seeking to learn. They wouldn't just automatically teach them, especially if it was for an important role in the community. They might send them away or refuse to see them. They might give them a difficult or committing task to perform. They still do these things. It is an ancient and powerful tradition. They are testing our willingness and our commitment. Can we follow very specific instructions? Are we open to learning? What is the spirit in which we do things? What is the spirit in which we face obstacles and challenges?"*

Opening to Learning

Susan feels that the training process would ideally begin with an opening and cleansing period. *"Participants would open themselves to the learning. They would participate in the cleansing ceremonies that we have in our Aboriginal traditions - bathing in rivers and the ocean, cedar boughs, sweatlodges, singing, drumming, running in the forest. And they would work with the elders on a daily basis. You have to go onto the land. You have to learn to **listen**, to really listen to the earth, to the elders. Not just when it's convenient."*

Involving Elders

Susan sees two ways in which elders could be involved. She believes that those wanting to work with Aboriginal youth need to be connected to their own elders. When inviting elders to participate in a training program, she has found that the best way to involve them is to allow them to set the agenda. She experienced the success of this strategy firsthand while helping to coordinate the Native Alcohol and Drug Counselor Program -- an eleven-month training program based out of the Friendship Centre in Vancouver. *"Bob George, an elder from the Burrard band, used to come for a day every two weeks. He would stay for the whole day and people could connect with him. His input varied from week to week, it was up to him. He gave us what he felt we needed at that time."*

Program Elements and Style

- Working in the community while taking the training.
- Travel to broaden one's experience of the world. Visit other communities.
- Experiential learning. *"It's very powerful"*
- Involve the elders.
- Develop modules that have a core component but also require personal research and practical experience to ensure that they are relevant to one's own situation. This model could be applied to all the modules. Examples include:

- An introductory course on how different cultures trained young people and the rites of passage that youth experienced. This could be followed up by researching one's own culture to see how such practices are/were done.
- An introductory course in ethnobotany and environmental education. Students would learn such things as the medicinal and edible plants that exist in their own territories, the important biological processes that characterize their areas, and the ways people traditionally gathered and prepared food.
- Program development skills.
- Community development skills.
- Personal wellness. This could include, for example, making personal wellness goals, learning about self-care, attending regular counseling sessions, eating nutritionally sound meals and learning personal financial management strategies.

"If my elders from long ago could pass a gift to youth workers today, I think it would be a sense of inner peace from knowing who they are. By knowing they are one with the Creator and all their relations they don't have to feel afraid. They don't have to feel alone."

LISA WATTS

Lisa Watts is the youth worker for the Tseshahht Nation. She runs the Tseshahht Rediscovery program, and sits on the Council of Directors for the Rediscovery International Foundation. Lisa also runs a youth centre in the Tseshahht community, just west of Port Alberni on Vancouver Island. She is a traditional woman, a mother of two boys, who knows how to work with young people. She is also a storyteller. During our conversations together she used stories from her people to help me understand her meaning. She tells the story of the little boy deer dancer who gets fire for his people by stealing it from the wolves after the nation's strongest, bravest and cleverest have failed to illustrate the traditional Tseshahht view of youth rights and abilities. Lisa also told the story about how Raven tried to copy the Bear's method of extracting grease from his paws by holding them over the fire and then greasing his salmon. When Raven tries, his hands become blackened and permanently burned into claws. The lesson? You have to follow your own way....

Being a Youth Worker

"I started to get involved after the kids in our community broke into the gym one night to use it. People in the community criticized the kids, but I thought why do they have to break in? I experienced hurt as a child. I don't want to see the kids hurt each other. It's hard being young and it's hard growing up. When I turned twenty, I felt like I was dying. I want to see them get educated, to have a better chance. I provide a structure for them. It seems ironic to me that I am always giving rules and training. I hate rules, but I believe in justice. At the youth centre the youth make the rules and come up with the consequences. It took a while to develop, but now there is a Youth Council that runs it. It is important not to do things for the kids that they can do for themselves, that's part of the empowerment. If you do, then you are taking something away from them. I always go in with the idea that the kids are teaching me something. I was taught to pull cedar bark by kids who had been taught by the elders.

I know where I'm from. I know where I belong. As I grew older, I realized that my family had taught me much more than I was aware at the time. I received a strong family teaching. Family means a lot to us. You are always introduced to people and you learn their kinship to you. I was taught early on not to go out with my cousins. I was taught to look for what needed to be done and then just jump in and do it. Not to wait around and ask what needed doing. I was brought up with strong traditional values. The traditions are strongly ingrained in me. But also, I'm competitive and I like to be acknowledged and these are not traditional values. So I have to swallow myself sometimes to be proper. I wasn't taught so much about changing into a woman. I went through the rite of passage that we have for girls becoming women. Now those teachings are coming back strong. The traditions are coming back again."

One thing that one immediately notices about the Tseshahht youth centre is the computer room. There are several computers, hooked up to the Internet, and the room is always full, with young people working on homework, surfing the Net, chatting with people around the world. *"The kids love the Internet. They are learning about life beyond the community. It gives them a window on the world."* Lisa has her own e-mail address and she receives mail from the youth. *"Sometimes they will tell me their problems over the Internet. It's easier for them to do that by e-mail, even though I am right there."*

Training

Lisa cites her own experience and personal history as her most important training. *"I'm a natural. I'm a people person. I can stay on track and get organized. The kids are open to me.*

They know me and they know that I'm fair. In our culture the elders know our role by our personality traits when we are young. Then they start to train us for that role."

She has taken a variety of training programs, the following serving as good examples.

- The Nu-Cha-Nuulth Core Training program, which is designed for all band employees, included four one-week modules. The program focused on teamwork, counseling, community development and cultural and traditional perspectives. Lisa also took the second Core Training program for social workers.
- A variety of workshops on personal development and self-healing, including one on sexual abuse, and another on family violence, which was five-weeks in length.
- The Working with Youth in the Community Program, offered through the Justice Institute in Vancouver, included three one-week modules for practitioners.

Commenting on her training, Lisa says *"On paper outside of the community my qualifications wouldn't look like much. None of the courses are accredited by a college or university. You receive a certificate of completion. I enjoyed the Justice Institute program. It really makes you look at your personal values. But I was in a very different situation to the other youth workers in the program. They could go home at the end of the day. I am related to all the youth. I know them. I know their families. I know their backgrounds and what they have gone through. As a Native woman, living on my reserve and working with my people, I'm continually watched by 400 pairs of eyes. Everything I do. What I do, I will see. What I do today, I will see 20 years from now in the kids."*

Lisa believes that personal healing is crucial for those seeking to work with Native youth. *"There is no way that an injured person can do what I do. They wouldn't be able to cope with the work. Sobriety is important, but I'm looking for sincerity, not just sobriety. People have to be committed to working on themselves. There can be a very negative thinking pattern that comes with someone who is a dry drunk. You need to be working on yourself. And you need patience, common sense and have a genuine interest in the kids."*

The Land

The Tseshahht Rediscovery program is based at Klahoah, an island in the heart of traditional Tseshahht territory in what is now Pacific Rim National Park (where it is known as Nettle Island). The Tseshahht people came to the Port Alberni area for the salmon and berries; they did not traditionally live there year round. Lisa believes that it is vital to get Aboriginal youth onto their traditional land, and experience it directly. Speaking about her feelings of being on Klahoah she visibly changes. She becomes relaxed and there is an emotional, dreamlike quality in her voice. *"When I go there I feel like a Tseshahht woman. I feel Nu-Cha-Nuulth. I feel really proud. I just belong there. When I'm there I'm not just brown, I'm Indian through and through. I can feel the ancestors. The peace, the natural beauty."* She talks about working with the youth in an outdoor setting. *"Our people are ocean people. When our kids are on the water they are enthralled. We take them kayaking. They love to go beach-combing and seafood gathering. The kids really bond when they are on the land. It takes about four days to get settled down with the kids on the land because we are so used to taking in so much stimulation. It's hard to slow down. But it happens. Even the hard-core, tough kids really soften when they are on the land, on the ocean. You really need to be out there for at least ten days. We live longhouse style, but we didn't have the training that our ancestors had. So we have to learn to*

live together again. It's good to be on the land. We use the stories. We learn about the territory, where the fishing weirs were, the CMT's (culturally modified trees), the cave burials."

For Lisa, the Tseshaht Rediscovery program has become a way for the youth to regain their identity. *"Rediscovery has become part of our life. We learn about the cedar. For us everything was cedar. Our clothes, our baskets, our ropes, our houses, our canoes, our medicines - everything. We learn about that. How to gather and prepare it. Our identity is so important. Here in our community we have every comfort. Not many people have the skills anymore to live on the land. We need that expertise, to gather our food and medicines. To hear what our land is telling us"*

Training Youth Workers

There are so many pieces to doing this kind of work. Lisa speaks about the many roles she finds herself playing in her work: school counselor, relationship counselor, safety advisor, janitor, cook, disciplinarian, outdoor educator, mentor, buddy.... it's a long list. *"I need to have the skills of a teacher."* Lisa would like to see a training program developed that incorporated the following elements.

- It would start with personal healing which should be an ongoing process throughout the length of the program. *"You would have to be on some kind of healing process before you get in."*
- It would be useful to do an exchange with someone, perhaps even go through a mentorship with another youth worker, and go and see how things are done in other communities.
- Proposal writing and fundraising. *"I wish there was a course in being creative with it."*
- Advocacy.
- Peer group counselling.
- Traditional crafts and technologies.
- Learn about how other cultural groups do things.
- Self-care and personal wellness.
- Learning how to debrief by helping youth to learn from and digest the lessons of their experience
- How to set up a crisis team. Lisa illustrates this need by drawing upon two crisis situations that had recently taken place within her own community. One involved a young person who was sick. Another involved a situation at a recent funeral of a young person who had died of a drug overdose. One of the pallbearers overdosed during the funeral on the latest drug cocktail of choice, a combination of heroin, cocaine and methadone.
- First aid.
- Hygiene and basic health issues, and also how to teach them.

- Sexuality. *"It needs to be explicit and real."* It should also cover working with sexual identity issues.
- Relationship counseling.
- Youth culture 101.
- Outdoor living and wilderness leadership skills. *"Our young people are looking for challenges, they want to take risks. We need to provide activities that can meet that need."*
- Ethnobotany. This should involve community research and learning the stories that go with the land and the plants.
- Lisa likes the idea of learning about and working with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. *"We need that. It's important. There's so much to learn! I don't even know how to cut fish right yet!"*

Learning Styles

Lisa comments that many traditional Aboriginal people feel intimidated by colleges and other institutions of learning. Some of this she believes may have to do with the learning styles and the focus on the written word. *"I learn best by listening and by doing. Not by reading. In our culture we use repetition to learn something. In our traditional teachings we are told the same thing in many different ways, over and over again. The repetition is good."* She talks about the qualities she would seek in a teacher of such a course. *"What is important is being genuine. For me it isn't even so important that they be Aboriginal. They have to be genuine, and take the time to teach me in a way that works for me, to listen to me. I'm looking for quality, understanding and compassion."*

Lisa also believes there is a need for a Native Youth Worker Association. *"Other professional groups, like social workers, have them. I think that youth workers need this. In three years I haven't had time to use any of my holiday time. Other professions seem to have a safety net. I don't. I can't rely on it. I have over 8 years experience in the human service field and I get paid \$10.41 per hour. I don't feel valued in that way. I think it would be useful to have some kind of job scale. An association could do that, as well as organizing gatherings, information sharing, support and networking."*

TOMMY WAMMISS

Tommy Wammiss, Na Na Mu Gwi Tsa Las, is from a strong Kwakwakawakw family. His father, Spruce, is from Gwayi (Kingcome), and is a hereditary chief of the Wolf Clan. His mother is from Guskimax (Quatsino). This year he will be initiated as a Hamadsa at his family's potlatch. He lives on the Quatsino Reserve near Port Hardy on Vancouver Island. He has two sons. He is a grounded, focused person with a maturity beyond his 25 years. He is a powerful and enthusiastic singer, and during our time together we were joined at his house by his father, uncles and brothers to share songs. They sat around the hollowed cedar log, which is used together with the drum by the Kwakwakawakw, and sang powerful complex songs into the early hours of the morning. After each song the elders would speak about the meaning of it. As the singing continued, people started to arrive at the house, drawn by its power....

His Work

Tommy is a skilled and talented person who is able to play many roles. Until recently, he was the youth worker in Quatsino. He is a home school coordinator and works as a cultural tutor within the school system, in which he teaches singing and dancing. He has worked with the Owitna'Gula Rediscovery program. He also works as a sea kayaking guide for his family's eco-tourism business, and is involved in their nationally acclaimed "Ancient Voices" tours, which introduce people to the cultural and natural history of the territory through sea-kayak journeys.

"I like to take the youth onto the land. I recently organized a three day retreat for young people to learn about AIDS. We brought educators into the community, and went out to a very isolated cabin. It's a good environment to work with youth. There are no interruptions there. There is no TV, no stereo, no running water. The youth were quiet. They listened. They stayed focused. It was fun too. We would play Lahahl (a traditional gambling game involving singing) every night. It wasn't intimidating for the youth."

His Training

Brought up in a traditional family, Tommy says that he got actively involved in his own culture after he graduated from high school. He took the six-month Aboriginal Cultural Stewardship Program offered at UMISTA through the Aboriginal People's Cultural Foundation, and learned the necessary skills to work in museums. He traveled to many museums with First Nations collections as part of this program, discovering much of his people's cultural treasures -- especially masks -- were in museums or in the hands of private collectors.

He is currently enrolled in the Working with Youth in the Community Program, which is offered through the Justice Institute in Vancouver. *"It's a good program. I'm learning about communication skills, referrals, the importance of documenting and journalling."* He has also taken a Kayak Leadership program through Malaspina College.

Tommy credits his father and uncles as his main teachers. In the Kwakwakawakw tradition songs, dances, legends, ceremonies, the owning of masks, and other facets of cultural knowledge are held by different families and clans. Songs belong to particular families, and some can only be sung in certain places. So the traditional place for learning the cultural teachings is within the family system. Tommy receives traditional training from his father; he has also begun training his son, who is only three years old.

Singing

Tommy teaches singing within the school system. *"The elders told me to sing all the songs that I know, not just my own family songs. That way, they said, the kids will understand*

more. Our ancestors speak to us through our songs. It is really key to get our youth singing. The songs trigger something. You hear them and you think Hey! This is me. This is our culture. This is our life. It touches them in a deep place, and then they want to learn more. It was the songs that really stirred me up, and started me on my journey."

Tommy's commitment to the songs of his people is absolute. He organizes regular practices at his house, where the elders and youth come together. As they sing together, the youth also learn about all the other aspects of their culture. *"I don't have a TV and I don't have a video. I just sing and study my singing. You can't just go halfway. You have to go the whole way. Our songs are very complex. You have to know the legends to understand the meaning of them. I listen to my tapes over and over again. I get the beat. And then I ask questions. What does it mean? Where does it come from? In some songs every word has a legend behind it, and a particular hand motion that goes with it. There is so much to learn. There was one of our elders who recently passed away who knew a thousand songs. Only four hundred of them were recorded and now he's gone. I only know 180 songs. I only know the tip of the iceberg when it comes to our culture. There is so much."*

He talks about the resistance he has met within his own community to the teaching and learning of traditional cultural activities. *"Our group was singing outside one time. The council received a complaint from one of the elders, who complained that he couldn't hear his TV because of our singing! So now we are only allowed to sing inside."*

Elements of a Training Program

Tommy believes that a training program for youth workers that draws upon a traditional model of Aboriginal learning *"would be awesome. But people have to want it"* he stresses. *"It should start with a retreat out in a remote place. Out on the land. You need to get them thinking about it. You have to test their commitment. Does this person really want to do it? It has to show people how intense it can be doing this kind of work. You have to start by washing the city out of people."*

- *"You have to work with the elders. You need to be connected to learn the protocols, the basics. In our culture protocol is so important. You always have to be careful. As a Hamadsa, you have to know all the protocols. There is so much that you have to know. The order of all the masks in the dances. The order of the songs. Everything. And it would be good to learn about the protocols of other nations."*
- Tommy feels that the core elements of the program should focus on developmental skills, bush skills and cultural skills.
- Tommy talks about his own learning style. *"Our people never had a written language. You **listened**. Over and over. Repeatedly hearing stuff works. If you hear a lecture once you forget it. At high school, they gave me tapes along with the lectures. That really works for me. It got into my head that way. Hearing as well as seeing is what works for me. And hands-on works really well."*

Culture, Land & Language

"There was a time when the culture was the land. Red and yellow cedar was our life. It gave us all our culture. The land is the same as our language, our dances, our potlatches. If we don't get the youth out there now, who's going to do it later? It'll be gone." Tommy is passionate as he speaks these words. *"The old style of potlatch was different. The old ways have to come back. In our old potlatches there were four days for the mourning dances, four days for*

the Red Cedar Bark and four days for the Peace Dance. Nowadays it is just two days. My grandfather, Tom Patch, once gave a potlatch that lasted for three months -- a three-month potlatch! And he fed everybody who came, three times a day. We need to keep the old ways of hunting, of gathering plants. And the values where we take care of the resources, and take only what we need.

*Some of the old language, you can't translate it. You can describe it, but not the whole thing. One time I heard Chief Adam Dick speaking in the old way, and I asked my dad what he had said. My dad told me that it so wise and powerful, but that he was unable to translate it. **If only I could say** was what he told me."*

MICHAEL MOORE

Born in a remote logging camp on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, Michael Moore is truly a Renaissance coastal character. A musician, martial artist and philosopher, he has had careers as a logger, a fisherman, a computer technician, an eco-tourism guide and as a director of a marine resource management non-profit organization. He is one of the original founding members of Hollyhock, Canada's answer to Esalen, which brings leading edge teachers and practitioners of the practical, creative and healing arts together at a retreat centre on Cortes Island, attracting people from all over the world. The first thing that you notice about Michael is his energy. He literally radiates positive and enthusiastic energy. He has been involved for several years with Owitna'Gula Rediscovery. Surrounded by his children, and pausing to eat delicious homemade soup and bread with Sophie his wife, or to play music, Michael shared his thoughts about youth workers and how to train them.

What's in a name?

Michael sees initiation as a primary role of the kind of youth workers needed by a community. "**Youth worker** is definitely the second best term. Perhaps **leader** or **guide** would be better, but we really don't have a good word in English for the kind of role we are talking about. We seem to have abandoned the concept of people who guide young people in their transformation to adulthood. We are trying to pass things of lasting value to young people - things that have to do with being happy and satisfied in life. But we seem to take a really patchwork approach to it. These kind of workers are vital; they are part of society's immune system."

Attributes and Qualities

"The best youth workers are people who have worked on themselves and understand their relation to all things. They are not fighting off demons the whole time, or bound by political convention and fear. And they can build relationships in the community. They know almost instinctively it seems, who to turn to for help and how to build support. That instinct comes from having a clear perception of other people's intent, and you only get that when you're aware of your own. The ability to choose allies and helpful people is critical. And you need to know that people are not the enemy. Things can be very political in a small community. The politics are more intense when the turf is small! So you need to be aware that people only really address their own demons, and stay clear and focused. You can't have a chip on your shoulder and do this work." Michael views the work of youth guides as being essentially spiritually oriented and culturally centered. "Enthusiasm is one of the key qualities! It's more important than degrees. Cultivating enthusiasm is an art. It's about getting better at seeing the beauty around you and within the people that you encounter." He describes the Greek origins of the word enthusiasm. "En" meaning "in", and "Theo" meaning "God". God within!

Michael views the work of a Rediscovery camp as perhaps the most important thing a youth worker can participate in. "Rediscovery attracts people because it delivers. It contains the rite of passage to adulthood. It is the oldest process, the oldest journey. If you could just train people to be able to run and sustain Rediscovery camps in their community you would be doing a lot."

Training Youth Workers

"There are two sides to this work. They could be described as the art of the report and the art of the drum. You need both." The art of the report includes such things as program

development and management, technical skills and qualifications. The art of the drum has to do with cultural awareness, healing and personal qualities and values. *"The training process should start with people taking a thorough look at themselves and their own skills. People need to build a curriculum, a learning path, that reflects the areas that they need to develop. It's like weight training. You don't just exercise the muscles that are already strong. You work on the ones that are weak. People need to make personal learning goals, and they need a mentor, a coach who can help them to achieve those goals. Some people are stronger at the reports. Others are stronger at the drum."*

Michael believes that the curriculum should include a personal healing module. *"Students need to come in direct contact with those who focus on balancing and healing. There are many skills for balancing yourself."* He also stresses that the quality of the courses offered depends directly on the quality of the teachers. *"Who is teaching is often more important than what they teach."*

He uses the concept of the journey to describe the training process. *"It needs to be a journey. Leaders have traveled. It gives them perspective. They can see the boundaries around their community."* As well as being a useful metaphor for the whole process, Michael feels that travel is also important.

Michael described a training program lasting over two years, in which participants go through cycles of coming together, returning to their communities to work, learning and researching, and then coming together to share and digest each others experiences, supporting one another in their journey of learning and development. *"It would start with a selection process and a period of preparation. You need to prepare yourself to undertake a serious enterprise."* In the first year they would work on basic skills and attitudes, learning more about young people, community organizations, and their own communities and traditional territories. They might take part in a prepared internship with a youth organization or in a community project such as Rediscovery. They would build on this work during their second year, undertaking a project where they guided and mentored young people.

MARNI YORK

Marni York was born and raised on Haida Gwaii. Although her father is Haida, she belongs to the Tsimshian Wolf Clan of the Metlakatla through her mother's family. Tough, resourceful and determined, she has run the Haida Rediscovery program, the original founding program, for over ten years. Her term of duty is longer than that of any other program director in North America.

Her Work

Marni has been involved with the Haida Rediscovery program since 1986. The program, which began in 1978, endeavors to reconnect Haida children and youth with the land, their heritage and their traditions. The camp itself was at one point the most isolated youth camp in the world. Developed and run primarily to meet the needs of the local community, the success of the program started to receive widespread attention in other First Nation communities, and to date over 40 communities have used the model developed by the Haida to work with their own young people. *"I went out as a volunteer for one session, and I ended up staying the whole summer!"* she recalls.

Her time with the program has been spent fundraising, wilderness guiding, selecting and training staff, managing and working with a succession of community boards and volunteers. As the Rediscovery program director, Marni has also organized outdoor camps and expeditions for local schools.

When not involved in the Rediscovery program, Marni works at the local elementary school as an instructor of the Haida Language Program, a position she has held for the past two years. *"We lost 25 of our elders in the past year"* she comments. *"That is a big part of our language."* Marni speaks about the importance of the work. *"The language is who you are, as well as where you come from. There are kids who understand it, but we still have a long way to go."*

Marni claims that she would rather be called a "guide" than a "counselor". *"If people go to a counselor, they expect you to know something. Around here, you are expected to have all the answers. I wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole. Counselors get put on a pedestal, and the only way off a pedestal is down."* And she doesn't like "role model" either. *"It'll drag you down. With those name tags, it doesn't allow you to be human and it doesn't allow you to make mistakes."*

Her Training

Marni has taken a variety of training program as part of her learning journey. These include:

- The Katimavik Program. This was a one-year volunteer service program that she took after leaving school. It included three months of military training in Quebec, working as a teacher's aide in Manitoba, and volunteering with schools and seniors in the Vancouver area. *"It taught me how to live with and how to appreciate other cultures"* she comments. *"You get an appreciation for it. My best friend was from Newfoundland. Another good friend was from Quebec. Both of them were very passionate about their cultures, and that was interesting for me to learn about."*
- *"After 6 months taking introductory college level courses in Vancouver I knew it wasn't for me. The college, the city. I felt the courses weren't relevant to me and I didn't find anything interesting to keep me there."*

- Marni enrolled in and completed a two-year accredited Introductory Social Work Program, which was offered locally. *"What it basically taught me was get my own house in order before trying to help others."* As well as the practical skills associated with social work, the program included a strong personal development and healing component. *"The courses were relevant. The people who organized it made the courses more relevant to us. In the English classes, we did something locally. We applied the theoretical teachings locally."* The program also included a month long practicum placement. *"I chose a wilderness adventure program. I spent one month at Camp Trapping in Prince George. It's an outdoor program for young offenders based on behavior modification. I wasn't expecting to learn anything that I could actually use, but it turned out to be a very beneficial experience. What I learned I used right off the bat, and I have used ever since."*
- She took a two-week Rediscovery Senior Guide Certification program offered at Pearson College, which is located just outside of Victoria. Here she gained certification in wilderness first aid, lifesaving, outdoor education and camp management.
- A lot of Marni's traditional learning has taken place through Rediscovery. Every year she spends time out on the land with elders and cultural teachers.
- She took a two-week "crash course in communications" prior to taking part in an alcohol and drug session for youth and adults.
- When Marni reflects on what kinds of training she would currently like to have under her belt, three things come to mind. *"Storytelling - that would be really good. An FAC (firearms acquisition certificate). And more trapping."*

Preventing Burnout

One of the reasons Marni is so unique is that she has kept going where so many others burn out or fall away. Organizing an outdoor cultural program like Rediscovery can be incredibly stressful, especially when it involves working with community organizations and local politics. I asked Marni to reflect on how she had managed to keep going. *"To start with, I'm loyal to the program"* she says. *"When I started with Rediscovery, I made a ten year commitment to the program, to ensure the staff consistency was there."* Her commitment is profound and rare. *"Rediscovery is in my heart and in my soul."* And she only puts her energy into things that she can sustain. *"I knew that if I ever put pen to paper in Rediscovery I'd be toast. I'd burn out for sure. So number one, I don't do any office work (which is also possibly why our program has no money!). Number two, I try not to get involved with local politics. Even then it's hard and not always realistic. Number three, after the summer at camp, I relax, and go and visit family and friends off island, people who can offer me constructive feedback. These are the people I call on to give me a reality check. You need a support network. You have to be in the circle."*

The Land

"It's so important to get the kids out on the land" she stresses. *"They know the songs and dances already, but out there, they **feel** it. They feel a part of it. It's hard to be Haida without knowing where you come from, where you belong, where you're going to live and die. Otherwise you're a lost soul out there. You don't belong anywhere. At times, some of the kids don't even understand what that really means. They **know** that they're Haida, but they might not understand what it is to **be** Haida. Then there are some of the others who are **so** Haida, and they don't even*

know it! Those are the ones who apologize when all they have to offer you to eat is fish when you're visiting." I asked Marni why the songs and dances are so important to Aboriginal people. "They are vital. It's part of a story, our story. It is our history that was recorded through song and dance. That is how it was recorded and passed down. It's specific to each family, each clan, each village."

Youth Workers

Marni talks about the qualities that she feels are important for those guiding young people. "They need to like people and to have a sense of humour. They have to be willing to challenge themselves as well as others and try not to be an authority on anything. They've got to be willing to learn. I'll take anybody who's willing to learn. You have to be working on yourself. Everybody's got their own issues. You've got to work it out. And you need somebody who can acknowledge racism, and address it when it comes up. That one comes up for us every year - reverse racism."

Elements of a Training Program

- "The Rediscovery International training program is a good model. It's enjoyable. It's intense. And having people from all the different cultural backgrounds is really good."
- A modular system where you can take the pieces that you need. "You should be able to take the pieces that you want. There's no way that you'll get me into a proposal writing workshop!"
- "Ideally there would be a core group that would go through the tough stuff together. Go through the ups and downs together. That's how I got through some of my training. When you go through it with people from your own community, it makes it stronger. Ideally there would be a minimum of two or three from each community. One always drops out. I started out with two others. It was so much fun. Five years later, I was the only one left. On the Social Worker course we started with 25 and finished with 12. It's realistic to expect a 50% drop out rate."
- "It would be good to have a useful piece of camping equipment as a give-away during the course. A headlight, a daypack, something like that, to encourage younger staff to invest in their own equipment."
- "A two week introduction would be good, but it won't tell you who's who. Your initial two-weeker should have a couple of two-day follow-ups. Then you'd start to see about the commitment."
- Marni feels that the course should develop participant's initiative and problem-solving skills. "They need to be able to rig things up and make them work in the bush. They need to have bush skills and develop their outdoor experience."

PATIENCE PEDERSON

Born to a Similkameen mother and a Norwegian father, Patience Pederson lives in Prince Rupert and has worked throughout B.C to develop and support Aboriginal youth initiatives. She is a talented fundraiser, and teaches communities to access the resources they need. She also sits on the Rediscovery International Foundation Council of Directors as the Treasurer. Patience has been adopted by the Babine Nation, where her Mother Clan is Caribou, and her Father Clan is Frog. She has been given the name "Estez" which, amongst other things, means "the woman who speaks her mind."

Her Work

Patience is experienced both as a front-line worker as well as a supporter of frontline workers. In Victoria, she ran a youth house for girls who were either homeless or working the streets. She has her own company, PAW TRACS, which provides training and technical assistance to grassroots community organizations. The company itself specializes in community empowerment training, leadership training and policy development. Patience has also been involved in the design and delivery of a variety of training programs in First Nation communities, one of which is a year-long program developed for all health and social service staff in the Burns Lake area. This program she developed in partnership with the Justice Institute in Vancouver. Staff who took the training did so while working four days a month.

In response to a community wish for a wilderness youth camp, she set up the Boiling Point Rediscovery program, which is run out of Burns Lake in northern B.C. The program is now going into its fourth year of operation. Currently Patience works with the Tides of Nations Urban Rediscovery program in Prince Rupert. *"It's multinational. It works with all the Nations in Prince Rupert."* Noting the confusion that many young people experience from their mixed heritage, she comments on the difficulties some youth experience when trying to fit traditional social structures. *"In many cases they can't follow the traditional matrilineal path. They may have a Haida mother, but be following Nisg'aa cultural ways. Many of the youth are involved in cultural activities, such as singing and dance groups, but they wanted somewhere to go where it didn't matter where they came from, and where they were in charge."*

Patience sees her role as being a supporter. *"Most of my work is about clearing the roads, and showing them that things are possible. Adults tend to be very uncomfortable about letting go of control. I help to keep adults from obstructing the process. And I tell them my story. Because my story is so horrific it provides them with hope that regardless of their path, they have the power to choose their futures. And I give them permission to make mistakes. Teaching them that mistakes are an opportunity to learn rather than a reason to beat yourself up. And I'll hold them accountable. That's a fundamental philosophy of everything I do. I'll work **with** them, but not **for** them."*

One of Patience's many roles is that of fundraiser. *"Very little happens without some financial resources, especially in the urban environment. With funding, you can access training, materials...it gives you the power to get things done. You don't have to go out begging, especially for the core funding. That's what I try and provide for youth workers. I show communities how to do that."*

Youth Workers and Model Programs

Patience believes that the best youth workers are those who are still kids inside. *"When youth dies, the shell becomes the adult!"* In her experience, the best youth workers are those who still know how to play. *"They have a good sense of humour. You have to be able to laugh at yourself"* she adds. This is part of having a healthy attitude. *"You have to have processed your*

own stuff. Otherwise the kids will push your buttons." The best youth workers also seem to have a flexible approach. "You have a goal, but can allow things to unfold in a natural manner. And follow the lead of the youth. We pre-decide for youth all the time, and sometimes we don't get it right."

In her opinion, it is the character and quality of the youth leader that is most important in determining how well a youth program works. "Any ordinary program can work if you have the right person leading it. And the most awesome program in the world will be useless with the wrong person leading it. The program is secondary to the person. The leader makes the difference." She uses the example of a school curriculum to illustrate her point. "You can have two teachers with exactly the same curriculum. But because of the way they work and who they are, one of them might inspire the kids for the rest of their lives."

And in the end, the most important role of the youth worker is to connect. "It only takes one or two who really connect to be helpful. I didn't know that the stuff my mum told me was relevant until I was out there. I got off the streets, off drugs. I was called back by a foundation that I was given. A belief that I was good at my core. I look at some kids in our communities and I don't see that they believe that or that they ever had that. Youth workers have to help with that."

Training Teams

Patience sees the team approach as essential. "I don't believe in ever just training one person in a community. The goal of this program would be to train teams of people who can intervene and work with youth, not just individuals. People get burned out when they try to be the paper person and the frontline worker at the same time. It's much better when you can work as part of a team. I can do the camp work, but my skills are needed in the office. If I tried to do both I would be fried. We keep training the super-youth worker, and they burn out. They can't be all things to all people. You have to train a team, who play different roles, who can communicate. They have to work together, go through uncomfortable experiences together, understand each other's role."

Experiential Learning

Patience thinks training should be realistic and experiential. "I don't believe in doing fake stuff. So if I'm training someone to fundraise, we work with real proposals. They have to phone to get information. They have to build the relationships. I've found that to be the most effective model working in the communities. Support people through actually doing the process. That way they get the confidence. It's about being the coach. Sometimes you have to direct, but they are the ones that actually do it. You are helping people to push their boundaries, to step outside of their comfort zones, but at the same time, you are working beside them until they feel comfortable. Then they realize that they can do it. And they have to experience it. Words by themselves are not enough. So for me, I work the same way whether I'm teaching someone how to light a fire or write a proposal."

Elements of a Training Program

- It has to include a personal development component.
- It needs to train teams.
- Conflict resolution and communication skills.

- Racism. *"There has to be something about racism, whether that be inter-tribal, against you as an Aboriginal person or against white people. People need to know that to be proud of who you are doesn't have to mean putting someone else down."*
- *"Just having the right course titles in the program is not enough. The important part is actually owning it and doing it. You have to break the boundaries and step out of the comfort zone. And you need time to process. If people are learning new ways to communicate and interact, it means changing old patterns, and that's uncomfortable."*
- Outdoor programs. Patience has been impressed with graduates from the Lakehead Outdoor Recreation Program in Thunder Bay Ontario, many of which she has employed in youth programs. And she feels the Rediscovery Guide Training Program, which she has sent people to, is a good introductory program. Some of the skills that need developing are basic outdoor skills, those which come naturally to anyone who has spent a lot of time in the bush. Working with youth in the bush is valuable because *"they become open to learning. They know that they can't survive with the skills that they have."*

WILLIS PARNELL

Well known up and down the Northwest Coast for his sporting achievements and his work with young people, Willis Parnell is a Haida from the Raven Clan. He lives in Massett on Haida Gwaii, and we spoke at the 39th Annual All Native Basketball Tournament in Prince George.

His Work

Willis co-manages the recreation centre in Massett, which recently has been taken over by the community after being a military recreation centre for many years. He organizes sporting and recreation activities in addition to a variety of health and wellness programs for both local Haida and non-Haida youth. Willis believes providing youth with a welcome space, where everyone can feel free to participate is essential.

On the coast, basketball plays an important role in Aboriginal community life, and has done for many years. I spoke with Willis at the 39th Annual All Native Basketball Tournament in Prince Rupert, which attracts a huge crowd. The tournament has played a big part in Willis's life. He has been involved with it for the past 12 years, playing on six winning teams, and twice being named Most Valuable Player. *"Its very cultural"* comments Willis. *"It kept Native communities together. The teams become community ambassadors, and people are proud to represent their reserve or their village. It's something we can do all year. Basketball was a real teacher for me. I got to go to different cities; I learned to talk to people. I met a lot of people, and it helped to get me to school."*

Willis has run basketball camps for Native youth in many coastal communities. *"I try and give back to others. The camps can be a very uplifting experience for the youth. We work on basketball, but it's also about building friendship. Building relationships - that's a key thing for me. It's very important to be open. And you get to see people mature, grow and improve over the years."*

Willis has also worked as a tutor and with a wilderness program. *"I help through education, through sport, through being a friend."*

Being Yourself

Willis works to instill pride and confidence in the young people he works with. *"I have pride in being Aboriginal. You have to hold that, because it will always be with you. At high school, I was ashamed. You have to be proud of who you are, where you come from, what you stand for. You need to be yourself. That's how you gain respect. I see some of the youth really wanting to take hold of the identity. They are involved in cultural activities, whether that be dance groups, singing, carving or through their family. And some of them are really strong. Try to be yourself and your abilities and potentials will flourish and improve. Things don't just happen. It depends on what you put into it and it takes time. People want it right now, but you have to take that road that has bumps and obstacles in it. It's always going to be like that."*

Training

Willis has experienced a wide variety of training. He is currently finishing his bachelors degree in physical education through the University of Victoria. He has also attended a number of different courses and workshops. Willis stresses the importance of experience. *"A lot of my training, whether that be Rediscovery, camps, courses...has been through experience. For First Nations, not a lot of things were written down. It was verbal. Today, the elders don't write things down. They tell you. So you can have degrees, and be book smart, but that will not*

necessarily make you people smart. You can read all the things in the world, but if you can't present yourself then it's going to be hard for you. It's important to integrate what you have learned. You have to be able to speak from within, rather than just from what you have read. The Aboriginal approach is verbal. And you need to be patient. There are two things within our culture that are so important. Observation and listening. There is so much that you can learn if you really apply yourself to these two things." Willis believes that the experiential approach should be applied to the training of youth workers. *"It's got to be practical. Hands on."*

Working in the Community

"People need to present themselves as a person, and be sincere. And when you're working with the community, you have to get people involved. Don't fight against the community. Start with people's own strengths. Nurture what is there. And remember, it's an honour to go to communities and help out. You have to be very responsive to people's needs, and make them welcome." Willis also believes that mentoring is a good way to learn. *"It would be good to go and work with someone for a couple of months."*

Importance of Sport

Willis believes that sporting activities play a vital role within Aboriginal communities. *"It gives young people an identity within the community, a sense of direction. They aspire towards something, or to be like someone they admire. And they get to feel part of a group, part of a team. You get watched. You individually test your own skill through your participation with the group. You gain experience that way. And you strive to be the best of your ability, and find your true potential. You find your strengths and learn your weaknesses. You learn focus and concentration. People can gain so many life-skills through their participation in physical activities. It can be a way of grasping ideas and knowledge."*

ERIC MACPHERSON

Eric MacPherson is Gitksan, from the Fireweed House of Wiigyet. He lives in Kispiox where he is a minister in training for the United Church. Eric is an artist, a carver, and has been involved for several years with the Anspayaxw Rediscovery program. Calm, centered and observant he has the manner of a person who has spent a lot of time in the bush.

The Land

Eric believes deeply in the power of connecting with the land, with your own territory. His belief is born of experience. *"I didn't know where I belonged. I didn't know my role. I used to be first in the roadblocks. I wasn't scared of anything. Now that's a big part of my role in the community, to help on an individual and community basis, people to face what they fear. Different fears. Lots of times I'm just as scared as they are. I help people through their fear. When I was about 28, I was instructed by my chiefs to go and live on the land. I was shown where to go, and how far I could go. I spent two winters out there by myself. One of the first things I remember learning was discipline - it was written in the sky! I had worked as a job therapist for five years, and I thought I knew what discipline was until I got out on the land. Then I really started learning what it meant. You have to deal with the situation right now. There's no putting it off. It's good conditioning. Very good conditioning.*

I wanted to get away and just experience the land. I didn't want to listen to people. But I still had to listen to something. It was just Nature, but it was much easier to accept teachings from Nature than from people. It would be thirty or forty below, and there's nothing you can do about it. Just prepare, that's all. You start to realize that you're not in control. That is probably one of the most profound experiences, knowing that you are not in control. Of the weather for sure and the weather controls everything. You start to learn how to cooperate, to work with the land instead of against it. That's the way people are too. If you work against them, it's like working against the weather. It was an incredible teaching.

As a job therapist, I used to repeat myself. On the land, you don't do that. If you get wet feet, dry them. No one has to tell you. The land is such a good teacher, without hounding a person to death."

Some of Eric's earliest teachings came from his grandfather. *"I used to go out trapping with my grandfather. He taught me about trapping and the thinking behind it. He eventually concluded that I'd never be a trapper because I had a soft spot for animals. So I went out for two winters, and I said that if I got a wolverine, then I'd call myself a trapper. And I tried and I tried but I could not get it. So it's God's will that I'm not a trapper. The wolverine outsmarted me. They are so smart. My uncle used to call them musclemen. It outsmarted me in every way imaginable, it knew all the shortcuts. I thought I knew the land, but they **know** the land. They know what's going on. They know everything about the land. They live right off it and they're part of it.*

*This one wolverine kept robbing my traps. He was always just behind me or just in front of me. I never saw him in all the time I was out there. He taught me how much I don't know. But my uncle used to trap them; he said that you have to outsmart them. That's what it was like for people before. They learned everything from the land and from the animals. They learned from **observing**. People aren't doing that today. The land helps people to connect, with Spirit, the Creator. It puts things in perspective. I lost that perspective. It was a big turning point in my life; it's when I started to grow up. It's had a big impact, and it is affecting everything I do now. The things that you learn from the land, you can't get anywhere else. When a child grows up on the land, he will have a lot of stories to tell. But now the kids aren't doing that. My uncle spent all his life on the land. He knew the land in seventeen House Territories and it can take a whole week to walk across just one Territory on snowshoes. He knew seventeen."*

Training

"The land was my first teaching. It gave me a blueprint, an idea of my strengths and weaknesses. From there I knew that I needed other training. I wasn't going to be a trapper. I took a course in fishery biology. It was a program tailored for the community, taught by biologists and elders. It was really good." Eric also spent four years at art school. "It refined those disciplines. To really understand something, you have to have the discipline; otherwise you don't gain the benefits. If you don't discipline yourself, you can't bring out the magic. That's the hardest thing we have to deal with.

The first discipline that came to me was from my grandfather. My grandfather taught me that whenever you come into a camp, you leave it in better shape than you found it; you leave wood and kindling. You might have to come back to it when you're wounded and need those things. It's something very simple, but it might mean life or death. We can apply the same idea to everyday living in communities. When you're on the land it's so easy to see how clear everything is. In the world today everything seems complicated and confusing. But it's not really; it just seems that way. People like complicated lives. It makes them feel sophisticated."

Eric believes that it is hard to design a training program that is the same for all people. That is not the Gitxsan way. *"In our way you are trained by your maternal uncle. Just like the wolves. In a wolf society, a single uncle teaches the pups. My uncle knew the land; he knew me, so he knew how to teach me. We can be what our community, our family, our relatives direct us towards. The elders understand that collectiveness. My uncle wouldn't have just sent anyone out onto the land. My family prayed a lot for me. They didn't just send me off. At college I had one really good teacher for the whole four years. He observed us. He learned about us. And then he knew where to take it from there. He knew what we needed to learn and he knew how to teach us."*

Eric stresses the wisdom in traditional ways of knowing, and their relevance to the issues of today. The wisdom in traditional teachings is timeless because it contains principles, and transmits them in a way that can be remembered and applied. *"Our elders teach us about understanding the salmon, because the salmon tell the story of the people. To really understand the salmon would be like having a degree in social work."* He also talks about the need for balance and healing. *"When one area of your life is neglected, you are going to suffer in other areas. So you need a balance. A sense of what you need and what the community needs."* Above all, Eric believes that the best training is experiential. *"It's got to make sense; it has to relate. A lot of people have things that they want to teach us and share with us, but it doesn't relate. The best way is working with a team, a team of youth workers. It takes a team, because nobody has everything. I'm really focused on this collectiveness."*

Rediscovery

Each summer, Eric spends time out on the land with young people, teaching them about traditional Gitxsan ways, and showing them how to live with the land. *"Rediscovery opened up the world to the young people. It showed them how their grandparents lived on the land. They were really surprised! We haven't always had the comfortable life we have today. Rediscovery is not just about having fun; it's an appreciation of what the land is, and what it has to offer. Developing an appreciation and respect for the land, it's hard to do that in a summer camp of ten days. That's not how we were trained. Ten days is like going out for a weekend, but it's better than nothing."*

Church

"In church, we use the circle. It seems more practical. I practice our Gitksan traditions as well. They seem compatible to me. I've crossed a lot of barriers. To me the church is the people, not a building. I go past the names and the tags. How can you put a name to Spirit? People say that you can't practice your traditions and be a Christian at the same time. I say how can you not do that? There's so much hurt around the churches."

DOREEN ANGUS

Doreen Angus is the learning assistance teacher at the Kispiox elementary school, and the coordinator of the Anspayaxw Rediscovery program. She is Wet'suwet'en, from the Frog Clan, and she married into the Gitxsan 30 years ago. Doreen is strong and talented, and is a powerful community organizer.

Elements of a Training Program

- Strong communication skills. *"It would be good to work on different communication skills and strategies. Especially around confrontation, it's very difficult for us as Native people to look someone in the eye and confront them."*
- *"We should have resource people educate them about culture, to show them. We need to teach them survival skills, the traditional ones to do with food preparation and living in the bush with nothing. You've got to experience something like that where you have to rely on one another."*
- Doreen sees sobriety as important for those working with the youth. *"You need a healthy lifestyle. It's important to be a role model, to have integrity and to set an example. Even smoking is a big deal when you're working with children; knowing what we do affects their health. In order to advocate a healthy lifestyle, you have to live it yourself. For our children, the teens especially, healthy means dull and boring. Sitting home the whole time. They have to experience an alternative. That's what we're trying to do at the Rediscovery camp."*
- Technical outdoor skills. *"You need skill and confidence around outdoor leadership skills such as canoeing."* One impressive program that Doreen has observed is the 73-day wilderness guide program offered through Smithers College.
- Doreen believes it would be useful to have a number of practicums, enabling students to build up their skills in a number of different areas. *"It's important for our leaders to be well rounded. A practicum system would be just great and training groups makes a lot of sense. They can support each other. They have to be motivated though, they need to maintain a high level of commitment."*
- *"Youth workers need to learn a lot of strategies - a bag of tricks - to motivate people. You need different things for different age groups."*
- *"You can't look for perfect people. You won't get anywhere. Start with those with an active lifestyle who have some experience in the world."*
- Doreen speaks about the best way to involve elders in a program. *"When I was taking my teacher training I wished that there had been more elder involvement. It's important to be involved in an activity while you are learning, like making a basket, snowshoes, bread, preparing fish or meat, tanning hides, singing, drumming. Lots of things will happen while the hands are busy. You learn the meaning of what you are doing and the respect that First Nations people have for all creation. Having someone sit and talk in a room is one, but it's not the best way. Doing an activity puts meaning into what needs to be taught."*

- Doreen likes the idea of an accredited course for youth workers. *"I would like to see credit given for traditional things."* She talks about her husband Jim. *"He's like a professor in Gitksan traditional knowledge."* She also sees value in a laddered approach. *"It would really make sense to have stepping stones. Youth workers don't get paid much, and the hours are terrible. It's hard to do that when you are in your 40's and 50's. It would be good to have stepping stones into a degree later on."*
- *"Being a youth worker is not appealing. But we need it. Just taking someone off the street, paying them the minimum wage, giving them no resources, doesn't cut it any more. Youth workers are in the frontline. They are working with kids who may not have had ideal parenting. They are dealing with the fallout from the residential schools. Youth workers don't have an advisory group. They don't have the back up and support that they need. They need a group of knowledgeable and committed people to work with them. It would be good to have a module of the training where youth workers identify their support network in the community, and then they go through part of the training as well. They would learn how to set priorities, develop policies, how to deal with crises."*

HATTIE WESTLE

Hattie Westle is a Gitxsan elder, who lives in Kispiox village. She grew up on the land with her grandparents, and she continues to inspire those who know her with her energy, her self-reliance, her hard work and her deep knowledge of the earth. Every summer she goes out and works at the Anspayaxw Rediscovery program, cooking for the whole camp and teaching traditional Gitxsan ways. We spoke at her new home, which she and her husband are still building themselves. It is surrounded by large vegetable gardens and has a root cellar dug into the side of the hill.

Growing up on the Land

Hattie grew up in the bush with her grandparents. "There were no roads back then. We used to walk for three days to Kuldoh (the place where Hattie grew up). My grandparents had horses, and we would use them to travel. We had six or seven dogs for packing the sled in the winter. There would be two dogs just to pack dog food. We had a big garden. We used to work hard all year round. We would dry all our fish and meat. In the fall we would go in with pack-horses; we would take rice, flour, coffee, tea, and one container of tobacco for Grandfather."

Hattie grew up with a hunting way of life. It was a way of life based on generations of knowledge and understanding, from the protocols of working with animals, to their behavior and habits, to their preparation and storage. This way of life was also based on a seasonal rhythm. "In the fall we killed one bear, for butter and lard. We would cut all the fat off, and make a fire under the pot. You boil the fat all day. Then you let it cool off and cut it into blocks. The old people were so well organized. We had a great big smokehouse. We had the fat stored, and they would smoke all the bear meat. The only part they didn't use was the bones. I didn't care for bear meat that much, but we used to eat it twice a week. Then they would go and get a moose and a deer. They were worried about the animals dying out so they rationed the moose meat. They would smoke it to preserve the meat.

In the spring Grandpa used to ask if we wanted some "pork", something greasy. We would go up into the mountains, find a rotten tree and bang on it and listen for what's inside. If there was a porcupine in there, we'd smoke him out and eat him. You burn off the quills and scrape it. It's really tasty. That was our treat. So if you get stuck out in the bush, you go to where there are rotten trees and bang on them with a stick. If there's a porcupine in there, go dig a hole and make a lot of smoke. We would only kill if we needed it. But you can survive. It's easy. I would get lots of grouse, turkeys, rabbits; I would go up in the mountains and snare them.

Before we go hunting we usually smoke ourselves with spruce or cedar. You take a steam bath first and then smoke yourself. We had to do that seven times, and make sure that our clothes were smoked as well. Then you can mix with animals and they can't smell you. I used to wonder why they called us dirty Indians, because in the old days they were so fussy. They had a separate house for skinning and furs. Meat was kept high up in the smokehouse. We would use a ladder to go up there. Potatoes, berries, vegetables were all dried. You couldn't go hungry; you would just go and get them. But not anymore, I don't see that anymore.

We would trap in the winter. We had three or four lines. There were so many animals then, fisher, coyotes, squirrels. But you don't see them anymore. I never saw a weasel last year. There are very few left. The old people were so strict about the skins. They wouldn't bring them in the house. There are ladies coming and going in the house. You shouldn't have the skins in where people are coming and going. You keep them isolated. We would come in from trapping around Easter.

In June, we would move to the fishing ground. We had a big smokehouse, and a building for nets and tools -- just those. We took tents to sleep in, and just left it as wilderness. The

kitchen was a distance away, because of flies. You must not eat in your tent. Just cook and eat in the kitchen. Everything on schedule! We had two nets and we would use canoes. We would catch the fish in the pools above the rapids where God made a place for the fish to rest in still water after their struggle."

Canoes

There is currently a revival of traditional canoes on the Coast, and the rich cultural traditions that go with them. Hattie is probably one of the few people alive today who grew up with traditional canoes as a part of her daily life. *"I used to use a dug out cedar canoe. That was around fifty or sixty years ago. It was much colder back then. We used canoes and built them right out there. It took us weeks and weeks, maybe a month with all our other work. We would work like crazy, preparing food for the dogs. I remember Grandpa built two of them. One big one that we used for travelling up the river, and a small one for checking nets. You can use cedar or cottonwood. After we got it the way he wanted it, we would fill the canoe with water, and boil it with hot rocks. Then he would push it out with sticks until he got it the shape he wanted. We would boil it for two or three days, and gradually push it out with bigger sticks. We keep heating rocks and dropping them in there. It's the same as when you're making snowshoes. Then we had a party after we were done!*

Grandpa knew the river. He knew where the currents were. He used a paddle and a pole. I was so curious to watch him. I ran alongside the bank to watch him go through the canyon. I was worried about him. The currents move around. They are not always in the same place. You have got to be ready. He was talking to the river in Indian. After standing still in the current for about three minutes, he started to move.

Whenever you leave your canoe in the winter, you flip it and pull it way up the banks in case the river is high. They think of everything. They would tie it up in the willows, upside down. Sometimes they would use cedar bark ties - it's strong when you twist it."

Traditional Learning

I asked Hattie about how her grandparents taught her. *"They would make me do it. You have to obey the instructions. As soon as I was old enough to sew, Granny made me responsible for my own clothes -- my own moccasins, stockings and clothes. In the winter I would make moccasins, a skin vest, hat, gloves. And I would knit. I learned by watching Granny; I used to stand behind her watching. I told Grandpa I think I know how to knit now. I watched her, but I had no needles. Grandpa came back with willow and made knitting needles. He sanded and oiled them. I wanted to learn and I watched. I watched those two and I learned trapping, fishing, everything. It comes back to me, the training right from youth.*

One of the ways that I learned was by having my own horse. I looked after it from a colt. They gave me that as part of my training. It was my responsibility. I had to look after him, and get his hay every day. We had no saddles in those days. In those days the people were happy. We lived so simply. You grow up that way and you don't care for luxury. Some ladies worry about their fashion, their clothes! I don't really care for that."

One of the values that Hattie really stresses is hard work. Even today she is far more active than most people half her age as she spends her time tending a huge vegetable garden, preserving foods, building her house, making crafts, and playing an active role in the community's affairs. *"When I was young, we didn't seem to have much time to sleep! There was too much work to do. It was not often that they would sleep in. We would have 5 1/2 - 6 hours*

sleep. They never went hungry. In the 1930's we didn't know anything about hunger. We were passing food out. I always had enough to eat. So I stayed that way."

Teaching the Young People

Hattie goes out into the bush each summer to teach young people the skills of living on the land and traditional Gitksan values. Although a smile is seldom far from her face, she is strict about keeping the camp simple. She will not allow the use of a propane cooker, nor will she allow the young people to bring earphones or radios. *"How would you hear a bear or a wolf if they came into camp? In the wilderness you need to be constantly aware. You don't need cabins and fancy things. Learn to live **with** the land. Don't try to change it. I enjoy being out in the bush. I feel good about our Rediscovery. For me it's like being home. These luxuries might not last but the wilderness will be there for generation to generation. It will feed us. All these TV's, they might just go. Technology and knowledge are just getting out of proportion. But you'll head for the wilderness and survive. But they must prepare. Come spring you'll think about gardening and do as much as you can all summer. Then the salmon come. And the old people seemed to be thankful for **everything**. To me, luxury isn't really anything. It belongs to the world and it isn't going to last. So these kids must learn and get used to it. Be relaxed and at peace out there. My daughter was in the Air Force and she went through survival training! She realized what I had taught her. She made it through!*

Out at camp, I ask lots of the children do you miss your TV? Do you miss all your buttons? They tell me that they learn about fighting and blowing things up on TV and in their games. This is better they tell me. The very young ones have got a chance. Obedience is the number one goal - to obey. To learn to keep time by the Sun. You start making camp and preparing. There were no lights; you go by the Sun. If you don't have sleeping gear, you make a bed from cedar and spruce boughs. Get a fire going. You don't walk right up until it gets dark. Time is very important. Timing, obedience, responsibility, these things come from growing up on the land. Only take what you really need if you go in the wild. None of these pillows and radios just a sleeping bag and one change of clothes. Use your jacket as a pillow!"

Teachers from as far away as Prince Rupert will bring children to visit Hattie so that they can learn from her. *"I'm planning to put in a smokehouse back there"* she says, pointing to the land behind her house *"so I can train some of these children. It's quite a thing to smoke fish. Some say you can smoke it right from the river. I say no; you float them in water. They are hard when they first come out of the river from the nets. You wait until they are soft. And then a lot of them will smoke fish and let the fire go out, and then bacteria come. The people get sick that way. You have to keep the fire going right around the clock.*

I'm using a pressure cooker now. At my age, I need to eat the bones and the skin. I was trained to do that so you won't get arthritis. The old people used to boil the fish heads and suck on the bones. It's good for the brains. Maybe that's why none of them went crazy! We sucked the eyes; Granny said it's good for you. The white stuff that's inside the male fish, that's supposed to be good for our bodies. The fish hearts we eat. The eggs we eat. There was very little left. How smart those old people were."

Hattie is also involved in efforts to keep the Gitksan language alive and strong. *"Once you grow up with the language, you always remember. Often they invite me to go up to Ksaan (the Gitksan cultural heritage centre). They ask me the names of all the creeks. They're going as fast as they can."*

Rites of Passage

Hattie described the traditional Gitksan way in which girls were raised to be women and the rite of passage that they had to go through. *"As a woman you have to go for one year without*

touching any blood or meat. You can't eat anything with blood. You're restricted. You don't go mixing out. You mostly eat herbs and vegetables. At the end of the year there was a big feast. I was thin! It was the same with the boys. They had restrictions too, but not anymore. I was never allowed to go out unless my aunt took me out. I never thought of cheating about that. But if you did it today, a girl would sneak out. I never thought of stealing meat. I obeyed it."

Training Youth Workers

Hattie believes that programs such as Rediscovery have been very positive. For her, keeping the connection between the youth and the land is vitally important, and those who teach the youth have to know the land themselves. Many people seem to have lost this connection and Hattie believes that an important part of training youth workers is having them re-connect with the land. *"Take them out there. It's going to be a lot of work, especially if they've finished high school. You take them out there, and they're lost! You have to start from scratch. And they have to **listen** and learn. How can you teach someone if they say "I know"? If they're willing to listen, I can teach them. But if they're ignorant - I know! I know! - I'd be wasting my time to take them out. And it can't be done in two weeks. It's going to take a long time. You need to learn by the seasons, for at least a year or two.*

*Old people know about the weather. They observed everything, the clouds, the colours, the sun, the moon, the sounds. It's complicated, but they seemed to be right. They didn't need to go to school. They **observed**. But if you don't know the wilderness, you are scared of it. They play games with you, if you've never been out there. At nights the animals get together and make noise. So someone might get hysterical and go out of their mind!"*

Animals

"The animals learn from us and we learn from them. The grizzly, he's called Grandpa. He's the king of the land, the boss of our land. You respect him and he'll respect you. He never smashed our cabin. The black bear - you just walk round him. They try and figure out who you are. Stand still. Never run, they'll run right after you. They are curious.

We used to be careful of wolves; we'd use fire. If it is a lone wolf, there is no problem. A pack will follow you for miles, and they're sneaky. So you might have to go up in a tree. But I didn't hear them last summer.

The wolverine - he's a sneaky little thing. He always travels by himself. He stays away. You don't see him unless you're lucky. He seems to know your mind. That's why not many people get them. Grandpa used to use five traps to catch a wolverine. And the traps have got to be smoked because they are smart. The animals seem to know if a woman is on her moon."

DOLORES BAYNE

Dolores Bayne is a Hesquiaht elder, currently living in Port Alberni on Vancouver Island. She works with the Hesquiaht Rediscovery program, and also sits on the Rediscovery International Foundation Council of Directors as the elder. Soft spoken and humble, she is a traditional cedar bark weaver. Each spring she goes out with her daughters and gathers the bark in the traditional way. She earns a living from the baskets and other artifacts that she makes, and donates much of her work to support youth activities. Dolores also works as the elder-in-residence at two treatment centres on Vancouver Island. We spoke after travelling to Alaska together. We had been invited by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to meet with people from all over the state who run science camps and culture camps for youth. Travelling with Dolores was an amazing experience. She teaches by the way that she does things. Indeed there could be few better learning experiences for a youth worker than to travel with an elder like Dolores. During our trip, she would always stop to pray before eating, creating a quiet, still space no matter where we were. She would remember her spirit ancestors, and it seemed as if they were travelling with us. She would also acknowledge the ancestors of the places we visited and the people we met. One day as we walked through the hospital in Anchorage, she stopped by an old lady in a wheelchair, and gave her a rose she had made from cedar bark. The look of surprise and joy on the old lady's face was truly memorable.

Her Work

Dolores credits much of her training to her grandmother. She lived with her grandmother until she was sent to residential school, which required Dolores to live ten months of every year away from her community. During the remaining two she returned to her grandmother's home, which is located at Hesquiaht Harbour, the traditional village site of the Hesquiaht people. This area has been continuously occupied for 4000 years and it is here where Dolores' true learning took place. *"The elders said that it's taught in the home. The elders taught their children from an early age. We were taught to sit still right from the time that we were little kids. We never questioned it. If you didn't obey, then one grandmother would have to stay behind with you. And the old people would never raise their voice at us. They would just make a little gentle motion. That's how I was raised up. We weren't yanked or pushed. But today I see people treating little children roughly. It's really tough today. Our elders can't seem to be heard. Parents are much more difficult to talk to. I work with families and the children are so out of hand and there is so much fear in our communities. Nobody wants to speak up."*

Dolores believes that the Rediscovery program initiated by the Hesquiaht people has made an impact. *"Through Rediscovery you can see a little bit of movement. The programs are good, but we need more follow-up. I would like to see our young people really learn how to survive, to catch fish, to gather seafood, to hunt, to live from the land. They are getting away from that, and if we take out hot dogs, they don't want to look at clams or fish. I would like to see young people themselves take responsibility for running the camps, and having exchanges with other communities. This is something I would really like to see."*

Dolores believes that a training program for youth workers would be very valuable. *"I would go for it, but you would have to see which ones would be good for that. Perhaps get the elders together to select the ones to be trained. It would be tough though, because families tend to select their own, and that might not be the best person."* She would also like to be involved in the training of such youth workers. *"I would tell them about how we were raised, about what my grandmother taught us, because we were from the old. The elders keep saying that you have to go back. Backtrack some years to our elders."*

Dolores is passionate about her language, which she retained despite every effort made by the residential school system to remove it. She may be the only person alive that still knows

some of the original names of creeks, inlets and other geographical features within Hesquiaht territory, and she feels a great responsibility to keep the language alive. For her, learning, using and honoring the language is a vital part of the healing journey. *"We have to teach our children to speak Hesquiaht, to find their way out of this. Once they speak, then they start to connect, with the earth, with Mother Nature. If we get our youth to speak, then they can see how things happen but our children have mental blocks. They are too ashamed to speak. Right now they are competing with each other. The other elders that I have spoken to -- in NitNat, Ahousat, Port Alberni, Nanaimo,-- they all say the same thing. They are all looking for a way for the youth to make that change. So the youth workers in this program, they need to be working on their own language."*

STEWART DAIGNEAULT

Stewart Daigneault, known to all as B-Boy, is an artist, a bush-man, a family man, a singer and a traditional person. He lives in Northern Saskatchewan and has two daughters and two sons. He runs survival and cultural camps for young people, working with Aboriginal groups across the North. Youth come to his camp on the Pine River and reside with his family. Here they typically receive only flour, salt and tea and learn how to gather everything else they need from the land. We spoke while driving along an ice road on the way to his father's sweatlodge.

His Work

B-Boy has been involved in helping youth connect with their culture and history for a number of years. He has done this through his development of art programs, drumming groups, youth camps, and various other ceremonial traditions. He is currently helping the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations develop and run a variety of camp programs. *"With all that I know, I try to teach youth, to show them that there's different, better ways to do things. You have to sit down, use your hands, your mind, your body, your voice. Try to connect with all your senses. I find that young people's senses are very closed down, especially the ones who have come through school. Lots of them don't even know that they have these senses, so I try to touch on all the senses at the same time. So for example, if we're working with the drum, the hide it has a smell, it has a feel, it has a sound, it has a look, it has a taste. I focus on all the senses. If we're working in the bush, I just take them out there and work with whatever happens there at that time.*

I usually start off by telling them where they come from, where their family name comes, what it means. I tell them about our culture, about being Aboriginal. From there they start to gather inner momentum, they start to feel OK about being Aboriginal, our language, our traditions. Self-esteem and self-confidence comes from there. So I tell them just enough. I get them started and then step back. I show them. This is our way of doing things for thousands of years. There's nothing wrong with it. It works. It's proven. This is the path. I've given you the basic tools. If you want to go, go that way. If you don't, keep searching. I never tell them to do anything. I just put it out there for them. I find it's better that way, instead of offering them a narrow path into traditionalism. I don't find that adequate enough; better to give a youth his history, self-esteem and confidence. Once he has that, everything else falls into place. Otherwise after the camp or whatever, the self-esteem leaves again. But if he has his history, he walks out confident. He knows where he comes from. If I teach further than that, then I teach the spiritual aspects of everything we do."

B-Boy has worked with young people in many settings. *"It doesn't matter where you work with youth. It's all the same. You can reach a youth anywhere, anytime, anyplace. But there are places that are better, more comfortable. Outdoors where there are no roads, no power lines. He realizes that there is something greater than he. That's the best spot. You feel natural out in the wild. In a classroom, in a house, youth are very accessible. But there are better places."*

His Training

B-Boy enjoyed a traditional upbringing that might seem unimaginable to most young people today. *"I am mostly all self-taught. I learn from others that work with youth. When I grew up, it was in the wild with my parents. I was always free. In summer I just wore shorts and moccasins. I had fun all the time. Nothing ever bothered me. There was no peer pressure, nothing like that. Today I have seen that there is a need for young people to be shown that there*

was a better way. It just snowballed from there. My dad and my uncles were my teachers. They pretty well taught me everything I know about the bush, about living with and by myself. They didn't tell me. I just observed. I just chose my own way.

Because of my family's traditions, it's mandatory to go out for a year or two by yourself in the bush as a young man, to learn about yourself. To appreciate quietness, living with yourself. It's a tradition in this area. So I went into the bush when I was fourteen and came out when I was seventeen. I had to live off the land. I knew all my skills, but I had to find my own way of doing things, my own touch. My dad came once every month or two to check on me. He would bring one chocolate bar and one pack of tobacco. Contact with others is kept at a minimum. You never came in contact with your mother the whole time, even though it's really hard. So then you just started creating your own mother. Everything around you was comforting - the trees, the rain, the snow. You learn to find comfort from what is around - it's constantly there. So now my philosophy is that I'm babied by whatever is around.

If I have a strong group of young people from an isolated community, I let them go out by themselves, and stay there. I just tell them we leave in two weeks. I've seen the results so I encourage them as much as I can."

Training Youth Workers

B-Boy describes a traditional way of training people based on his own experience. His approach begins with the individuals themselves. *"I'd start off with the basics of being a person. I'd show them how to connect, just with themselves. I truly believe that a person connected with himself can connect with anything, anywhere, anytime. If I can produce that kind of youth worker, then I'd know I'd done a very excellent job.*

*You have to train a trainer to train, not just like you, but just like **him**. All tools, objects and training procedures are kept to a minimum. You can do anything with your mouth, your mind, your spirit, your body, you can teach, you can heal. Those are the best tools that a trainer can have. By themselves tools are very limited. It's like having a canoe but no paddle.*

A youth worker has to just sit and be totally quiet, learning to appreciate himself and quietness. I believe that youth learn more by a person's actions than by their words. You have to have a powerful, strong, honest character. Then youth will see that this is how a person is supposed to be. That is much better than a bunch of games or someone who can paddle a long way."

One area that needs attention in the program is the relationship that exists between youth and youth workers. *"One of the biggest challenges is communication; it's not all there. Communication between youth and youth workers. They might get along and participate together, but the communication is not really there. That's one of the biggest challenges I see today. Sitting down and talking with young people. It's hard to work when you don't know what's going on.*

A natural way of training is the best. A natural way of training crosses all boundaries. It could be in Malaysia, Indonesia, anywhere. You have to connect with your own culture. Let people make their own decisions about what they will do next. A practicum would work. Trainees have to pick their own way, and not just have one set way of working with youth. We are all individuals."

Selection

"If you start training with character, then the characters will choose themselves. I would start by sitting for two days of stillness. They will choose themselves. You have no part in choosing at all. I believe that two or more days of quietness are adequate. Character development has to be the core around which everything else is built. You can give a youth

worker all the training techniques in the world. If they have no character it's no use, because a youth works mostly on feel, on emotion. Because that's all he knows. If he sees anger in your eyes, he won't listen to you. So there should be initial tests - two to four days of silence. And they need to get familiar with the course; to know what they're getting into."

Knowing what you are getting into includes understanding the responsibility of working with young people. B-Boy stresses the importance of this. *"When you work with youth, you have to take it very seriously. Every word, every action counts. **Everything**. You can't just get up and say and teach all kinds of things. You have to be very careful and dedicated. If not, go do something else -- go flip hamburgers"*.

Involving Traditional People in the Program

"I've never really seen a respectful partnership between a college and traditional people. There needs to be a scheduled spot just for traditional teachings and activities. Constantly, not off and on. It needs to be ongoing so people know it's a serious thing. You could give credit for participation or attendance. Beyond that it's un-markable. Do it in a respectful way. Make a special space for it. Traditional people can fix it up the way that suits them the best. Just like a sweat, simple, basic. And then tear it down when you leave, and leave no trace."

Best Programs

B-Boy has traveled widely, and some of the best training programs that he has seen have been Tony Robbins' workshops. For a youth program to be successful, he stresses that there has to be community involvement. *"The best programs are the ones where the community gets involved. Where everyone pitches in and lends a helping hand, maybe gives a fish knife, garbage bags. Outdoor education programs that involve everybody deal with whole families in a healthy, positive way. Taking whole families out at the same time. Youth workers should be trained to involve the whole community. To involve as many people as you possibly can involve, the RCMP, local businesses, absolutely everyone."*

Many college courses tend to be filled with students who are of the same age and who train together. B-Boy believes that this is not the best way. *"Try to look at all ages, 25-40, 40-60. Try to mix them up. Don't just have 25 year olds, or just 18 year olds. Mix them up so that everyone learns from everyone. It's better to have an 18 year old and a 50 year old rather than two 18 year olds. Try to mismatch it as much as you can, males, females."*

KIM HAXTON

Kim Haxton is an Ojibway woman from central Ontario. She has worked in a variety of cultural and outdoor Aboriginal youth programs in both Ontario and, in recent years, British Columbia. She is truly at home in the bush, and when we spoke, she had just spent two months looking after a remote camp for the Nuxalk people of Bella Coola, where she is helping to set up a family healing camp. Kim was just preparing to fly to Nepal, where she travels each winter to study with a healer who has been teaching her bodywork and other skills of balancing.

Her Work

Most recently Kim has been working in conjunction with the Nuxalk Nation developing a family healing camp. She has also just completed writing a series of proposals seeking funding for another year round program. Kim previously worked as a guide at the Chako Kunamost Rediscovery program in Bella Coola and was the first director of the Boiling Point Rediscovery program with the Babine Nation. In addition to running this program for two years, she helped build the camp, develop it, and train the youth who worked there. Kim has also worked as an instructor for the Rediscovery International Foundation.

She has worked in the school system as a tutor for band children, and has developed a cross-cultural, outdoor, experiential educational six-week program for school children from primary through to grade three. Kim also worked with the multi-cultural association in Thunder Bay for two years helping youth from remote communities manage the transition when they attended school in the city. *"I helped the kids from Northern Reserves, rural bush kids, to integrate into school, into their host families and to get a street sense."*

She has done a variety of contract-work as a wilderness guide, and for the past two years has worked with a youth agency running a therapeutic wilderness mentoring program. She works one on one with youth who typically stay with her for up to six months. Kim also spent seven years with the Canadian Ski Patrol, and in addition to her duties as a ski patroller, she has worked as an instructor.

Her Training

Kim spent five years at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, getting her degree in Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism. During that time she focussed on acquiring a variety of technical outdoor skills and certifications, in addition to understanding the therapeutic aspects of outdoor education. *"I learned a lot of skills. I got my instructors tickets in things like skiing, paddling, winter camping, white water, survival, wilderness first aid, things like that. And I studied the ways that people have used therapeutic recreation with youth and the long term effects of wilderness-type programs."* The program certainly had its challenges. *"I was the only Native person in the program and I was ostracized by the other Native people at the University. I was not doing something traditional, like teaching, social work, Native studies, things like that. I was hanging out with a lot of white people and I was doing something different. But it's paid off, because I get to work where my heart is."*

Kim's life really changed after completing of a long journey she undertook from Peace River, Alberta to Bella Coola on the coast -- she paddled 1600 kilometers and hiked 400. *"That journey gave me my first real glimpse of cultural protocol and I realized that traditional outdoor education programs have a really hard time with protocol. They can be very invasive. Programs that have a very gung-ho, go, go, go, approach, don't really work for a lot of Native people. There is a role for pushing your limits. But it needs to start from a place of cultural understanding."*

Kim's search for ways to combine outdoor education with cultural principles led her to communities who had developed their own Rediscovery programs. *"The difference about Rediscovery was the spiritual component. You don't teach it to youth. You just get them out there, and create experiences for them. Then they understand. That whole philosophy has become my lifestyle now, and I work each year helping kids to get back to the elders, back to the land. That has been my biggest teaching. Meeting people who are really doing it, and working with them to take the children back to the land. People have to open up their eyes and empower themselves. The kids are so caught up in pop culture and they have lost their way of being on the land. And that's the only thing that's ever going to be really stable. That's the teaching."*

The Task of Native Youth Workers

"You need to work in the school system. The kids spend so much time there, and in my experience in communities all over northern B.C., it's not meeting their needs right now. I see kids who are not making the grade at school - they are failing. But how many other kids have shot a bear or a moose when they were ten, and felt its spirit pass through their hands? How many have known the experience of traditional family and community? There are other ways of learning. I feel that youth workers should be involved in the evolution of the school system, especially in northern communities. I see lots of systemic racism. The kids don't say anything, they make trouble during ordinary classes, and many teachers can't understand why the kids don't learn at a desk. I've had teachers come out to camp, and see the same children in a totally different setting, where they are open. The arts and culture are so important. So it's important for youth workers to keep that philosophy alive, visible, in camps and on the land. They need to bring home the responsibility of that"

Working with the realities of a community, Kim believes, is one of the largest tasks a youth worker must face. *"A youth worker has to be able to involve the community. If they are alone, then they burn out. And they have to be able to steer through the family squabbles and the community politics."*

Training Youth Workers

"You need to have a program that can allow people to be in their own community, and then come together, perhaps for one week a month, along with a distance component. It's important to keep it at a community level. The participants have to have the support of their community, if that's where they're going to be working. The trick is applying their learning on an on-going basis. Building up a repertoire of practical skills that have been tested, as they go along."

Kim sees a need for a team approach. *"Although many communities are crying out, even for just one youth worker, sending just one person **out** for training can be hard. Other people get jealous, and then they have an even harder task when they return. You need to train a team. One person can't do everything; a group can do so much more. Your team needs to have someone in charge who's not political, who can access funding. Then the youth workers themselves, they're the two or three people in the community who the kids actually go to already. You need more than one, because of family issues. If it's just on one or two people's shoulders, they run out of steam. You need to understand the needs of a whole community, not just a single youth worker."*

- **Outdoor Skills.** *"They need their technical outdoor skills, and the ability and mindset to look after themselves and ten other people -- the idea of being responsible for the lives of other people. They need to learn health and safety standards. You should teach these extremely so they will be used at an acceptable level. Above all, they need to learn about the*

wilderness themselves. They need to go on that spiritual journey. It's not just about the skills, but the *experiences*."

- **Communication Skills.** Kim really stresses the importance of effective communication skills. *"It covers everything" she says. "Counseling troubled participants, being impartial and not taking sides, being able to phone up a logging company and ask for a donation. It's oral and written. How to get funding, in-kind donations, volunteers. They need to know how to communicate with elders and facilitate their involvement and participation. They may also need to know how to say no to some elders. Above all, they need to learn how to get the youth empowered, instead of doing everything for the youth. I see lots of youth workers where the youth just take and take. Training people in these skills should be based around actually doing something. It shouldn't be fake. It should be experiential and realistic."*

- **Teaching Outdoor Skills.** Kim believes that an outdoor leadership course should consist of the following four components.
 1. Basic outdoor skills: Students would become proficient in the overall planning and organization of an outdoors trip. They would learn how to, for example, dress for the elements, prepare food, navigate and canoe. Basic first aid would also be taught. The importance of maintaining a healthy group dynamic would be a predominant theme.
 2. A winter component: Students would apply basic outdoor skills in a winter environment. Under such conditions they would also learn how to build winter shelters, to read animal tracks, and to cope with extreme temperatures. Students would be required to lead expeditions or be part of a co-ed group consisting of 4-5 of their classmates. Although a guide would accompany student groups, students should learn how to face any challenge that they may encounter outdoors.
 3. Working with elders, especially bush elders: Under the guidance of the elders students would learn about territorial plants and tress in addition to the overall philosophy of the bush. They would also be taught to listen. The importance of "collectivity" and "community" would be stressed. Students may need to look at how they behave socially and how such behaviors influence group dynamics.
 4. A final outdoors trip, significant enough in nature to be considered a "rite of passage: A voluntary month-long solo expedition would serve as a good example. This "rite of passage" could be pursued with others.

- **Culture.** Kim believes that youth workers need to learn about their own cultures. *"You need to research the history of your own people. And from there, you need to learn how to develop a program with your culture as the foundation. To work with the cultural protocols. You need to go and listen to the elders, all the elders, not just your own grandma. When we were developing the Boiling Point Rediscovery program, I went on a journey around Babine Lake with 12 elders who were involved. I sat with them at night. They showed me the area. You need to get the youth directly involved with the elders."*

RUPERT ARCAND

Rupert Arcand is Cree from the Alexander First Nation. He has over 20 years experience working with healing and development initiatives. He is currently the director of Yellowhead Community Corrections. This position requires that he be responsible for justice initiatives in five of Alberta's Aboriginal communities. Probation services, community-based initiatives, sentencing circles and crime prevention are justice services and strategies that receive special consideration. Rupert has a particular interest in youth initiatives. He is married with two children.

Listening to Young People

"We expect kids to behave, to listen, to go to school, to watch their siblings, to be a good person. We have our own vision and aspiration for them, and get upset and angry when the kids don't want to live up to that and act out. We don't spend the time really listening to them, listening to who they want to be. If we're not willing to spend the time really listening to them, then they act out. They are talking to us loud and clear.

Kids are powerless; they don't have a lot of authority, so they act out. A lot of the kids that come to us as young offenders, I ask them why they fight. One young person said it clearly. If you sit quiet and ask for things, no one listens. If you fight and scream and hit, then they listen. Young and old, they listen. So you are aggressive. Then even just the threat is enough to make people pay attention to you. That way worked for them. It made things happen, right now. Because they have also learned, that if someone tells you they will do something, and it doesn't happen right away, it probably won't happen at all. Kids know about the genuineness of people.

So with kids who are in trouble with the law, it's not about fixing the kids. We have to ask why they are doing that. They are speaking out. They are not bad people. I look at their lifestyles, their upbringing, and every one of them has gone through a tremendous amount of loss, of abuse, of no one being there for them. And we wonder why they act out? I'm not going to just react to the surface of what's happening. It's a reflection of what's going on in the community."

Children's Rights

"I've thought about this. As a young person I saw inconsistencies in my community. Someone might be drunk, fighting and swearing, cheating on his wife. Then the next day he's in charge of a ceremony that everyone says is sacred and I had a hard time with that. As a child I had a right, being born into those traditions, my birthright, that those things weren't there, that the adults and the elders had the responsibility to shield me from those things until I was old enough to make sense of them. I had the right to expect that. Kids have the right to expect that we will teach them our ways, our language. And they have the right to be respected for the sacred things that they are, and that they are going to be, to be safe and protected.

Children have the right to be disciplined and to have some structure in their lives. That's how they make sense of things. There's an absence of that in our communities compared to before when there was a strict structure. Sometimes that was inflexible but there was goodness in that. Today it is very loose. I see children from our community who have been fostered out. They had structure in those placements, whether they liked it or not. They come back to the reserve when they are fifteen or so. All of them say the same thing. You stay out late and no one even notices. They have a hard time making sense of things and they get lost. So they end up getting structure from their probation officers. It's a family role that we are playing.

Sometimes the things that are really damaging to the kids, and to us as Indian people, are that the very things that could unite us and bring us together, are the same things that keep us apart, good and bad medicine. We don't even talk about that. If there is an old person, with bad medicine, who is abusing the kids, people won't say anything. But they will jump on another person for the same thing. It keeps us to ourselves and yet the teachings are inside us, and they could unite us. Even the kids who are getting in trouble with the law, they are still afraid of it. They still respect it. Kids have the right to be who they are. We take away from their creativity by narrowing down who they are and should be. As opposed to allowing them to become who they want to become"

Rupert tells a story about bees to illustrate the importance of allowing children to follow their own path. *"The bees leave a trail from the flowers back to the hive. They wander aimlessly to find the flowers - they don't just follow a straight track. That's how they find new caches and survive, but we get our kids to follow a single way, and we take away from them."*

I asked Rupert about the traditional perspective on child rights. *"In my understanding, I don't know if you'd call it rights, but adults had obligations to the whole, and as such carried out those functions. I don't know if you'd call that rights. The rights to survive, oneness with the community, with nature, with the Creator. In today's age, we have laws and rights. Certain things have to be provided. These rights only mean something when they are acted upon. We only seem to use them when they have been broken."*

The Best Programs

"The more I spend time with elders and get more clarity about why they do, I realize that for them it's not the fear of breaking those laws or not fulfilling obligations to young people and the consequences that come from that. It's the fear they have for not fulfilling their reason for being here. The greater price that they have to pay, the responsibility to their ancestors, the ones that they will have to face in the life beyond and the future generations, not in a court of law. There's so much strength in that. So the best youth programs are processes that come from connectedness, to community, to future and past generations, future spirits. Not only the here and now. And any program depends on the interpretation of those doing it. You don't have a program if you don't have a person coming from that place. They are the program."

Rupert has seen a lot of different programs and initiatives come and go over the years. "Too many!" he comments. *"The ones that seem to have had the most impact, in the long term*

view, are the ones that help people cut through the bullshit and help them become accountable. That get past the rationalizations of why they do what they do, and provide a mirror. Those have the largest impact on people, including youth. Old people work like that."

Rupert uses an example from his work to show how seeing your own life clearly can have a dramatic impact on someone. *"I did a pre-sentence report on a sixteen year old. He had a long record. He was always in trouble. I was wondering if we'd ever reach this guy. He had no support from his family. He'd been through the whole system. We're supposed to be unbiased in these reports. There are parameters. You have to talk to family members, the school, so that the court can get an idea of who they are so they can do an appropriate sentence. Well I did a lot of digging. I talked to the young man - about his life, the good parts and the bad parts, about his family, about growing up, about how he sees the world. I talked to the parents, the grandparents, the family, community members, teachers, the school counselor, his friends. I looked at his criminal past. I asked him questions about it. When I was done it looked like a book! I sat down with him and told him that I'd finished and that it had to go to the court. I told him that I wanted him to read it and he did. He read about the loss of his younger brother, the feelings of being removed from the home. His view, the mother's view, the child welfare worker's view. He looked at it. Sometimes he cried. He told me he'd never seen his life like that. After that I used to visit him every week. I'd sit and talk with him - not about the conditions of his probation order, but about how's it going. We'd just walk and talk about different things. After that kid got out of probation five years ago, he has never been in trouble again. He went to school; he has a family now. He's pretty happy. He's going to counselling now - he told me he thinks he needs to do that for himself. I can't say that one thing made the change, but it provided a mirror for him."*

For Rupert, one of the lessons from this story is to think beyond being just a program. *"Often programs today are playing the role of the traditional family. The traditional family has been broken in so many ways, and they are trying to fill the gaps. Where we learned survival skills, now we have recreation programs. Health and the justice system are playing the role of uncles - providing feedback, structure and support, education. The closer those programs are to the traditional family, the more sincere, real and caring, then the more effective they are going to be."*

Inner Peace

For Rupert, whom we are inside is perhaps the most important factor of all. The more connected and peaceful we are inside, the more we will be able to help others to connect and find peace. *"There was a time in my life when I had a particular feeling and perception about things. I used to ask myself, what would I do if I saw two little kids come towards me, one an Indian kid, one white, both wanting to be picked up? What would I do? At one time, I thought I'd pick up the Indian kid. My reason was that maybe that might be the only time in that child's life that he was selected - chosen over someone else. My rationale was that the white world gets that anyway. Today I view it differently. The same may hold true for the white kid as well. Today I would bend down and pick both of them up. We'd play together and all pay attention to one another. We are humans and that is the essence. I've come a long way. At that time I felt very inadequate. I didn't have inner strength and pride in who I was and that impacted who I was as a human being, my role as an Indian. Humanness is important. I'm more at peace and I didn't have to choose. It was an unnecessary perception that I had to choose; I couldn't see that I didn't have to choose. The foundation is a feeling of connectedness, and sense of peace, of inner confidence. The better we understand ourselves, the more we can help others. That's how you recognize opportune times to teach someone."*

Training Youth Workers

"We need to ask ourselves, who played that role before? We are asking a lot from these people. We are asking them to play a lot of different roles and a key issue is to provide support for these workers. There is not one true way to teach them. Sometimes the best way to teach someone to swim is to throw them in the water. If you did that to another person, they might never go near water again. I've been involved in a lot of different training programs, as a human relations trainer, an adult educator. The elders talk about double learning. You need to really know it well before trying to teach it. Otherwise you won't teach the whole thing.

Conventional ways of selection, sometimes they work and sometimes they don't. There was a reason that a long time ago that an uncle spent a lot of time with a boy to know him. That way he could know when the boy was ready for certain things. To hurry that process up may or may not work. It depends on what you want as an end result and how committed you are to that. The process is the important thing. It might take two months.

The best training that I have seen - judging by the results of those who come through it? It's called parenting! A long time ago, before someone was respected as an elder, it was important how their kids turned out."

Youth Worker Qualities

*"They need to have integrity and honesty. They need to be aware and respectful of other's emotions. They need to be non-judgmental. They need to be careful around people, and they need to be relaxed with it because it's who they **are**, rather than a role they are playing. One of the greatest skills is being able to tell someone that they are being an asshole without pointing the finger at them and without threatening them. There is a real skill in being able to do that, but not in a blaming way. Some people can do that very gently."*

Training

"I had one mentor who never left me with the feeling that he'd given me the answer, but left me searching and questioning. He didn't give me all the answers, but more questions with which to search with. He used to say that learning to ask the right questions is important. I'm impacted by someone who doesn't know all the answers. They search together with you, and you feel more equal."

A Training Program

"We walk in two worlds. So it should be recognized - accredited - on both sides. Good people will participate then. There needs to be academic and community recognition. You are honored with that. Above all, being recognized by your own people."

ROBERT AVVEDUTI

Rob is an Italian-American who married into the Cree community of Alexander 13 years ago. Together with his wife, Carrie, he has four children, and they have worked as a team in many initiatives. Rob helped develop and coordinate a unique community-based training program for therapeutic youth workers. Carrie is three months away from completing her degree in Social Work through the Grant McEwan Outreach Program. She is currently the director of the Mabel Arcand Children's Home, a group home owned and operated by the community of Alexander. We spoke over the course of two days at their home on the Alexander Reserve.

Work Experience

Rob originally came to Canada with the Four Worlds Development Project, an Aboriginal healing and development program offered by the University of Lethbridge. He came to facilitate a six week university preparation course for Aboriginal students, which was based on the Life Values Training Project. He had previously been presenting this work in San Diego, California. He went on to work at the Life Values School Program, which was piloted at Blue Quills School but now runs privately. The project was developed for "at-risk" Aboriginal youth as an alternative to school. *"It was a holistic youth development project"* describes Rob. *"It involved whole brain learning, memory systems, the land, an aggressive reading program, vocabulary enhancement. It included martial arts training. We taught a full-contact system called STRIKE. It has a level system and involves kindness, generosity, mind, body, spirit. You earn your way into everything. So with the STRIKE system, to progress to each new technique, you needed to learn the story, the philosophy and the value that go with the technique. You had to keep your personal development journal to be able to spar at a certain level. We used physicality to learn, and it was very effective with the kids. So with learning vocabulary, we would use drama and histrionics. But when I first came here, I was ignorant. I didn't understand the community structure and the political realities. And I didn't really understand where the kids were coming from. I was used to working in San Diego with ghetto kids. The cops would drop them off with us, and we were the last resort before serving jail time."*

Rob worked as the community youth worker, sponsored through health services. *"My job was basically getting activities going for youth - opening the gym for recreation in the evening. Organizing meetings between the youth and the elders. I supported youth initiatives. For example, we had one group of young women who would meet regularly. They called themselves "The Agents of Change." They would have meetings, do fundraising for their activities. I worked as part of the community NADAPP (Native Drug and Alcohol Awareness and Prevention Program) team. I worked in the school system with the health classes, particularly with the boys. We would have sharing circles, stuff about growing up."*

Rob also worked with the Footprints Alternative Healing Centre, a residential facility owned by the Band. *"It's an eight week program aimed at Aboriginal people sixteen and up. People come there after they have identified some kind of crisis in their lives that they need help with. It could be justice issues, child welfare issues, substance abuse. We work with addictions, but as a behavior, rather than as a disease. People come as participants rather than as clients, and we work as facilitators in their learning journey, rather than as healers, counselors or therapists. We create opportunities for people to have reconciliation with the past and making peace with themselves."*

His Training

"Basically I just made it up!" He credits his learning to his native culture, spirituality, various eastern philosophies, and martial arts. Rob quit university in the United States before finishing a degree in Business Administration. *"I started taking courses through community colleges and night-school in whatever interested me, psychology, anthropology and I honed my people skills by waiting tables."*

Both Rob and Carrie took a three-month holistic Youth Worker training program offered through the National University in California. Its curriculum included courses on cross-cultural awareness, leadership development, self-esteem, and physical fitness. *"You actually did it. It was fifty percent experiential. You worked at a high school in the day and took the classes at night. It was a good structure because you got to see it happening right away and it helped you define your own value system and to understand the idea of balance - between yourself and others. It made me realize that what I do does matter. As Phil Lane put it, "The hurt of one is the hurt of all. The honour of one is the honour of all." How can it be any simpler than that?"*

Youth Worker Qualities

"You need to have energy, to be a high-energy person. When you are the leader you need to bring your energy level up so that it affects everybody. If you have low energy, you suck energy from participants, especially depressed youth. They need to get pumped and excited about things, but it has to be in a genuine way and you need to be consistent. Youth need to know that what you present today, you are going to be tomorrow. Don't let your ego write cheques that your body can't cash!"

The Alexander Youth Worker Training Program

Rob, in conjunction with the Alexander Social Development Program, developed and ran a nine-month community based training project. *"It was designed to train community members to work with youth instead of bringing in outsiders."* Eight people from the community were trained, and were paid a training allowance of \$8 hour. The total cost of the program, including outside facilitation, was \$180,000. The program is an interesting model for Aboriginal communities, and Rob openly discussed its format and what he found to be most useful. He highlighted the following:

- Group training. *"We brought in a therapist who ran a group, teaching participants to run groups. She also taught child and youth development."*
- A psychiatrist taught counselling, group work, documentation, assessment and suicide prevention
- A social worker came in to run a social work methods course. Confidentiality issues, for example, were discussed.
- Every day there was some kind of physical training. *"We tried to expand participant's experience - they would get to try different things like Tai-Chi."*
- Cultural components. *"Elders came and worked with the group."*
- *"Lots of team-building, personal development, confidence building, initiative development."*
- A wilderness camp.

- Participants received certification in first aid, counseling and suicide prevention
- There was a three-month practicum where students worked with youth in the community.

The program was structured with one full time coordinator (Rob) and a series of resource people. *"You need one constant person that oversees the whole thing. They are not teaching everything, but they are experiencing everything. They help people to integrate each of the pieces, to make sense of the journey. It would be good if that person worked with a partner so that there were two of you."*

Lessons Learned

"If I did it again, I'd advertise and I'd take people out into the bush right from the start. I'd put them through hell and weed out the turkeys. I'd concentrate more on building a team right from the start. I don't see any other way of doing it, because you are up against such massive odds in the community." Building such a team should not only involve the participants in the program. "First time around, I made a mistake. I created this group of people who felt special - a clique. They pulled away from their spouses and friends and they could only relate to each other. That was a big mistake. You don't want to do that. You need to involve the families. The family is your primary support network. You want your family as your support and have them understand what you are doing."

Personal development is a key element. Rob puts it this way. *"You don't have to be a saint to do the job. But if you don't have your own house in own order, it's going to come back and haunt you."* He also describes some of the challenges of training and working within one's own community. *"Everyone gets gossiped about, everyone gets talked about in a community. Everyone has a reputation. So if you're working in your own community, you have to learn not to judge the people. Part of the training has to deal with overcoming the history, whether that's your own, other people's or family labels. Some families will have terrible reputations, and those can be hard to escape from. Some kind of Native Youth Worker Association could really help with the cultural issues around gossip and confidentiality."*

"The cultural component wasn't addressed nearly enough the first time around" Rob states. *"I would totally increase the cultural component. We would need a resident elder throughout the program. And also to learn about the history of your own community, it's important for everyone to know who we are and where we are from, to have pride in your culture and pride in your name. As an Italian I was taught that by my grandmother."*

Carrie believes that the program needs some kind of traditional structure. *"You need some defined rites of passage that people can pass through. Native people as a whole need that. You earn the right to be a woman. So when the program starts, it's almost as if the participants are becoming babies again. They are going to be learning about silence and listening. They are going to be earning the respect of the elders. We no longer have the life markers that we once had. But there is a universal system. There are common threads. Your own community has to define it."* She believes that this would help to increase participant's self-awareness. *"In the program, you need to be able to really see, honestly and realistically, where you are at. And going through a rite of passage - that is only half of it. You have to be recognized. A girl is treated differently when she is a woman. It's the same with youth workers. They need to be recognized as teachers; that might help with the burnout."*

Carrie also believes that the program needs to be longer than the original nine-month period. *"I would add different components to the practicum. They would be spread sporadically throughout the program. So you might work with a classmate developing and implementing a program and then learning from your experience. There are many things that could be done. Perhaps living with an elder for a while or spending time in the bush."*

Rob stresses that the community needs to be involved in the training of people, and in turn they need to learn about the work of a youth worker. *"You can't do anything without educating the community about your function in the community, your role. Participants in the program didn't want to end up being bingo baby-sitters. Get the community **involved** in the program. Even get them involved in the design."*

One difficulty that many programs experience is reaching the most vulnerable, the least accessible youth. Carrie suggests a strategy that youth workers could use to reach the hard to reach. *"I would introduce a big brother big sister component. As part of the training we would identify all the seven to fifteen year olds in the community. Then each trainee would be assigned to connect with several of these young people on a regular basis, perhaps every wee and then they would debrief afterwards. That way no-one would get left out."*

MIKE LICKERS

Mike Lickers is a Mohawk from the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario. He belongs to the Turtle Clan. He lives in Calgary with his wife and son, and he is the director of Ghost River Rediscovery, a year round culturally based outdoor education program. Mike brings a very practical, no-nonsense approach to everything he does. He is renowned for his ability to build connections and to be a “bridge” that has credibility with many different groups of people. When you or I go into a coffee shop we come out with a cup of coffee. When Mike comes out he has a cup of coffee, a donation of coffee to his youth program, and a new friend and program supporter.

His Work

Mike has been with the Ghost River Rediscovery program since its inception, building it from a volunteer summer program to a year round operation with a full time staff of three people. The program is designed to meet the needs of youth in the Calgary area, youth from both the First Nations communities and the urban population. He also works as an Aboriginal Liaison and Resource Person for William Roper Hull Child and Family Services, a large social services agency in the city. He sits on the Calgary Aboriginal Affairs Committee with the City of Calgary and is a member of the Calgary Police Multi-Cultural Liaison Team. Mike also works with the Commissioner's Office in the redesign of family and children's services in Alberta. In addition to teaching the Rediscovery Guide Certification Program, he has also devoted his time to a variety of other jobs working with Aboriginal youth. The following serve as good examples.

- He was a youth addictions counselor and support worker in Fort Rupert on Vancouver Island.
- He was a lacrosse and hockey coach on the Oneida Reserve in Ontario.
- He worked with the Owit'na Gula Rediscovery program.
- He worked with Youth Corrections in Vancouver as a cultural liaison officer. In addition to connecting native inmates with elders and their teachings, he organized a variety of cultural activities, such as sweats, for the native inmate population.
- He was a Youth Court Worker with the Native Counseling Services of Alberta.
- He was the coordinator of Native Treatment Foster Care at William Roper Hull Child and Family Services in Calgary.

Mike brings an unusual and varied experience to his work with young people. In addition to serving four years with the Canadian Army, including a tour with the Airborne Regiment, he worked as a first aid instructor and gas and grenade trainer. Mike also worked in laser optics and LandSat photography with NASA, and for a company that designed and tested missile systems. He also spent several years as a senior section gang foreman with Canadian Pacific Railways.

His Training

Mike's formal training in youth work is equally varied in nature. He has completed an Addictions Training course in Vancouver, a two-year program offered through distance education, in which he gained certification in suicide prevention, family and youth counseling, addictions counseling and conflict resolution. He also took a variety of in-house training with

William Roper Hull that included training in therapeutic crisis intervention and behavioral concepts.

Mike took the Native Youth Worker Training Program offered in Vancouver, which is no longer running. *"It was a good program. The facilitators were good, and it gave me some understanding of West Coast culture. It gave me connection to other people in the field. It was very laid back, which I wasn't used to. So that was a good learning for me."* One of the challenges of the program was that participants were at very different stages in their own healing journeys. *"The criteria for getting in the program were so many months sobriety, Aboriginal ancestry and an interest in working with Aboriginal youth. People hadn't dealt with their own issues and they came up again and again. It was a challenge, but for me it was a good process because I realized how much patience I would need to work with the youth."*

Reflecting on his training and education, Mike comments *"I'm definitely visual and hands-on when it comes to learning. Most Aboriginal people are that way. If someone told me to read a book and I knew it was on video, I'd watch the video first. With a book, I can't see how it's done. Maybe that's just me, but I prefer video or someone showing me how. If someone tells me to read something, I turn off. That's how I was trained in the military. You had to do it, not just read about it. It's hands on or hands off! So if you show me a plant in the bush, I'll remember it but if I see it in a plant guide, I'll forget about it."*

Mike traveled a lot as a young person, living away from his home community. *"Dad was in the military and I spent 7 years in Germany as a kid. In Germany you were either German or Canadian. When I came back to Canada, I got called everything - "Wagon-burner" and all that. But before that, I grew up without racism, and my parents reinforced that. I learned about the world, and it was a lot better than going to residential school. My dad went through that, and he didn't want us to have to do the same."*

Mike's training in traditional ways initially came from his father. *"I am still learning. I learn from every community that I visit or work in. Learning those traditions for me involves a connection with the Elders and with the community. I'm lucky. I can jump from one community to another without being criticized for who I am and what I do. The hardest thing for most people is working on your own reserve. If you're an outsider it's easier."*

Culture and Youth

Mike's life has involved many different initiatives to help the most disenfranchised and traumatized youth reconnect with their cultural identity. In the past five years youth from 35 different First Nations have gone through the Ghost River programs. Many of them have grown up in non-Aboriginal foster homes, or have been in institutions. *"We work with youth from the mainstream, kids who go to regular school and have a family and we work with kids from institutions, group homes, jails, foster homes, treatment foster homes. We don't label them. They all participate together. I work with lots of kids who have fetal alcohol issues or who are dually-diagnosed (i.e. with fetal alcohol syndrome and attention deficit disorder). They might have physical and mental challenges or experience the cultural isolation of being Aboriginal in a non-Aboriginal home. And a lot of work with youth who are street involved - they may have lived and worked on the streets."*

Mike believes that connecting with a sense of culture is a vital part of the healing journey. *"You have to share your own history, your own trail. Then it creates an interest for them to explore their own. They think "if Mike can do it, so can I." You've got to be a part of what they're doing. You have to be in the circle with them. Give them an insight into what they can do and then provide them with an opportunity to do it themselves."* Mike has often worked to bridge the gap between traditional Elders and youth. *"Lots of kids won't go into ceremonies. They're too afraid. They want to understand, but they're afraid. Sometimes cultural people need to go to the kids. Talk to them. In our culture, parents were never the teachers. Grandparents,*

uncles and aunts would go to the kids and teach them. Now we've got to the point where we've elevated Elders to where they are above us and we have to go through this whole ritual protocol. In some of our traditions, our Elders were more easily accessible than they are today. I think the Elders are protecting themselves as well. But what would happen if an elder went to a youth and gave them tobacco and said "tell me a story about you." Can you imagine? We have to remember that these kids are lost. Someone has to work with them - to approach them. We have to reach out to them." Mike describes the case of a young Native woman currently in a maximum-security prison, who has been referred to the Ghost River program. "She is classified as a dangerous youth. Someone like that won't try and find an Elder but they can be reached. To reach them, you have to talk to them, to understand their story first. Most kids just want you to listen to them and not have to be told things. It's like counseling. You listen. You have to be open, honest and truthful. Share your feelings right off the bat. You build trust first and then you share your culture."

Mike uses the sweat lodge as part of the Ghost River program, and cultural teachers from three different Nations have built their lodges in the area of the camp. He has also seen its effect in the prison system as well. "Usually if we're having a sweat with youth that have participated in that before, we'll invite the Elder or sweat keeper to come and talk to them about it before. I'll tell them about it, and give them the opportunity to ask questions. I always stress that it's voluntary." Mike describes one young Aboriginal man, taken from his family at birth and raised in a series of religious fundamentalist homes, including ones that were Christian and Muslim. "He was pretty confused! And he hated and was terrified about anything to do with being Native. He didn't want to go in the sweat. He was scared. So I got him to look after the fire with me. I didn't tell him how important that job is but he could participate that way, and he got interested. Next time he wanted to go in himself. It was his choice. There are lots of ways for youth to participate - getting the wood, the water, the rocks, looking after the fire, the door. But you never force them to do something like that. You just encourage them."

Much of Mike's work involves taking youth into the bush. The Ghost River program runs 10-day camps from May through September in a remote wilderness location. During the winter youth come out for weekend camps. "I give credit to the Rediscovery model. It works for the youth. They gain confidence and self-esteem. They realize "I'm not alone." They come back pumped up about being Native instead of being ashamed. Each night we sit at the council fire and pass the eagle feather. People talk from their heart and everyone gets a chance to speak once before anyone speaks twice. On the first night, the eagle feather goes really fast around the circle! No one has anything to say. By day four, it might take three hours to go around the same circle of youth! They have a lot to say. They feel heard and understood. Our follow-up programs renew that feeling. They come to an evening activity in the city and reconnect with that feeling they had. And they get things they may not get at home, like a connection with an Elder. They may learn a tangible skill from a traditional person, such as traditional sign language."

Reaching the Hard to Reach

Mike comments that a real challenge for Native youth workers is to involve everyone. He has noticed that many programs, especially those to do with culture, tend to involve youth who are already doing well. "You need to put on sessions that are inclusive of all - not just the top dogs. It tends to be youth from strong families that get involved, and it's a challenge to open it up, especially if we are working on our own reserves. Then you have to deal with the family politics. You come from one family, and you might get flak for reaching out to youth from certain other families. You might even lose your job because of that. So the trick is to provide activities that everyone can access. Joe Jack, who's dropped out of school and is doing drugs, he isn't going to come to a basketball tournament, he isn't going to come to a drug awareness

meeting and he especially isn't going to come to a cultural display or event. You have to start with where he is at. Start by talking to him and listening to him. Help him out, and participate in the help. Don't just refer him to another person or agency. Be involved. You have to be active in that person's path. And if you want them to understand the culture, you can do that without even expressing it. Just do it without saying this is how Mohawks do things."

The Traditional Role of Youth Workers

"Those working before us were far greater counselors than we will ever be. They knew how to reach people. They didn't need any special techniques. They knew what to take out and use. So I play the role of a traditional Mohawk uncle and the role of the uncle is an educator and a disciplinarian. That's what they did. So you educate the young people, without throwing culture at them. And you can't reach every young person. There needs to be two youth workers in the community, ideally one male and one female, because basically what you are doing is building a traditional extended family right in the community. That's your role. So that is what we do at camp. The youth have access to grandparents, uncles, aunts. They learn about that extended family skill. And they bring new youth into, their friends."

Burnout

Mike has seen a lot of burn out amongst youth workers. "There's a very high burn-out rate because they try, or they are pushed by their community, to be the be-all, the resource person, the educator, the fund-raiser, the counselor. The community expects you to be everything and to find everything and we train youth workers to think like that. How many other jobs do that? If you become a psychologist or a doctor, they don't expect you to write proposals and fundraise to run your program. Someone else does that. That doesn't mean youth workers never write proposals. But we should be educating communities to understand the role of youth workers."

Training Youth Workers

- Traditional Aboriginal family values.
- Cultural and community protocol.
- *"Counseling and understanding behavior. Not too much psychological evaluation, otherwise you stay there. People become analysts instead of facilitators. And some of our best counselors and educators in the world only have a grade six education. The university has to think about how to fit someone like that in -- who has the life experience of four people over. I believe that some Elders need to be recognized as professors."*
- Building a holistic program. *"Don't just do recreation and forget about the other areas. Follow the circle. Pay attention to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects. If you cover all that, you are doing good youth work."*
- *"It is important that it be a stepping stone program - that you can continue on with it if you choose. Often Native people are certified and diplomaed to death, because they can't access the higher levels of education. So ideally it could ladder into a degree and it would be distance delivered. Something like the Grant McEwan Social Work program. About seventy-five percent would be on the job and in the community, and about twenty-five percent*

would be in the college. And it needs to be experiential. If a person was to tail me for twenty-four hours a day they'd learn far more than if I stood in front of a classroom and talked to them."

Selection

"There probably needs to be some kind of selection - perhaps a gathering. Universities could learn from that. Students spend four years studying and then do something else because they didn't really realize what they were getting into. You need to share a bit of what the process is first. Take them to a program or out into the bush. Find out what's expected from you and what your responsibilities would be. Talk to some youth and don't glorify it. If anything, show them the hardest aspects, so they know what they are really getting into. So the initial selection could be something like an introductory course, and participants were selected after that.

Selection should also involve recommendations from the community. They are going to need community support. I would select five people from a community and choose two. The others could apply later. But it needs to be reputable, rather than just pumping people through.

I'd see a two-year process. The first year would have some of the general components. They would work with a program and get involved with developing something in their own community. They need to learn about their community. What's already in place? What's already been tried? Why did things fail in the past? And then get involved in designing, developing and implementing a program in their own community.

They'd work on getting a counseling certificate. It could be something like the Therapeutic Recreation Counseling Certificate developed by the National Association of Native Treatment Directors. And they'd research their own culture, and present that back to the group. It would be good to research another culture as well, to learn about how others do things. So around here, you might get a Ttsuu T'ina person learning about Blackfoot culture and traditions.

There needs to be a connection with the land. Most of our Native traditions were based outdoors. The West Coast people were Longhouse people, but their culture was still based on the land. And the closer you get to the land, the closer you get to the culture. It would be good to have a shared canoe journey, or something like that, to bond the group.

Mohawk people were an agricultural people. We were probably the most feared group in the east and people further west, like the Pawnee, learned their fierceness from us. But there was a choice, and a rite of passage for your role within the culture, and initiation. You might follow a spiritual path, a farmer's path, a warrior's path. Those rites of passage need to be re-instilled for people, so they have a true identity of who they are. Youth workers need to go through something like that. Something created within this program.

In year two, you would specialize in an area. That could be recreation, outdoor leadership, health. You would train and gain the confidence in leading those activities." Mike also believes in the value of getting to know yourself. "It would be good to spend a period of time isolated, on your own."

Child Rights

Mike has been working to incorporate some of the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into the redesign of children's services in Alberta from an Aboriginal perspective. "Some of those issues are really contentious in the Aboriginal community" he stresses. "Every child has a right to food, shelter, love, protection. We had that in our culture. But I struggle with it. It changes when you have kids of your own. I work to rehabilitate kids who have experienced great pain, but who may also have caused great pain. So many of our traditional values have been lost. The U.N. brings up a lot of issues. It's good, but they are not always Aboriginal issues. In the Mohawk tradition, you, and your uncle, were

responsible for your actions. Your uncles and aunts gave you your discipline, not your parents. It's the same on the West Coast. When you are in the Big House, you have those guys who throw rocks at you if you are talking. If they hit the old lady behind you, it's still your fault. You were supposed to be paying attention, and you might have to hold a potlatch just to balance that out. That's why it's so critical for youth workers to understand Aboriginal family values. That's what kept us in line. There were checks and balances. But today those same people who are supposed to be doing that for you might be abusing you, so that's where the U.N. comes in. It is promoting universal values, trying to include better interests for all kids. But traditionally they didn't wait until you reached a certain age when you suddenly became responsible as an adult. So the Convention isn't really geared to Aboriginal people or to Aboriginal people's family structures."

CHRISTINE JOSEPH

Christine Joseph is a Cree Metis Elder who lives in Cochrane, Alberta. She was raised in a very traditional way by her grandparents. Her passion is working with young people, whether they be on the streets or in jail, and helping them to understand themselves. She is a strong advocate for those who have been disenfranchised, and she has traveled to communities all over Canada. For five years she was the National Elder of the Native Women's Council of Canada.

Raising Children

"When children were born we used to give them an Indian name. The strong elders knew before they were born what their name was going to be. That's how they would accept this child. Even from the start they knew. And an elder would keep them. Often the grandmothers would raise the children, because the mothers might be so young when they had their first children.

And they had a ceremony when the girl had her first period. An elder would teach them how to respect and take care of herself. When she has her moon days she shouldn't sleep in the same bed as her husband, or step over a man, or walk in front of him. Teach her how to boil tea. There's an elder that would live with her for four days and nights, and when she came out, they would break camp. Then they called that place a sacred ground, and no one would go there after that. My grandparents had a ceremony for me, and there was an old lady who stayed with me. I remember her telling me to respect myself.

Afterwards they would have a ceremony, and there would be mostly women there. She would gather berries and water and they would eat them. That old lady would tell her everything about what happens with her body. Then they had a feast and each of the older ladies there would pray for her and wish her the best for becoming a woman. They would tell her what to teach her kids. How to show respect to them. From then on they were adults. It was the same with the boys. Old people would talk to them, not to abuse sex, not to abuse children. And if someone treated her kids rough, they would talk to her. But you very seldom used to see that. And then when the baby was a year old, they would have a ceremony for her. If anything happened to the mum or dad, the aunts and uncles would take care of the children. If the parents didn't get along they would split them up. But in my time there was already liquor on the reserve. If the mother drank, the children were taken away by relatives. Now Indian Affairs places them. Liquor is the worst thing that could have happened.

My mother was taken by the Indian Agent and put in a convent. Convent was an altogether different way of life. First with the Baptists and then with the Catholics. She was only 15. They married her to a Scotsman. She had 14 kids. My grandmother took me. When I got married, my grandmother was 75. The old man was older. They were the kindest people. The day I married a man, my grandparents were there with five other elders. I remember them telling me to lead a clean life. So the children won't learn anything bad from us. We were very good listeners and I used a lot of it. We were married for 43 years. But my kids weren't accepted on both sides. We had very little education. But Dad used to tell us to walk with our heads up. You can't change anything, so don't be ashamed of who you are. My Mum lost her treaty rights because she married a Scot. The convent arranged it. My Dad was called a Metis, and he knew how to talk Cree. But we are not accepted by the reserve people. There's a lot of politics and money involved. But what happens on the reserves affects us because we are dark and we look like them. Other people think we are all Treaty Indians. It's pretty bad. We get treated rough and there's nothing we can do about it. Just hold our heads high.

I had eleven kids and I raised about nine others. We were raised like that. Not to leave anybody out who comes your way. Whoever they are. But now it's not like that. Albert Lightening (a famous Cree spiritual leader and healer from Hobbema) used to say that you should

share, even down to your last cup of tea and your last piece of bannock. Share it. And they did that time. They did a lot of sharing. My grandparents just lived that way, and the young people learned by it. Of my kids, four are drug and alcohol counselors working with young people. I have three nurses, three nursing aides and a hairdresser!"

Her Work

"My work is being what I am. I had to be that. I used to work with the Catholic Women's League. I knew that there was a need for people working together to accept each other as people, no matter what, because in my time it was hard. My best friend was told not to play with Indian kids when she was growing up. She was told that they would kill her! With my children it was changing a bit. My grandchildren know how to handle it.

I studied to be a nun for three years. I didn't really learn much, because as Indian people, we were brought up to be very quiet. We already knew that. When we got to the part about heaven and hell it really bothered me. It bothered me that they said my grandparents were going to hell, because I knew that they were good people. Now I'm very comfortable with it all. Today I don't condemn the church people. That's what they knew. What I learned from my grandparents, their teachings, ceremonies and sweats were very good. I highly respect them. I feel free today to talk about that with nuns and priests. I teach my kids to go to the sweats and to learn all about it. But I think today some of our Indian traditions are abused with all the money flying around. I don't know if it will ever come back the way it was with my grandparents because they lived that. There were strong medicine people then. They didn't know anything else. There were people who knew what would happen next. They could predict things."

Christine was the National Elder for the National Native Women's Association for five years, and vice president for five years. She spent twelve years involved with the Friendship Centres, mostly working with people on skid row and in treatment centres. "I got involved because I knew that my kids would get involved in what happens in the cities. All of my kids went through treatment centres, even the ones who didn't drink. I wanted them to know about that, and know where to go for help if they ever needed it.

When I got older I worked in the jails. Even now I still do that. Most of them want to talk. In this day and age most of them tell me that their mum and dad drank, they were raised in foster homes. You need to teach them to be good parents. Foster children and people on skid row - most of them don't know who they are. That's why they end up there. It's especially important for youth."

Christine discusses the difficulty many elders have connecting with young people. "The youth are afraid of it. I'm having trouble with some of the elders. I talk to the youth. I tell them to take what's good. It's the same with the churches. Just take what's good. Don't dwell on it, and don't be afraid to ask questions. Have workshops with the youth. That's good.

Me, I can't divide myself. My grandchildren are mixed. I have Treaty, Metis and White in my family. I've lived three ways. So I don't divide them. So many young people don't want to admit that they are Native people when they come out of a foster home.

When I work with youth and their workers, I watch them. I'm trained to do that. Then I start by asking the youth how they feel. What do they want to know? There are many ways to do that. It could be in large groups or small. There's nothing that the youth can tell me that I haven't heard. Don't ever underestimate a Native person. Don't think that they don't know anything just because they are young. I say that I'm not here to tell you about your mistakes. I'm here to listen to you. To help however I can. If you're frustrated or angry, I can see that from the way you talk. So I'll sit here and you can come and talk to me, and they will, especially one on one. When they are alone, they will tell you. They let it out, and they are healing themselves that way. As you talk you can reach them. Even a real hard core kid has a soft spot."

Christine has worked with the museums in Banff, teaching people about Aboriginal culture in that area. *"If I'm teaching them about culture, I give them an example. I'm sorry that I didn't concentrate more when I was younger. I tell them about my life. They come up with things. I don't have university words to use with them. Youth camps are a good way to do it because you are living it, rather than just talking about it. Like the old way with the fire. That's how the old people did it. That's how my grandparents did that. My grandfather would take the drum in the morning and sing softly with it. He would get up at sunrise, and get us all up. He would tease us and get us outside. At nights, in the evening just after sundown, that's when he'd sing and tell stories, real constructive stories. The things that old guy used to tell us! And he used to say that in the evenings you should be quiet. Just listen to the drum. That's when the spirits go around. If someone's going to die, you hear it. You know it. That's what he used to say. In the sweat, you'd actually hear them. They'd talk to them. With my grandparents, everything was connected - the land, the spirituality. It was a way of life. I never underestimate the old ones. The ones that never went to school."*

Teaching Youth Workers

"The first teaching is I'm here. I'm just like you. I had to clean myself up inside before I could help myself, my family, my community, other people. I can't fake it. Give people quiet time, time to meditate. Time to think. We have to try to heal, and we can. So if I was teaching youth workers, first of all I'd have to tell them to clean themselves inside, to know themselves. Who am I? Before they can tell others who they are and what they are. What I would have to do is to speak freely. Like here in this interview! We're jumping from one thing to another, but you can fix that up later!

I would tell them that I only have grade three schooling. So let me know if I get off the point. If I sound crazy, then take what's good. Because I'm down here and they're up there. I'm not educated, but I have experience. Some of these youth workers they might have education, but they might not have what they need. I notice that."

Christine tells a story about sitting at the University of Lethbridge with George Goodstriker, a Blood medicine man. *"He's not educated either. We were sitting there. And a Native girl, all dressed up with a briefcase walked past us. She ignored us. I understood her. She needs to be accepted by the others. George, he said it would be better if she was herself. There was a reason why our people wore big skirts, and kerchiefs. But we can't go back to the way we used to live."* Part of Christine's role is showing youth how to use the teachings and traditions in today's world. *"The kids say to me "This is the 90's!" One young man said that to me. "Grandma! This is the 90's! We don't wear braids." He went on and on. I told him to look at how much you have lost as an Indian. It's good what you have gained. But we have lost respect. Children were never put in foster care. And we don't respect sex, because babies are sacred when they are born. There are a lot of good things in the 90's, but there are a lot of things that we have lost. He was quiet. Then he asked me is sex a sin? I said, we were told that by the church but a man and a woman were made for that. But now you see these condoms just thrown away. I suppose it's good - protection - but they're not respecting it. They should put it away somewhere. He asked me is screwing around bad? (Lots of laughter!) I explained that you can get all kinds of sicknesses. Don't be afraid to talk to your girlfriend and respect her. You just die laughing sometimes, the things these kids come up with. Me, I'm used to it! People are shy to talk about birth control. Elders are shy to talk about these things. But we have to talk about that with our children. They have kids every year and who looks after them?"*

BARB JEFFRIES

Barb Jeffries, Anemeke Wada Mook, currently lives in Prince George and is a family care worker for the Carrier Sekani Family Services. She is Chuckchee (the Aboriginal people of Siberia) and Blackfoot. Barb's life and her work have been featured in films, and she is well known for her work with the most marginalized of youth. She uses traditional Aboriginal values and teachings to help youth in their healing journeys, and her courage and commitment has touched and inspired the lives of many. Barb has a beautiful, loving energy.

Her Work

In her current job, Barb provides support to Aboriginal families involved with Social Services. *"I help with the care process, I advocate on their behalf, I refer, I'm a listening ear and a counsellor. I help them with abuse issues. I try and motivate them and get them out of denial."*

She has worked in Ontario on various community development projects, and has worked as a youth and family court worker. A treatment centre for emotionally disturbed Native youth has also employed Barb as the on-site youth worker. She has functioned as the resource person for a social work program in Sudbury College and has run the ARIES project in Vancouver, which is a drop-in centre and school for Native street kids. *"It was incredible!"* she says. *"When I got there, they had allowed the kids to basically demolish it. They had written profanities all over the walls. They had no respect for it and there was no program. I started by bringing a sense of spirituality to the work with the staff there. Using the smudge, incorporating the spiritual teachings into our work there, so that the youth could start to feel comfortable about being Indian. Youth on the street identified themselves as everything but Indians. So I worked with the staff and on our own healing, because we can only bring our children as far as we have gone ourselves. If we haven't worked on it, we can't bring the kids past that issue.*

I repainted all the walls. I told the youth that if they wanted to put stuff on the walls, it had to be from their own culture. They had to research that, whether they be Cree, Coast Salish or whatever. The teaching plan wasn't developed, and we worked with the Vancouver School Board to develop individual learning plans with the youth. They came when they were hungry. We had a lunch and a dinner program. We started with basic needs. They painted beautiful pictures on the walls. They researched their own backgrounds. And the students got up to grade ten, even though they were still on the street, still prostituting and drugging.

Part of the process was teaching the Ministry and the School Board about Native spiritual beliefs and practices, so that they could understand what we were doing. A lot of the kids were very ashamed. Many were gay, some had AIDS and they had been shamed by their own communities. I made sure that people heard their pain. I had this concept that I had to save the world. But I've seen a lot of it come about in Vancouver - the safe house, the independent living program. It's moving. After that I got into fostering street youth, and being a drug and alcohol counselor for street youth. I had four foster daughters, and I'd work ten hours a day on the streets."

Elders and Youth

"I believe that the best tool with street youth was the culture. It's so important to bring the youth and the elders together." Barb comments that while people agree that this needs to happen, they seem to find it hard in practice. *"That's because those who are facilitating the process are working beyond their comfort level. It all depends on who's facilitating. If the leaders that the youth trust participate in things, then the youth will too. You've got to show a part of yourself so that you are real. If you want them to change, you've got to show them that you are changing too. You have to be vulnerable yourself. You're not going to get anywhere*

unless you show your vulnerability. Otherwise they won't feel safe. These kids think that you want something from them. They are used to that from adults.

Traditional elders know how to connect with everybody. They did wonders with the kids that I took to them. One time I brought Jane Day Chief (a Blood elder who is the spiritual leader of the Buffalo Women's Society, the oldest women's society on earth) and some of the other Blood elders to Vancouver to meet youth from the streets. She knows my background, and she adopted me as a daughter. I connected her with a young girl who had been a prostitute since she was 12 years old and they connected. Jane gave her unconditional love and acceptance. Those teachings will always be with her. The key is getting the kids to connect with the culture and getting the culture to accept the kids. People don't accept or care about street kids.

One time I picked up seven or eight youth from the street and took them to a gathering in Alberta. They had all been involved in drugs, prostitution, murders. It had a huge impact on them. Uncle Phil (Lakota teacher Phil Lane) acknowledged them in front of the people. He honored them for surviving. They were acknowledged in front of the people and they will never forget that. The spirituality really helps with young people. It connects them fully. With who they are. With who they can be. Their identity."

Her Training

Barb took a two-year social work diploma through Confederation College in Ontario. *"There were thirteen Natives that started the program, and I was the only one left at the end. I went through hell, but I graduated!"* Above all she credits her traditional learning. *"Most of my training is through the traditional teachings. In Ontario I met and worked with teachers from the Medewin tradition. That's where much of my learning came from. My spiritual base. Those teachings had such an impact on me that last right up to this day.*

In my life, I have been so violated and abused. From the age of four, my family, my parents and my brothers, sold me into child prostitution. I'm a survivor, three of my brothers and two of my sisters committed suicide. But I never felt clean. My teacher told me that I was like Mother Earth. I asked her what she meant. She said that the Earth is so violated by pollution, raped and plundered and yet she still manages to grow a beautiful flower. So despite all the pain and suffering, you can still be a beautiful person. I've moved on now. But despite all the teachings, I still have more to learn about self-esteem."

Barb took a series of training programs organized and offered by the Professional Native Women's Association in Vancouver. Over the course of two years, this organization in conjunction with the Four Worlds Development Project sponsored five two-week intensive training programs. *"We learned about residential school, about different healing ways. We worked on ourselves. I took what I needed. And I really promote self-healing with staff. That's very important if you are working with youth."*

Child Rights

"As Aboriginal people, we had a concept of child rights. Our children are our future, and we must treat them with respect and love. It is in our teachings as First Nations people, but we have lost that. So the street scene is a reflection of what is going on in our communities."

Training Youth Workers

- **Attitude.** *"You can't go in thinking that you are better than people. A lot of our own people do that. They get disgusted at the houses, or the way that kids are dressed. It all has to do with attitude. Being humble is a teaching that we need to incorporate in this program.*

That's one of our traditional teachings. You learn it through fasting, through mentoring with an elder."

- **Sexuality and Boundaries.** *"There are lots of male counselors who abuse the young women. That has to be developed in a training package. We need to discuss sexuality very openly in the class. It should be a topic. There are lots of male counselors who have gone into communities and taken advantage of their positions. We have to teach people that even though they may feel an attraction, they must learn to go past that. There is more to it. It's like being in a family. You play the role of an extended family member. And we especially need to address the issue of two-spirited people. It's a hard one for our people to accept. That's why a lot of suicides and AIDS happens. From self-hatred"*
- **Structure and Routine.** *"That's a part of our teachings traditionally and people don't tend to have that today. Through traditional teachings such as the sweat, or fasting you can learn that. Ideally there would be an elder who was always part of the class. A resident elder."*
- **Healing and Balancing.** Barb stresses the importance of this. *"But if people aren't ready or comfortable with that, then allow them the space. Don't pressure them into it. Just provide opportunities for them."*
- **Crisis intervention, suicide intervention and self-esteem development.**
- **Survival skills in the bush.** *"Even if you're going to be working in the city, you need to do that. It connects us with the earth and everyone should have that from the beginning."*

Barb describes a program structure that she has worked with that seemed to be effective. It was the Native Community Care Program offered by Sudbury College, Ontario. *"The first year was generalized. The second year was more specific - whether that be as a CHR, mental health worker, a drug and alcohol counselor. That was an excellent model. They worked in their community. Then they came in for two weeks. Then we went back out to the communities. We had distance education - TV, teleconferencing. Then I would go across N.W. Ontario to the communities to motivate and work with the students. Then they'd come back in to the college. It was an excellent program and it's still running."*

MICHEAL BOPP

Michael Bopp is co-founder of the Four Worlds Development Project and has dedicated his life to training people to lead community healing and development processes. He has worked in such areas as community health promotion, youth development, community addictions, prevention and intervention in sexual and physical abuse, post-war rehabilitation and tribal people's development. Together with his wife, Judy, he has lived and worked in central Africa, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, the former Soviet Union, and across North America with tribal communities, inner-city projects and rural development processes. Michael has written many books and manuals and has most recently developed a Master's Degree in applied human and community development.

What Works?

Michael has worked with First Nation, Inuit and Metis communities all over Canada and the United States, and has witnessed many different approaches to youth healing and development. *"Everywhere that I have been where there is a successful program, there is a spiritual core to it. People are called to higher values, commitment, service, and to higher behaviors that are more life affirming. People are both spiritual and material beings, and we cannot have wholeness unless our lives are in balance with the requirements of our spiritual nature."*

Commenting on the common threads of successful programs, he describes a recent report by the Carnegie Foundation in America. *"They looked at the common features of successful youth programs of every different kind. And they found that it didn't matter what kind of program it was - a cultural program, a boot camp...what distinguished successful programs was the degree of love, caring, positive regard and consistency shown."*

Michael has always advocated a holistic approach to youth development. *"In the early days of Four Worlds, we consulted with elders and spiritual leaders from over forty tribes. One of the guiding principles that they shared with us was that the healing of individuals, their families and their communities go hand in hand."* For Michael, this means that to make a sustainable impact, youth workers have to be able to work with youth and with their community. *"No matter how good you are at working with youth, if you can't get support it won't work. You might not have the right support person to do that for you while you are out on the front lines. You can't just work with the youth. You have to have a core group of healthy adults around young people to get youth development. One youth worker can do it with a few young people, but not a whole community."*

Michael describes the process of healing and development that he has observed. *"People can change their world" he says. "And to do that, the web of our relationships with others, and the natural world, which has given rise to the problems we face, has to be changed. That kind of change can't be imposed from outside. It grows from within - within each person, relationship, family, organization, community, nation. And it is culturally based. Healing and development have to be rooted in the wisdom, knowledge and living processes of the culture of the people.*

I've noticed that authentic development seems to move through three phases. It starts with constructing healthy relationships. Without that, nothing happens. From those relationships, processes emerge, not permanent change, but new initiatives, events, ways of doing things. From there, new systems and structures emerge, and those new patterns become the established way of doing things. But it starts with the relationships. Most programming that comes into communities, whether it is intended to address youth concerns or any other area of community life, starts in exactly the opposite way. People come from outside with money and structures. From there they hope development processes will emerge, leading to healthy relationships."

According to Michael understanding this is important for those supporting or funding youth initiatives in Aboriginal communities. *"Put your money on the right people, and don't expect to see results right away. The first couple of years, it's basically about relationship building. That's not the kind of outcome most funders want to see. There might be more visible outcomes, because you don't build relationships in a vacuum, but the major achievements would be relationships. And relationships naturally lead to processes."*

Michael applies this principle to building a youth program in a community. *"If you gather a core group, of youth and adults, the first stage is building trust. Then they have to go through the journey that they want to take others on, which in many communities is a healing journey. As they start to do things they develop confidence, and the process begins. And people are working with such hard issues. There is a very high level of dysfunction that such a group has to overcome - so many people have hurt and abused each other. But if a group of people can put all that on the table and forgive each other, then their growth can inspire huge growth. They start to be the change they want to see around them. The most powerful strategies for change always involve positive role modeling and the creation of living examples of the solutions we are proposing. They start to support each other. They have supportive communication patterns. They have unity. That's vital, because disunity is the primary disease of community. So they need unity and a vision, some kind of vision of wellness for youth and for the community. They can use that vision to call themselves to account. And the leadership has to live it. They need to walk the talk."*

Building a Youth Program

"Youth are always ready. You can get things happening immediately because youth want to do stuff. But something can look like a program, and meet some of the needs of the youth, but not be sustainable. You are doing what a healthy community does naturally. So why aren't parents doing those things? One reason is because many parents are addicts and they are focusing on themselves and not the youth. If all you do is fill in the gaps, it is community enabling and you will burn out, because no one will buy into it. After a while the money will be re-allocated, or you will annoy someone powerful in the community, or you will just get tired. So you have to build circles of people around you."

Working with the political system of a community is also important. *"You have to connect the bottom-up initiatives that the youth are doing, with the top-down political system of the community. They have to understand what you are trying to do - at least well enough so they don't undermine the process, and hopefully better than that. And people forget what a political power young people have. They are over half the population in most Aboriginal communities. If someone worked with the youth and helped them to have a real voice in their community, and taught them to get involved politically, they would be elected chief within a few years."*

In addition to the political dimension, Michael stresses the necessity of participation, and the need for youth workers to encourage it. *"No participation - no development! It's as simple as that. Participation is not just about numbers, it's much more than that. Participation is the active engagement of the minds, the hearts and the energy of the people in the process of their own healing and development. So the youth have to be involved, and participate in a meaningful and appropriate way. That doesn't mean that they have to run it on their own. The best programs always have a broad range of stakeholders. But they do have to be engaged and have a real voice in it. You won't always get everybody on board right away. So you have to start with whoever's there. You have to start somewhere. And it's far better to start small and get the pattern down and let it grow from there."*

Youth Rights

Michael recently completed a report for the Assembly of First Nations on community healing and social security reform. *"One of the things we recommended was a Charter of Aboriginal Human Rights, modeled on the United Nations Conventions such as the Rights of the Child. These kinds of conventions can be powerful educational tools. Many people in Aboriginal communities don't know their legal rights. And once people sign on they can be held to account. The Convention on Child Rights has been used in that way. Countries have been called to account. For that to happen, there needs to be money attached to it, connected to the kinds of processes you are promoting. That's what makes these conventions viable. They are worthwhile. People say for example that nothing came out of the Rio Accord. But I have seen activities and outcomes in different parts of the world that are very positive. Policy changes leading to changes in legislation and programming. But you need resources to bring them alive. You could have an internal accord on child rights within a community. We are involved with something like that in Spirit Lake, North Dakota. The people are developing a community healing accord. You could bring together the whole community and create a Child Rights Convention of your own. You could start with the U.N. as a basic model, but develop it according to the needs of your own community. It would need to involve everybody, and it would be a form of participatory research. Then come to agreement and sign it."*

Working with the Elders

Bridging the gap between the elders and the youth is a primary goal of youth development processes and youth workers. *"In the past, children grew up learning to listen. In traditional cultures all over the world, children still do that. They will listen for hours while an elder speaks. That happens in many places. But it doesn't happen in transitional cultures, because there are two different cultural worlds. The gap between the elders and the youth is much more than a generation gap, it's a culture gap. In many ways they come from different cultures. So a youth worker is working in some ways as a cross-cultural mediator. To do that they have to understand both. They have to understand the traditional culture of the elders and the contemporary culture of the youth. That way they can build a dialogue of respect."*

Observing processes designed to connect the youth with the elders, Michael concludes that the majority have an *"event-oriented approach. They have occasional events."* Ideally there are two parallel processes going on - youth healing and development and elder healing and development. The youth worker facilitates the process of connecting the two processes. According to Michael, this can go far beyond just "bringing the elders in" even on a regular basis. He describes a model currently underway in Rankin Inlet in an Inuit community in the newly created territory of Nunavut. *"The people there have developed what they call an Elder's University. It is an elder's initiative. Twice a month the community gathers in the gym, and they start with prayers and games. Then they break out into circles all over the gym, each one led by an elder, who teaches or speaks about some traditional aspect of life - sewing furs, men's roles, sexuality. Then the circles all come back together and there are more games and people eat together. There is a second component. On the other two Thursdays in the month the community gathers and then break out into small groups all over the gym and hold healing circles. There are men's circles, women's circles, youth circles, elder's circles. The whole thing is an amazing model of community healing and renewal, and it has the leadership of some very gifted elders. One elder in particular, Opilardjuk, is an old-world genius, and a 21st century renaissance man. He speaks no English but he can communicate with everybody."*

Michael also worked with a number of different elders to develop the Four Worlds Elderhealth project. *"A number of elders said that they were being asked to play a role of leadership within their own communities which their own training had not prepared them for. Because of their experiences they needed to work on their own healing in a safe place, and also learn about other kinds of health issues. Many elders were prevented from doing the things they*

wanted because of health conditions that they could learn to control. So the elders worked together to heal and learn. One of the things that they spoke about was the need to get real about sexual abuse in the community. There is still a lot of denial and fear amongst the elders. It's not easy and it can be hard for the elders to find real support for that in their own communities. Try getting funding for elder's healing within your community. It's hard."

Training Youth Workers

Michael describes a training process with five components.

1. Working on yourself
2. Youth development issues and human development cycles
3. Youth healing issues
4. Working with the community
5. Specialization and learning strategies

"In almost all training, the selection process is almost as important as the training itself. You have to find the people who are already doing it, who are already moving. You need people who have dedication and direction. One way would be to go and consult with the elders, especially the elder women. Go and ask them who to approach. If the communities are choosing people it is important that the process is democratized and not politicized. So you could have a community selection committee that starts by agreeing on the principles they will work by and the characteristics that they are looking for, and then selects people. But however you do it take time and build selection into the program as a really important part. Think about it carefully.

Part of the challenge is dealing with the constraints of accreditation. There has to be a course content, and you have to call things by certain names. Most college courses are around 36 - 40 hours long. But your classroom could be a workshop. Forty hours is a workshop week. So if you have twelve courses over two years you would need people in a workshop for six weeks each year.

Ideally participants would be mentored out to a good program. They would do internships. They need to be out of their community for long enough so that they can break old patterns and establish new personal patterns and develop good work habits. Training in small groups, say three people is better than just training individuals. They can reinforce and support one another."

Michael believes that the personal healing and development aspect of the program is crucial. *"Healing the past, closing up old wounds and learning healthy habits of thought and action to replace dysfunctional thinking and disruptive patterns of human relations are vital parts of the learning process. There could be two parts to this in the program. One part could be that everybody goes through treatment and engages in other learning and healing activities, such as spending time with the elders in the bush. The second part is having some kind of walkabout experience, something completely different where people go way out of their element. Go to France, work for a youth TV company, something completely different."*

DOUG DOKIS

Doug Dokis is a youth worker in Calgary. His clan is Migizi, the White-Headed Eagle; his name is Nigig, the Otter, and he comes from the Anishnabe Nation. Deeply committed to the young people that he works with, he volunteers many of his evenings and weekends to youth programs. For Doug it is much more than a job. It is a way of life. When we spoke, Doug was deeply shocked and upset. It was the morning after the death of a Ttsuu T'ina woman and her child. It is a community Doug knows well.

His Work

Doug is a youth worker who contracts his services to group homes, First Nation communities and the Native Unit of Alberta Family and Child Services. He mostly works with children and youth of Aboriginal ancestry. *"I do a lot of advocating. Getting the message from the kids across to the social workers. What the kids perceive themselves to need, rather than what the system says they need. Listening to them and speaking to the courts and institutions they're in. Kids in care aren't listened to. They may be listened to, but they aren't heard. My message is nothing new. Stop trying to control everything. Let the people say what they need instead of telling them what they need."*

Doug brings a very human approach to his work, which is often a relief for young people who have ended up in a system, usually through no fault of their own, that is terribly impersonal. *"I find that what works are programs and approaches based on simple respect for yourself and those around you, mutual respect. I don't usually read the whole file, just the basics. I don't put so much weight on who the department says they are. That was then. The window of opportunity with many of these kids is very small. If you go in with the idea that they are fire-starters, or runners, you go looking for it. I start with right now. I tell them I'm not concerned with the past. I'm concerned with where you are and where you want to go.*

When I'm working, I try and get youth to teach youth. I don't always know the answers. I seek out youth who are learning, because they are often the best teachers. It's easy for me to talk about how it was for me. But they are experiencing it right now - using the culture, learning to live in a good way."

Doug speaks about the responsibility and commitment involved in doing this kind of work. *"Kids get moved around the whole time. It's hard for them. They have to keep starting over every time they get a new worker. It's not like that in a family and that's the key to the whole thing. Playing a traditional family role and traditional family values. You've got to be there when they need you. If you're not there - you may be the only one. It's a responsibility. When they come looking you've got to be ready. So I play a role like that of a father. I give whatever I can, and I find whatever I don't have."*

Culture

Doug brings a cultural perspective to all his work with young people. *"You can tell right away which ones have been exposed to their culture. They have that basic respect. Those that haven't been exposed to it - they don't want to learn anything other than what they know. They are linear and their minds are closed. The only way to get it across is to try and live it. The ones who have been exposed to it just hang out with me and naturally learn more. They feel comfortable around traditional people. Those with no experience are uncomfortable with anything other than gangs and the street. TV, that's all these kids know. But if you give them hope that there's more, then they'll find it. Give them the confidence that they can do it.*

Through the respect that is at the core of Native culture it gradually becomes more conscious. It becomes more a part of who they are. So they may not be ready to start sweats or

ceremonies, but they do start to get an understanding of the core - the respect. They can start to identify with that. And you don't force people. You can't work with anyone who isn't ready to learn or change. Our role as youth workers is to take the time, and expose them to it, not to force it. As long as they know where to go when they need it. You can't chase them around."

Doug works with traditional ways such as the pipe, the sweat, the sundance. And he speaks about the role that youth workers play, learning to be traditional in non-traditional ways and settings. *"Respect, caring, sharing trust. That's the core. When people learn from a manual everyone does the same thing. That's how education is now. It tries to teach everyone the same way. But they're not the same. In the traditional way everyone is an individual. There isn't only one way to learn the culture. Non-traditional people work that way - this way and no other!"*

I was taught by elders and traditional people from several traditions, but at the core it was all the same. So if I remember the core I can work anywhere. I can work with Cree people, Blackfoot people, whoever. The ceremonial tools of the different traditions vary, but if you lose sight of the core teachings the tools won't help you. It's a simple way of life. That's what the old people always say. Keep it simple. It begins with you. How you treat yourself and other people. That's the simplicity of it. If we go like that, it's going to be like that. That applies to the training process too. So if I'm trying to get this across to other people that's what I have to do. And I tell them, I'm not necessarily right. But if it works for you then use it. It was given to me for free, and I give it to you."

Wherever possible, Doug takes the youth that he works with to ceremonies and gatherings. But at times he experiences resistance from the system, and on occasion he has even used article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the one that says indigenous children have the right to their culture) to pressure institutions. *"Social Services makes it very difficult sometimes. There's a double standard. They say that they're trying to expose kids to the culture, but they can't let go of the rules. So they won't let a kid in secure go to a ceremony. Last night I got a call from a girl in lock-up. They won't let her smudge. They say it's because of the smoke alarms. But when I'm there it's OK. When I'm not there, it's not OK. So we teach the kids ways to help them out of their old thought patterns, like smudge and prayer. But they're not allowed to do it sometimes, so they start to question it. Is it bad? they wonder. To me it's about control."*

His Training

Doug grew up with his family, but outside his community. He has been through the journey that he guides young people through today. *"I never knew who I was when I was growing up, only when I went to my reserve or was playing hockey. But when I was in the city, it was something you were ashamed of. School taught you that you were savages. I didn't want to identify with that. But my father gave me the core teachings, respect for yourself, for others, for the elders. Never be prejudiced."*

I had read and implemented the European book of life by the time I was 24 years old. I had a job, a house, a cottage. Life was over! I knew how to survive, but not how to live. At 28, I had no more answers to the pain of not knowing who I was. So I looked for it in my own culture. That showed me who I was. No higher or lower than anyone else. I went back to school and got a University degree. The way I see it, I was fortunate to be able to do that, because of the Treaty, because of who I was as a Native person. So I felt that I had to give that back to the community, and started volunteering with Native kids."

Doug has a degree in Health Administration specializing in Native community development, which he took through the University of Alberta. Currently he is eight months away from completing his Bachelors degree in Social Work, which he has taken through Laurentian University. Doug has also devoted his time to a variety of in-house training courses,

offered by a number of agencies he has worked for, which has allowed him to gain expertise in the areas of child protection, foster care and suicide intervention.

Training Youth Workers

"I have yet to see a specific Native Youth Worker training program. There is a need for it. Just walk out in the street and you'll see the need. The key in delivering such a program is that credentials on their own don't cut it. Universities and colleges spend too much time in the classroom. There has to be a good balance between the classroom and the community. In a four-year program you should spend at least half your time in the community. There is too much effort and emphasis on theories and introductions to psychological theories. It manufactures people who work in a linear way.

If you are going to do it from a Native perspective, it needs to focus on Native history and why our people are the way they are. To understand the reasons and truth why we are in this situation. Because you can't deal with say Native alcohol issues without dealing with things like residential school and colonization. There has to be indigenous history from an indigenous perspective. I have to believe that European peoples believed they were helping us, otherwise I would walk around with hate inside. My ancestors suffered a lot. I got some of the benefits - the education. So I can use that in a balance with my great-grandfather's way of living to help young people who are still suffering. So we have to balance this education. If you have too much education but no life experience - or too much life experience but no education - it won't work. There has to be a balance."

Doug believes that such a program should use a traditional framework. *"Involve the community as a whole in the teaching. Traditionally, every level of the community was involved in teaching the next one. That would be good to have in the program."* Another part of that is recognizing the trainees as individuals. *"Everybody is an individual and they will learn differently. Before you can start to train youth workers you need to know what do they know? What do they think? Then you can start from there. You need to ask them why are you doing this? Do you know what's involved? Are you prepared to do what's involved? In the mainstream you are taught to work in a non-personal manner. Native youth work has to be done in a personal manner. Are you ready to give all of yourself? Are you afraid of who you are, of where you've come from, of what you've done, because if you are, you won't be able to help these people.*

*So the teaching may be a healing process for some of the potential youth workers. That should be part of the curriculum - exploring your own balance in a healing way. Find ways to have people look at themselves. If you're not open and balanced with yourself, you won't be able to guide other young people. Lots of people in the field aren't healthy. You **have** to walk the talk.*

This training, two years is a short time. It's important to get the core of the traditions. And you need to teach something around behavioral issues, because you deal with so many illnesses, such as those created by parents' intake of chemicals. You need to be aware of it without losing sight of the human being. Too often there is an emphasis on clinical and theoretical perspectives, and you lose sight of the human being.

You need to know the system, whatever that is in your area. The System 101! For me I need to know about the different agencies and what they do, how they operate, if I didn't know that, it would be really hard to work.

I'd like to see at least two practicums during the training. And it would be helpful to give people some expertise in working on their own, to work independently. Children's services everywhere are becoming more community based, and the way I work is self-employed. I contract my services to different agencies. You need to understand the supply and demand in your region."

ROB LIND

Rob Lind grew up with the stories of both his Kwagiulth and Viking ancestors. He lives in Vancouver, where he is well known and widely respected for his work with street-involved youth. Rob believes in dreaming big, and he has seen many of his dreams come true. Currently he is working on the development of a Native youth healing centre, which he will name the Broken Arrow Healing Centre.

His Work

Rob currently runs a safe house for street youth in Vancouver. He is an executive board member of the Vancouver Friendship Centre and he sits on the Council of Directors of the Rediscovery International Foundation. He has been involved with many of the projects overseen by the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) and he is a member of the management team.

In addition to his work in the city, Rob has lived and worked on his own reserve in Fort Rupert on Vancouver Island. He has worked there as a youth worker and has helped develop a youth centre. Rob has also run a pilot Urban Rediscovery program in Vancouver. But whatever his role, Rob sees his work as being essentially the same. *"I work more as a friend, than as a leader or supervisor" he says. "I like just being there as a friend, and not trying to play a role. I just work from my experience. I've lived where they are. I've lived on Main and Hastings, I free-based cocaine for three years, I dealt drugs on Granville Street. I know from experience about being a Native youth on the street. It gives me a different perspective. Above all my work is about giving the youth unconditional love and respecting their choices - listening to what they want to do. Understanding that they are wild and free - I can't expect them to convert to what I want for them. I work with programs to encourage and empower youth to lead healthy lifestyles, and to protect them from harm - suicide, prostitution, drugs, gangs. It's hard, especially as an Aboriginal kid coming to Vancouver from a reserve. It's hard to compete with what the street offers. I used to make between \$400 and \$1000 a day as a cocaine dealer. I try and help them learn from my experiences. I'm paying back for everything I've done in the past.*

You've got to make it fun. You can't bore them with profound statements, lessons and paperwork. The best work I ever did was as a boxing coach. The kids respected what I did, and I gave them a reason to be inspired. They don't see what it's really like to reach a goal. I never dreamed or imagined that I'd have what I have today. Kids don't see past school, their cliques, their gangs. They don't see the possibilities. You've got to help them open up and see it. Don't put limitations on it. I tell them they can accomplish anything - as long as they believe in themselves, put their heart and soul into it, learn from their mistakes and don't quit." Rob uses the story of Benjamin Franklin inventing the light bulb to describe his philosophy. "They said he had 2000 failures before he made a light bulb. He said NO! It's a process that has 2000 steps. That's how I look at my life. I like setting goals and expectations just beyond my reach - then you stretch and stretch until you get there."

Another technique that Rob uses is theatre. *"I think that theatre is great with youth. Every program I've got that in there somewhere. Expressing yourself. That's important as a youth worker. You can't be afraid to stand in front of a group of people and talk - and if you are then you can't be afraid to admit it."*

Being Honest

"As a youth worker, you are going to make mistakes along the way. We have to be accountable for our actions and not be afraid to admit our mistakes. Kids are a lot more forgiving than adults; if we're willing to be accountable, then kids will forgive quick. They know. And kids are more ready to admit to their mistakes if you are willing to admit to yours. The

reality is I didn't sober up until I was 25. And many people in the communities who promote sobriety today didn't sober up until they were older - 40 or 50. Sometimes because their doctor's told them they didn't have a choice anymore. So the respect has to go both ways."

Participation

Rob has seen and worked with many different programs over the years. One successful model that he points to is the Britannia Teen Centre in Vancouver. *"They have respect for all cultures. They spend time focusing on what the youth need."* Another is UNYA. *"I've always admired it. They have more youth on their board than adults. I believe that programs need to be youth driven."* Rob has also found the Rediscovery model to be effective. *"It promotes respect -- for the environment, for the elders, for each other. I try and develop that in everything that I do. Basically any program that allows the kids to make the decisions, take charge and be accountable. It's important to get youth involved right from the start. They have far more respect when they actually get involved in the process. It's not always easy, but it's worth doing. It's far better if the youth help to work for it - come to the funding meetings, get involved from the start - than just having it handed to them."*

Participation and involvement have become fashionable buzz-words these days. *"Everyone says it - but no one really does it. I think that's mostly because at the back of their heads people really believe that **they** know better. I know it took me a long time to realize that about myself. An Elder in Fort Rupert showed me. He asked me "Are you really listening to the youth, or are you just saying that you're listening?" Youth workers need really good listening skills. **Really** listen and understand. Try to understand all that anger and frustration, not from your point of view, but from theirs."*

Rob describes how he works to involve the most marginalized of youth. *"I like working with the kids that don't want to get involved. I learn more from them. The real hard core kids. There's one young Native woman I've been working with for the past two years. She walks away from every program. She's got a heroin addiction; she works as a prostitute. I just take her to McDonalds - we hang out. I'm just keeping the connection open, and right now it's the only connection that she has. I'm the only one she will call, and I keep the door open. Many programs have shut their doors to her. That happens a lot if they don't get the results that they want to see. My process hasn't worked yet, but it will. When she has that one bad experience - that turning point - she'll come to the one place that didn't close the door. Kids come back to people they know will support them, who won't judge them."*

Commitment

"The most important thing I do for kids is to be their friends. I'm not afraid to take risks and stand up to the Government people if necessary. You have to stand beside kids and support them, even when it gets tough." For Rob this has led him to develop a place where youth can come and live. *"I take kids in at my home. From a Government perspective it's unprofessional, but these kids have no other place to go. One elder told me that if you can't find a place for a youth then you'd better damn well provide one. I believe that. If we have a spare bed then we make it available. I've had 32 youth live with me since I left college, and today 30 of them are doing well."*

Rob recalls an incident that he believes sums up the way to work. *"I was at a round table and an Elder from Alkali Lake shared the story of what their community had been through. Some of the professionals there were asking him to describe the process, the theory, behind the community's story. He summed it up in two words. Sharing and caring. It's not complicated."*

There's a lot in those two words. That's what it's all about with the kids. You have to care and you have to be willing to share your experience. Care enough to listen. If you are just there for the pay-check, you shouldn't be there."

Working in Your Community

Rob has experienced both sides of youth work -- working in one's own community and working in the city. *"It's similar. In the city you have more access to support systems and programs, but also more access to gangs, drugs and things like that. At one time I'd have said it's harder to work in the city, but today I'd say it's harder working on the reserve. I went back to the reserve to relax, and that's where I came closest to burning out! There's so much abuse. When I went to my reserve I was really big on respecting the elders. But the reality for some of the kids was that the elders I was telling them to respect had been abusing them since they were four years old. It's easier to hide from in the city; in the community it's right in your face. You can't hide from it. Everybody knows. In the city you can live in your own little shell. I'd never go back and work for my own band. There are so many family politics. As an outsider you can have much more non-bias towards other families."*

Culture

"It's really important for youth to understand their own culture - or cultures if they come from mixed heritages. Too many programs are just one specific kind of culture such as pow-wows. There's not so much for the youth on their specific tribe or where they're from. As a youth worker, I'd rather get the family teaching the culture. It should be taught in the home. It's important to understand the protocols of where you live. But the pride comes from your own culture. Each tribe has it's own history, it's own role models, it's own struggles that they went through.

In Fort Rupert we had the kids do a biography with an elder in the community. It was the most awesome workshop I ever put together. The kids listened to things that the elders had done, to their stories. I have never seen such a connection between youth and elders. They brought the elders to a feast, and each elder would sit in a chair while the youth told stories about them, what they had been through. Even those youth with no family went to other elders. The connection went on long beyond the workshops, and some really tough attitude kids gained respect and understanding. That's something that could be done in the city. In small communities lots of elders would love to have that. The kids had to spend two hours a week with the elders, but in practice they spent far more time than that. The elders took them out on the land, showed them things. They took them to petroglyph sites, to the smallpox graves. The kids got an idea of their history and of what their elders had gone through."

A Community Approach

"A lot of what we do in the city is Band-Aiding. We take the kids off the streets, try and find them beds, clothing. The key is repetition, consistency, follow-up and not giving up. Whatever you do it has to be consistent. So often within programs, youth workers will change. It doesn't work that way in community life. The same person is always going to be your father, your uncle, whatever. So I stay here. It's hard, but the key is consistency. Over the past two years I've worked with over 600 kids. They want to quit abusing substances and so you send them to treatment. What do they return to? Sixty to seventy percent of kids start using again within a month of returning from treatment. Nothing changed. It just goes right back to square one. So about 50% of being a youth worker is being a youth worker, and the other 50% is being a community worker."

His Training

Rob has taken a Youth Worker Training Certification program, but he points to his life experience as his greatest teacher. For example, he describes how he learned to counsel. *"I was always the one who counseled within my group of friends. I never used to be the one the girls went for, so I used to listen to them instead! I became a peer counselor that way. There used to be group of around thirty of us who would all hang out together, and I was the one who spent time listening and counseling. That's where I learned."*

Rob is well known as a formidable fundraiser for youth programs, with a high credibility and track record amongst funding agencies. His proposal writing and fundraising abilities did not come from formal training workshops, but also from the street. *"When it came to Government funding, my mentor was a guy in his fifties called Way Out Willie and his bunko-men. He was a con artist and he taught hustles - three card Monty and things like that. He used to put on a suit and go door to door selling fake ads in a paper he'd had made up called the Policeman's Gazette. He had a scam with a bag of fake diamonds. I learned more about dealing with government funding agencies from him than anyone. How to get in the back door rather than the front. How to present yourself. He used to work off people's emotions. He really understood people. He and his bunko-men knew people's greed. They knew what people wanted to hear. So I learned about finding out funders likes and dislikes. With my first proposal, I found out who was on the board making the funding decisions. Then I found out who **their** bosses were. So then I went to all their bosses and I got support letters from every single one. Those went in along with all the regular support letters, and we were approved right away."*

Training Youth Workers

Eighteen months after taking the Native Youth Workers Training Program in Vancouver, Rob was asked to coordinate it, which he did for two years. *"Different people need different things. So I left about forty percent of it open for participants to develop what they thought they needed in the program. You have an idea when you go into the program what you want to do -- work in recreation, start a youth centre, be in corrections, be a court worker. With the counseling I'd show them three or four ways of counseling, and told people that they should take what they need from it. You have to create something that works for you, based on your experience.*

I added an element where each person had one day to teach anything they wanted about youth. They started by just doing one hour. Later on they planned the whole day, and gave me an outline first. It was awesome! Some of what was learned could never be learned in a regular college setting. We only used two books - most of it was hands on practice. I brought in a group of youth - a whole drama class - to act out situations which the workers had to deal with. Scenarios such as abusive relationships, suicide attempts. And the youth graded the class on how they had responded. The kids became the teachers."

Rob describes the selection process they used. *"The first year, I picked the participants. Of those, about fifty percent are still working in the field. The next year, I hired two youth for three days to help me select sixteen participants out of ninety applicants. They were involved in the interview process. I watched who paid attention to the kids. Some people never even looked at the youth! The kids picked people that I wouldn't have. People that I would have considered high-risk. Today one hundred percent of those participants are working in the field!"*

The program is no longer running today. Rob attributes this to politics, but believes that the model is still good. *"One of the real keys is finding the right teachers. Communities have to work with the resources that they have. It took me a month to teach another person how to run it. That's how long it takes. You can't just give the program outline to a community and expect*

them to run it. You'd need to go and work with the program facilitators for at least a month. And the program needs to be longer. We had it for 10 months with a two-month practicum. It's got to be two years, and it needs to have an optional specialization within it - whether that be as a drugs and alcohol worker, a recreation coordinator."

KAREN LEPINE

Karen Lepine is a Cree Metis woman whose family originates from Fort Chipewyan in northern Alberta. Her life's journey has taken her from her early days growing up on the trapline to her work today in Vancouver with urban Aboriginal youth. Karen is enthusiastic and deeply committed to her work with young people.

Her Work

Karen's job title may be Youth Worker, but to her it does not fully describe the type of work that she does. *"Everyone says Youth Worker, and I use it too" she says. "But I see it as being more of a friend, a sister, being part of someone's family, a caregiver. Caring and sharing. It's a two-way street. I teach them and they teach me. And I work with families and with siblings as well."*

Karen has worked as the First Nations Youth and Family Worker for the Vancouver School Board, working throughout the whole district. She has also been the First Nations Cultural Enrichment Worker at Britannia Community Centre in Vancouver. *"I had a connection with the youth and I'd help them to make a connection with the community. I would develop programs and ensure that there was community input. We set up family healing events, dry dances, storytelling, elders nights. We tried to create a safe place for families to come together and heal. But we just called it storytelling, not healing."*

Karen started out working with adults in Alberta. She worked with special needs adults, seniors and terminally ill patients. She started volunteering at a youth group and began to get more involved.

"I see my role as trying to empower youth rather than depend on others. To challenge them to look after themselves and do what they want. I'm not there to tell them what to do. I treat them with respect and always leave them with a choice. Kids can see right away if you're sincere and straight up. You need to have unconditional caring for them. They grow up on their own, but they need someone to process the journey with."

Karen worked as the assistant coordinator of the Vancouver Urban Rediscovery program. *"It was refreshing to work with a multi-cultural group. The reality for most urban Aboriginal kids is that in order to live here - not just to exist - they need some networks. And they get locked into cliques within ethnic groups. It's important to bridge the gap and communicate with other cultures. You have to work with the whole network, not just the individual to see the whole picture. And that means crossing boundaries, including racial boundaries and exposing the kids to other cultures made them much more interested in their own. We had a really mixed group. Eighteen youth went through the program together and there were Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Metis, Shushwap, Kwagwiltz, Kootenai, Coast Salish, Carrier, Afghani, El Salvadorian, Phillipino, Jewish and European youth. We had two spirited youth, street youth, vegetarians, college educated, drug addicts. You never know what it is for each youth. But you give them the opportunity to decide for themselves. Give them the chance to see the bigger picture."*

Her Training

"A lot of life experience on and off reserve. Our family was very transient for ten years, and I got to meet many different kinds of people. A lot of it is living and working with a diverse range of different people, from young kids to elders."

Karen has also experienced life outside of Canada. *"I went on the Canada World Youth program, and went to Rwanda, one year before the massacres. The cross cultural aspect was really good for me. I had to learn French and some Kinyarwanda. It was an awesome experience and I really advocate it for other youth. I wanted to go somewhere totally unlike*

anything I knew, and I got to experience a very different world. I saw how little people can survive on. Simple things - a plastic bag, a pen - were of great value and people took care of them. It was the best experience I have had. I worked on a dairy farm in Quebec with a counterpart who knew very little English. And in Rwanda I worked in a medical clinic."

Karen took the Native Youth Worker Training program through Vancouver Community College. She is also halfway through a two-year program in Recreation Leadership at Langara College. *"It's really good. It would need adapting for Native students. It would need to be more experiential. I was wary of formal schooling, and it was good to go into a program as a mature student. You can apply more experience and knowledge and you are more focused. So the formal education is good, but you also need the experience. You can know it, but can you use it? How can you take people somewhere you haven't been yourself? It's the blind leading the blind. I believe that it's often easier to start with the right people and then train them. I've seen people with degrees and MA's in special needs populations, and in practical terms they were sitting ducks. There are some things that you just can't train. It's easier to go from experiential to academic than the other way round. It just doesn't flow as well."*

Youth Worker Qualities

Karen describes what a youth worker needs. *"I call it common sense. Having energy, physical and emotional energy. Having compassion. Having a very open-minded attitude, an inclusive way of working. Lots of times, programs are dependent on personalities; when they leave the program goes down. So being able to include, train new people, create teams, people who are respectful and non-judgmental. Seeing the inside, not just the outside. Lots of kids get all dressed up and do things to their bodies, but that's not their spirits. People who are culturally sensitive - not knowledgeable but open to exploring and understanding their own and others. People who understand the difference between supporting and enabling. Some of these things are hard to teach. So if I were selecting people for a training course, I'd be looking for common sense, energy, compassion, respect, openness and non-judgment right from the start."*

Culture

"I'm actively learning about my own culture. When I was very young, I used to live on the trap line. I started to learn it. Then I was taken away from it. Now I'm reclaiming it, going back to it. And as I have done so, so have my brothers and my mom. For me it's very important. It's what helps people identify who they are and where they come from. It gives a sense of inner being. Even when they are going through hard times, the kids who know their own culture have a foundation to stand on, something to go back to. They stand a little taller. For those that don't have it - it's trial and error. They have an inner yearning. Some youth without teachings adopt other things as their culture, things like hip-hop. Some youth say that hip-hop is their culture. The culture allows you to be proud, especially when you practice it. I would support any program that empowered people to discover their own culture. I've only seen a few programs that do that - learning about, accepting, sharing and celebrating culture. A lot of programs get more into racism and how to deal with it."

The Land

Karen has taken many youth from the city out into wild places, and believes that the land plays a special role in the healing and learning journey. *"The land's magical. It's got a sense of truthfulness and peacefulness about it. The land touches their senses - senses that they have dulled in the city. And you get used to it. To have that energy with plants and animals - it's magical. The weather. They're able to be more of who they really are. Lots of youth haven't*

experienced quiet or even truly being by themselves, not even for half an hour. They start feeling the land and they start feeling themselves and they can reflect on things. In the city they don't do that. They don't get still and think about things. On the land it compels you to be like that. There needs to be a high level of respect for the land, and an awareness of safety. It's beautiful but it's also a very strong place. The land has so many teachings and there are so many teachable moments.

When I take kids to these programs most of them come back with memorable experiences. Two years ago, I took youth from Vancouver to the Ghost River Rediscovery program. I still hear about it! It really opened up the relationship between us, and they keep saying that they want to go back. Lots of them became more interested in their own cultures. Some are now learning to carve and to drum. They get involved in helping out at cultural events, without necessarily being centre stage. And they have some hope. What they do with it is up to them, but they have some."

Training Youth Workers

- It has to be experiential learning. Participants need to learn and enhance their facilitation skills.
- *"One year is too short. It feels like you just barely skim the surface and then move on. You want to get more in-depth."*
- *"There needs to be time for reflection"*
- *"From early on there need to be supervised times where trainees get together with youth."*
- *"It's important to develop **confidence**. Spend time debriefing experiences, and gain the confidence to just jump in."*
- Participants need to have the opportunity to experience and be exposed to areas of specialization within the field of youth work. Job-shadowing is also very important.

DAVID TREMBLAY

David Tremblay is Secwepmec (Shushwap) from the Spallumcheen Band. Currently working for the Sqwylax Band near Chase, David is the founder and director of the Splats'in Rediscovery program, and is a former council member of the Rediscovery International Foundation. He is married with two beautiful children.

His Work

David is currently the Youth and Elders Recreation Coordinator and youth worker for the Sqwylax Band, located near Chase. He organizes a range of recreational activities and focuses on youth leadership development. David started out as a swimming instructor and lifeguard. He was also a modern dance instructor. *"I was going professional but changed my career. I was a youth worker for my own band, the Spallumcheen Band, and I worked as a foster parent resource with our Child Welfare program. In some ways it was easier working with my own band. I knew all the families and children. I was working with children in care in our own program. I was guided by social workers. Now I'm my own boss. It's nice having the freedom, but it can be isolated."*

His Training

David is currently enrolled in the Working with Youth in Community Settings Program offered by the Justice Institute of Vancouver. He has also taken a variety of other courses.

"I started out doing a lot of volunteer recreation work with swimming and life-guarding. I took a recreation course while I was at school, and did the Aqua Percept practicum, working with kids with learning and physical disabilities. I took a recreation leadership course and took the Rediscovery Guide Certification training. I took a lot of workshops in the addictions field - solvent abuse intervention, adult children of alcoholics, that kind of thing."

He points to his own experience as a big part of his training. *"I didn't grow up in my own community. I grew up in a foster home, and it had a really big impact. I still had a connection to my mum, but not with my culture. That connection came when I was sixteen at the Stein Rediscovery program. That's when I started to seek out my roots, my culture. I went to a youth conference one time, and participated in a sweat lodge and the pipe ceremony. I had always wanted to do that. When I started smudging, sweats, prayer, it was like I had found a part of myself that was missing. I felt like I was spiritually guided to be involved in Rediscovery. I got hired at the Stein and felt guided to be there. I was guiding the kids, but I was also on my own rediscovery. I had some incredible experiences doing that, singing, drumming. I saw the healing that the program did for the youth. So I decided to go back home and start one of these programs. But I was pretty messed up and was told that I needed to heal first. I went through the Round Lake Treatment program, and it totally changed my life. I got a chance to look at all the crap I was carrying around. Then I started volunteering at my band before starting Rediscovery."*

Training Youth Workers

- *"If you are emphasizing the importance of self awareness, you have to clear out any issues that you have about working with youth. Because if you hire someone that isn't healthy, it's so disastrous. If it's a male, they can be out there hitting on the girls, getting them pregnant. Personally I'd like to see a treatment and healing component at the outset of the program."*

- *"You need to learn how to facilitate groups, to lead groups. How to lead games, and to be enthusiastic about it. You can get that really well by doing drama. Drama really made me an outward type person, not shy and inhibited about getting up in front of a group."*
- *"You need some first aid and safety. Learning how to prevent accidents. I have a lot of that from life-guarding and Rediscovery."*
- *David talks about the need for family issues training. "Having gone through treatment and done lots of workshops in family systems training with Native instructors really helps me in understanding a child and the way he is. A high percentage of young people are sexually abused, and some have fetal alcohol issues. You need training in that."*
- *"Culture. I almost take that for granted, it's so much a part of my own life. The First Nations teachings that I use in my day to day life. And being able to use and teach that to youth. The youth need that. They ask for it. If you ask what they want more of they say culture and ceremony. That's going to give them the grounding. The medicine wheel teachings, the prophecies, the bush knowledge. Learning to make a birch bark basket from scratch. All the teachings that go along with that."*

EXAMPLES OF MODEL PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

There are many excellent programs and initiatives taking place in Aboriginal communities. Every community seems to have tried something interesting and every community has something to teach other communities. The challenge for those trying to develop programs is to learn from the experience of those who have gone before. Often excellent initiatives are not well known in their own communities and may be virtually unknown outside. The following list is not intended to be complete in any way. Rather, it describes in more detail some of the initiatives mentioned and experienced by the participants represented in this report.

Camps and Outdoor Programs

- **Rediscovery Camps.** Over 30 Aboriginal communities in North America have started Rediscovery Camps in the past 20 years as a way to connect youth with the land, their Elders and the cultural traditions. Camps are extremely varied and range from remote caribou hunting camps (the Gwitchin people's Old Crow Rediscovery in the Yukon) to year round programs located in urban centres (Ghost River Rediscovery, Vancouver Urban Rediscovery)
- **Culture/Survival/Spirit/Subsistence Camps.** Many communities have developed camps where they teach young people their traditional ways. Some contemporary examples include Harley Crowchild's Tsuu' tina Culture Camp in Alberta and the Distinctly Wet'suwet'en Culture Camps in northern British Columbia.
- **Initiation Camps.** These are camps that give young people a specific set of initiation teachings about becoming a man or woman in their own culture. A contemporary example is the initiation camp run by Hank Snow in Alberta for Nakoda youth. The four-day camps are taught entirely in the Nakoda language.
- **Stewardship/Science Camps.** These camps blend traditional cultural teachings with scientific and resource management perspectives. Examples include the US Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Camps held in every National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. At such camps, Aboriginal youth accompanied by a biologist may track radio-collared caribou by plane one day, and learn to butcher and smoke caribou the next day under the guidance of an Elder.
- **Environmental Camps.** Based on Aboriginal teachings, youth learn the spiritual foundations of environmental work. The Earth Restoration Corps developed by Alvin Manitopyes is one such camp.

- **Adventure Programs.** There are a number of programs developed specifically for Aboriginal Youth that are outdoor adventure-oriented. These programs also place emphasis on personal development. Examples include Ontario's Outward Bound Aboriginal Leadership Program and North Carolina's Cherokee Challenge.
- **Healing Camps.** These outdoor programs typically address specific youth healing issues. As part of their work in drug and alcohol prevention, Sheila Chaboyer and Cyril Roy run one such healing camp for youth in Cumberland House, Saskatchewan.
- **Informal Camps.** For a large number of young people their learning does not take place in a program. It just happens in their life, because that is the way their family or community does things. Traditional subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, berry-picking, medicine gathering, cedar bark processing, food processing, and various spiritual activities, play an important role in Aboriginal communities. Some studies that have taken place in the Arctic have shown that youth who spend the most amount of time engaged in traditional subsistence activities with their families perform the best in school.

Service and Exchange Programs

- **Canada World Youth and Katimavik.** There are some outstanding young leaders in Aboriginal communities who point to their participation in these programs as the highlight in their journey of learning. The programs involve living and working in other communities and other countries for extended periods of time. Some past participants have gone on to sponsor their own scaled down versions of these programs in their own communities. Kirby Smith of the Peigan Nation is one such individual, as he has initiated exchanges for the Peigan youth with the Mohawk and Makah communities.
- **Youth Service Canada.** This is a federal program for youth, ages 18-24, where participants are given the opportunity to take on community service projects from which they will gain significant training and experience. Each project is individually designed, and there has been strong input from Aboriginal communities to ensure that the program meets their needs

Leadership Training

- **Traditional Leadership Training.** The belief that even the best leadership program pales when compared to traditional Aboriginal leadership training was supported by a number of this report's participants. Such traditional training, while it varies from Nation to Nation, involves a lifelong learning that begins in infancy. Leaders trained in this way understand themselves, their family, clan and Nation, their territory and their ancestors. They understand the complex web of relationships, obligations, responsibilities and interdependence that connect them.
- **Four Worlds Earth Ambassadors.** This program for tribal youth leaders offers a series of two-week long training modules that cover topics such as cultural awareness, personal development and leadership development. Male and female participants work with youth healing and development programs in their own Nation and then come together several times a year for the leadership training components.
- **Rediscovery International Guide Training.** This is a two-week program offered at Pearson United World College that trains and certifies leaders of culturally-based outdoor programs.

- **Native American Sports Council.** Developing partnerships with Aboriginal communities throughout the United States and with the United States Olympic Committee, the Native American Sports Council runs leadership and training camps in communities where athletic excellence, cultural teachings, community wellness and spiritual discipline found within traditional games and activities are stressed.

Youth Organizations and Centres

- **Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA).** Based in Vancouver, UNYA offers a wide range of programs and services for Aboriginal young people. Many of the programs stand alone as model programs in their own right, but the Association is particularly notable for the level of youth involvement and direct input that takes place. Currently, there are more youth than adults on the Association's board of governors.
- **Tseshah Youth Centre.** Close to Port Alberni, British Columbia, this community's model youth program places emphasis on teaching youth the importance of culture, education, leadership, participation, recreation, and prevention. Counseling services are also available.
- **Britannia Teen Centre.** Located off Commercial Road in Vancouver, British Columbia, the centre is noted for its cultural sensitivity in developing programs for urban youth. The wide range of activities the centre is also known to offer accounts in part for the high level of youth participation that takes place.

Education Programs

- **ARIES.** Based in Vancouver, this centre offers customized outreach school programs, which are framed in a cultural context, for Aboriginal street youth.
- **Valleyview School.** Based in the Metis village of Beauval, Saskatchewan, the school has started to develop a curriculum that integrates academic, cultural and outdoor educational components. Students learn about the Metis Voyageur tradition and the fur trade in history, learn river systems in biology, make their own paddle in woodwork, and take an extended canoe trip in outdoors.
- **The Plains Indian Cultural Survival School (PICSS).** Based in Calgary, Alberta, a culturally-based curriculum is used to teach urban Aboriginal youth.

1. **Marni York**
2. **Captain Gold, Willis Parnell**
3. **Patience Pederson**
4. **Hattie Westle, Doreen Angus, Eric MacPherson**
5. **Kim Haxton**
6. **Barb Jeffries**
7. **Tommy Wammiss, Michael Moore**
8. **Dolores Bayne**
9. **Lisa Watts**
10. **Rob Lind, Karen Lepine, Susan Powell**
11. **David Tremblay**
12. **Rob and Carrie Avveduti, Rupert Arcand**
13. **Christine Joseph**
14. **Mike Lickers, Doug Dokis**
15. **Stewart Daigneault**
16. **Michael Bopp**

