

WORKING WITH YOUTH: A VISIONING JOURNEY

By

VERENA GIBBS

Integrated Studies Project

submitted to Dr. P. Rasmussen

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts – Integrated Studies

Athabasca, Alberta

November 2010

Abstract

The capacity to envision or imagine a “better” life is what propels us into new possibility. In a time when daydreaming is often frowned upon, I propose that it is this unique trait that offers us hope for creating better future for ourselves. This project is about giving myself permission to visit places that cannot be arrived at through logic alone. It asks the question: What qualities do I believe create engaging, meaningful and positive space for youth? I begin by reflecting on personal, professional and educational experiences that have sculpted my current understanding and beliefs about youth. Followed by a brief exploration of historical and current contexts that influence the role of youth services in one rural Aboriginal community. I then critique a number of traditional approaches to youth work, and discuss why some strategies actually hinder youths’ ability to meaningfully participate in their lives – particularly those labeled “at risk.” Furthermore, knowledge gained through this process will be “mobilized” by connecting meaningful findings with local authorities working with youth to ensure that knowledge flows between learning communities (such as academia and organizations working on the ground level). This process is grounded in two interrogating theories: Resilience Theory and Appreciative Inquiry; chosen because fundamental to each is the belief that individuals or groups should be at the heart and centre of work pertaining to their wellbeing. Through reflecting on my own experiences, researching current youth programs and reflecting on prevalent trends and practices, my visioning process resulted in an articulation of the following four key qualities I feel are imperative when designing and implementing services for youth: progressive, positive, protective and participatory.

Keywords: youth, visioning, Aboriginal community, mobilizing knowledge

Visioning Process



Introduction

Possibly one of the greatest characteristics of being human is our ability to dream. The capacity to envision or imagine a “better” life is what propels us into new possibility. In a time when daydreaming is often frowned upon, I propose that it is this unique trait that offers us hope for creating better future for ourselves. This project is about giving myself permission to visit places that cannot be arrived at through logic alone. This is a visioning journey towards a more desirable way to support the youth in my community. I come to this place as an accumulation of personal experiences, life lessons, formal education, family, place and intuition, and it is with an honest and open heart that I dream of further positive experiences for and with youth.

Specifically, my hope is to invite youth and adults alike to envision how current youth services can be enhanced. It is not about articulating a set of prescribed steps to build the perfect youth program, nor is it an exhaustive list of strategies to employ; but rather it is an invitation – an invitation to the reader to daydream, to envision a more desirable future, to follow the creative spirit and to play.

Why Youth in Masset?

Living in a remote, rural community inevitably means working with limited resources. While it is not my place to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the services provided for local youth - it is my hope that some of my findings prove valuable to local services. Therefore, the purpose of this project is two-fold. First to satiate my curiosity in exploring the question: what principles do I believe create positive and meaningful services for youth? This yearning to understand more fully the needs and gifts of youth has driven me to create the space from which to envision a

better future. Secondly, I believe that the knowledge I attain through this process should not be confined to the realm of academia, but rather be shared with a community who may benefit from its results, and as such, their considerations have become woven into the process. This project may also be useful to those currently working with youth, or who are considering embarking on youth initiatives, as I believe this crucial first step – this pause, if you will, before the jump - can prove to be a beneficial practice in that it invites the personal, the contextual, the theoretical and the creative into the arena of design and vision.

The Visioning Process

This visioning process begins with a reflection on how my own experiences – as a youth, an educator and an adult – have shaped my beliefs and assumptions about youth and youth programming, and how this understanding shapes future ideas. This reflection process also includes the opportunity to question traditional approaches and to articulate theories that I believe would enhance and strengthen initiatives involving youth. This is a valuable exercise in that it taps into methodologies that resonate for me and create energy to seek out youth models and examples of excellence. Grounded in positivist beliefs, this process questions - Where are there examples of youth initiatives that are empowering and meaningful for youth? How might the strengths of these initiatives encourages or influence the direction of youth services in my rural community? Fundamental to this process is the ability to listen –both to self and other. It is from this place that I articulate the following four key elements that I feel are instrumental in creating positive and relevant space for youth: progressive, positive, protective and participatory.

Considering on the Now

“We look back, in order to go forward” – Kierkegaard

My visioning journey begins by reflecting on the influences that have brought me to where I am today. Reflecting on who I am and what has led me to this place of inquiry brings forth a sense of acknowledgment for the teachers – in the most general sense of the term - that have guided me to this place. Remaining mindful of *who* I am as I embark on an exploration of youth initiatives allows me to keep in check the factors that influence *how* I see what I see, as well as the underlying cultural and often “colonized” assumptions that taint my view.

A third generation Canadian, of mixed European heritage, I was born and raised in Vancouver, B.C. where I grew up in a nuclear home. The eldest of three girls, I spent much of my childhood playing in the woods behind my house. The outdoors played an important role in my upbringing, and my unstructured time in nature helped cultivate a grounded connection to self and place- it also created a deep sense of wonder. This deep sense of respect and connectedness to self and place has been instrumental in allowing me to build meaningful relationships in my life and in my work with youth.

As I entered public school, I recall both excitement and frustration as new learning opportunities were presented while at the same time, my interests and passions were ignored or dismissed. I excelled in the areas that inspired me and I stubbornly rejected or invested little effort into those that seemed “irrelevant.” I noticed how some of my learning experiences seemed electric, while others zapped the light out of my eyes. This sentiment continued throughout my formal

education as I oscillated between moments where my spirit felt alive with enthusiasm and moments where I felt out of place, unworthy and unheard. As a youth, I worked with children at summer camps and volunteered at local elementary schools and was inspired by the honesty, creativity and insight that children brought to the “learning table” and I was curious as to how to foster the positive learning opportunities that I had experienced.

As I pursued my undergraduate degree in education, I noticed that much of what was being taught made sense on an intellectual level, yet lacked the *quality* of learning experience I was hoping to nurture in my classroom – a place where innovations and ideas were welcome, and where participation in the learning process was encouraged. I wanted my students to feel empowered in their experience – not as a passenger along for the ride. Learning wasn’t something you did *to* people; it was something you did *with* them.

With each passing Bachelor of Education course my beliefs continued to wiggle uncomfortably to find meaning that felt ‘right’. My personal pedagogy began to take on a life different from the one I was being presented, and my fellow education students began to affectionately refer to me as the “black sheep” in the department – breaking away from the herd – as I continued to express my view that the learner, not curriculum, was paramount to the learning process.

After graduating, my desire for “something better” led me to a community-based, non-profit school whose mandate was to support the passions and curiosities of *each* child, with the support of the family. I learned a great deal about letting go of the “teacher reigns” and encouraging joyful learning.

One of the most powerful lessons I learned while at Wondertree Learning Centre involved *not* knowing. A significant incident had occurred and I was at a loss for how to best resolve it. I felt a great weight on my shoulders as I held the belief that as the “educator in charge” – I *should* know what to do. So I put myself in the place of one of my learners and asked myself: What learning opportunity is presenting itself to me? What beliefs may be holding me back?

I realized as a learner myself, it was my job to find the balance between trying out solutions on my own and asking for help. I began to see how I was a part – not separate from – a resourceful and supportive community; a community that collectively held a great deal more wisdom and experience than I had in my individual self. I felt myself begin to relax in knowing that I wasn’t alone, and for all the gifts I had received by ‘helping others’ – I was about to reach out.

I explained the situation to the families and learners in an open and honest dialogue. I shared my uncertainty and invited their suggestions and support. I was surprised by how suddenly and tangibly the energy in the room shifted, as parents and children sprang into creative action, rallying possible solutions. For me, this was more than a lesson about letting go; it was about the gift of creatively engaging a community in the process and the limitlessness of possibilities that follow.

For the past year, I have been a newcomer to a rural community, during which time I have built friendships, dipped into the school system as a Teacher-On-Call, and volunteered for youth events. A picture began to unfold before my eyes and I began to fall in love with this unique and vibrant community. Aware of my urban upbringing, I have attempted to be aware of my biases and have tried to stay open and receptive to the things I observe and engage in the spirit of inquiry while I listened to the stories people share publicly and openly.

Influenced by the work of Linda Smith (1999) on decolonizing methodologies, I bring this awareness to my visioning process and apply it to how my Western background influences the lens through which I observe and participate with this mixed-Aboriginal community.

Specifically, Western knowledge “brings to bear, on any study of Indigenous peoples, a cultural orientation, a set of values, a different conceptualization of such things as time, space,

subjectivity, different and competing theories of knowledge, highly specialized forms of language and structure of power” (Smith, 1999, p.42). Furthermore, the “rules” that apply to a Western orientation are both implicit and explicit and cannot be fully described by the “West” itself because it operates within these rules, and many of which are taken for granted (Smith, 1999). I bring to bear these considerations as I envision ameliorated services for youth in my community.

Observing the Contexts

*Our culture is born of respect, and intimacy with the land and sea and the air around us.
Like the forests, the roots of our people are intertwined such that the greatest troubles
cannot overcome us. – Haida Nation*

From my experience, it is rare that an organization or group invests time into reflection and visioning processes prior to implementing new initiatives. This is understandable as budget and time restraints rarely allow for such luxuries. However, this ‘breathing space’ offers the individual an opportunity to step back from a situation before making a new leap and can often offer insights or perspectives that may be missed in hastier circumstances. Therefore, this visioning process includes the opportunity to step back and take note of some of the historical and current contexts that shape this community.

Haida Gwaii – The Place and the People

The Haida First Nations have belonged to the archipelago known as Haida Gwaii – Island of the People - for thousands of years. Archeological evidence indicates that people inhabited the

islands as far back as 13,000 years ago (Misty Isles Economic Development Society, n.d.). The Haida are a linguistically distinct group with a complex class and rank system consisting of two main clans, Eagles and Ravens, and have historically depended on an established social system in which the community was interdependent economically, politically, and socially (Swanton, 1905; Stevenson, 1975).

Traditionally, the young people in Haida culture were part of every day life - watching, learning and practicing the skills and wisdom needed to survive. As in many Aboriginal communities, children were amongst the most valued citizens in society in that they represented the future of the society and brought a different and valued perspective to community life (Blackstock, 2007). Haida children were considered reincarnations of ancestors and as such treated with great respect (Stevenson, 1975). There were no specific rites of passage during puberty, however the rituals of becoming a man - such as bathing in cold seawater - were taught, and girls were raised under the tutelage of their mothers and skills included collecting bark, seaweed, roots and berries (Swanton 1905). A woman's first menses was a significant event and initiated a "period of seclusion and taboos which ended in a ceremonial cleansing and feast marking her commencement into womanhood" (Swanton, 1905, p.49-50).

Tightly integrated lines of support were woven into the fabric of Haida society; it was everyone's responsibility to ensure that its youth grew up to be strong, resilient and productive members of the community. These young people would someday be the elders guiding the community - the wellbeing and prosperity of its people depended on it (Stearns, 1981). Moreover, many Aboriginal decision-making processes involved youth as key contributors; this was demonstrated

during talking circles in which children's contribution were heard equally amongst the adults (Blackstock, 2007).

European Contact

The first European to make contact with the Haida was Juan Perez, a Spanish explorer, in 1774. (Misty Isles Economic Development Society, n.d.). However, it wasn't until George Dixon visited in 1787 that the islands were given the name *Queen Charlotte* after his ship. European contact affected Haida culture on several levels. Economically, the ravenous sea otter pellet trade of the 1800's created a boom in wealth and technology for many Haida families. In turn, the efficiency of new tools brought about increased time to invest in developing the arts – such as carving and weaving. Furthermore, it was the influence of a distinctly foreign set of religious and spiritual beliefs that increasingly conflicted with Haida spirituality and world-view.

Possibly the most devastating consequence of European contact was the introduction of foreign diseases, such as Tuberculosis and Small Pox, which rampantly spread through communities, wiping out huge portions of the Haida population.

Outside pressures from missionaries, an instituted colonial government combined with the death of so many members eventually forced the abandonment of almost all of the Nations villages and the settlement of the remaining members to the communities of Old Massett and Skidegate Mission. From an estimated 7,000 Haida at contact, fewer than 700 found their way to these two villages.- (Misty Isles Economic Development Society)

The Role of Residential Schools

While poverty, powerlessness and breakdown of social order were taking hold in Aboriginal communities under the impact of colonial policy, Aboriginal children were simultaneously being removed from their home and taken to residential schools whose express purpose was to disrupt their ties with “savage” culture and, of necessity, their families (Milloy, 1999). It is nearly impossible to measure the extent to which the role of residential schools has negatively impacted Haida culture. Not only did many children experience physical, emotional and sexual abuse, but also the trauma of being taken from their families. Under the guise of assimilation, the heart of Haida culture was attacked with the abuse of their children. The “residential school experiences profoundly altered family units at that time and continue to have serious intergenerational effects, touching every aspect of community life today” (Castellano et al., 2008, p.325). Consequently, without parental role models, youth grew up not knowing traditional ways of raising children, and in many instances did not have the capability to show affection or provide appropriate discipline. They sired and bred children but were unable to relate to them on any level (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

Economy

In 1910, the Queen Charlotte Agency was established in Masset, and Indian agents began to “exercise broad powers over the lives and affairs of the Haida” (Stearns, 1981, p.3). External forces continued to negatively affect the lives of the Haida until 1966 when the Queen Charlotte Agency closed and moved to Prince Rupert – greatly lessening the influence it played over daily

life. Furthermore, the “cannery changed hands from a local, “White” family to a large Vancouver firm, meaning that New Masset and the Village of Massett (Old Massett) would become economically interdependent” (Stearns, 1981, p.4). Economically, it is important to note that this period of history impacted traditional Haida family dynamics in significant ways. For example, greater reliance on the larger economy increased with the development of employee wages and commercial fishing resulting in less emphasis placed on working collectively as extended familial units (Stearns, 1981).

The Presence of the Military

Another significant factor that influenced the shape of the community was the presence of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) that began in 1942 when the Canadian government established a Naval radio station at the northern end of Graham Island, near Masset. Its purpose was to monitor Soviet Union communications during the Cold War. In 1943, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) built a landing strip that was soon manned by approximately 60 airmen.

At the end of the war in 1945, the station was temporarily closed, until 1949, when the Navy returned to resume operations in the Delkatla Slough. Between 1967 and 1972, many of the present facilities of Canadian Forces Station (CFS) Masset were constructed which included a recreation building containing a swimming pool, gymnasium, weight room, squash court, bowling alley, and curling rink, as well as a sports field and a ten bed hospital. The greater community utilized many of these services up until the early 2000s at which time the cost of upkeep became prohibitive.

On a social level, the influx of military personnel and family in this small community created both stress and opportunity. Youth from military families participated in sports and recreational activities, as well as social pursuits. Moreover, increased enrolment in the schools meant additional funding for resources and courses. However, when the military shut down its full time operations in 1997 it left a sudden gap in the community when approximately 300 families moved out of Masset, leaving only 1600 residents. Houses were sold quickly and enrolment in the schools dropped, resulting in some programs being cut and severing many of the positive relationships that were built amongst the youth. ¹

Current Population

Haida Gwaii is located 100 kilometers west of the northern coast of British Columbia, Canada and is an isolated group of over 200 islands. The Haida people make up approximately half of the 5000 people living on the islands. The majority of whom live in two main centres, Old Massett at the north end of Graham Island and Skidegate at the south end (Council of the Haida Nation, 2010). The 2006 Census broke down the island's population in the following communities: 694 in Old Massett; the Village of Masset with 940; Village of Port Clements 440; Skidegate 781; Village of Queen Charlotte 948; Area D, (rural Graham Island) 607; Area E (Sandspit) 402.

¹ These notes are based on personal reflections by Jim Troyanek, a member of the Canadian Forces, who served at the post in Masset. See: <http://www.troywoodintarsia.com/cfsm/cfsm.htm>

The majority of new-residents² to the islands have made their living on farming, fishing and the lumber industry and many families go back several generations. The forestry boom in the 1970s to 1980s, along with a strong and robust fishing industry from the 1980s to early 1990s brought an influx of new residents to the island. This was a time of economic prosperity for many individuals and families.

Current Youth Initiatives – Massett

Between 1980 and 2005, one woman voluntarily coordinated youth activities out of various locations around Massett. Up until 2005, she was able to secure government funds to operate her programs, at which point they were cut and she had to rely on alternative means of funding. The process of securing additional grants and bursaries inevitably took up a great deal of her time and energy, which otherwise would have been invested in the planning and implementation of activities with youth.

While in operation, the location of her youth initiative changed throughout the years, and included the Massett Community Centre where she was able to accommodate up to 75 youth in one evening. The ample space allowed for a variety of activities to happen simultaneously - drawing in youth with various interests such as movies, cooking, computers and games.

² The term “new-resident” refers to non-Haida peoples living on Haida Gwaii, and while many of the people have lived on the island for many generations, this is still considered “new” in the span of Haida history

In addition to this woman's voluntary involvement with youth, there are two youth workers who work through of the Old Masett Village Office. Presently, the youth workers organize after-school sports and activities at the Community Hall in Old Masett for younger children on Mondays and Fridays, and evening drop-ins for older youth on Monday and Friday nights (7pm-10pm). Approximately 30 youth attend the drop-in sessions on these evenings.

The Old Masett youth workers offer a variety of learning opportunities with limited resources, including cooking classes, grocery store tours with a nutritionist, Haida singing and dancing, basketball and sports, camping and kayak trips, and dances and youth health fairs. Most recently, the local youth initiated the creation of a Youth Committee that drew approximately 20 youth to its first meeting. The youth voiced their interest in implementing a fundraising strategy in order to buy a music system for dances.

A Critique of Traditional Approaches

"A child in school is learning according to the dictates of the teacher, supposedly for the benefit of society as determined by a governing agency. A self-determined student is learning for himself, living in integrity" -Brent Cameron

With a general understanding of the historical and current contexts underway, I embarked on a critique of some of the traditional approaches that have been used in education, as well as youth initiatives. A number of years ago I began to notice the degree to which youth – or “teens” – were discussed in a negative context – as a “problem” - in media, television and film, educational articles and community research. Often the results highlighted high crime, drop out and suicide

rates, as well as increased substance, physical and sexual abuse. The pictures painted often focused on the worse case scenarios and viewers were often left feeling despair. The mere term “bunch of teens” for many conjures up images of mischief, trouble and even danger. While some youth are highlighted or acknowledged for their positive contribution, academic achievement or overall hard work, we rarely hear stories of how youth – in general – are a vital part of our community, making up an integral part of our social structure.

In *The Business of Placing Canadian Children and Youth “At-Risk”* (2001) Terry Wotherspoon and Bernard Schissel challenged the dominant tendency in many educational settings to “adopt medical or pathological orientation that focuses negatively on students who are considered part of a problem population” (p. 322). It is therefore important to critically question how terms such as “at-risk” are culturally and socially constructed and which aspects of reality ignored (Fine, 1993).

Many education models operate from the underlying assumption that children and youth are unable to meaningfully direct their learning, and as such pre-determined content becomes the focus, often discounting the contributions of the individual learners involved. For example, throughout my formal training I would hear reference to the buzzword “rapport”, and while the concept held promise, I felt like it was never addressed in a meaningful way but rather a politically correct term for establishing well-behaved and compliant students. Furthermore, traditional education today is “often more in service of its own bureaucratic and financial needs than it is about creating an optimum learning environment; in that classrooms and grades serve

the system, not the child, and testing and measurement serve the needs for efficiency and accountability of government” (Cameron, 2005, p. 52).

Historically, the intent of schooling has not focused on the development of the child, but rather focused on the need to foster dependence and loyalty. German born Frederich Froebel, founder of kindergarten in the 19th century, believed that in this “garden for children” the teachers were the gardeners, and the children the vegetables to be manicured. Froebel prescribed a system that breaks the influence of the mother because he believed mothers nourish the individual, while schools nourish the state (Gatto, 1991).

Western history is built upon the struggle to gain and maintain power. While the players and context have changed many times, at its core, the purpose remains the same – control. Education and services for children and youth are no different. Walter Wink, author and theologian, coined the term ‘domination organizations’ which he defines as “unequal distribution of resources and privileges, hierarchical power relations, and the use of violence to maintain order – systems in which few people dominate many...represented in family, schools, religious organizations, work organizations and government” (Rosenberg, 2003, p. 2). As these systems “evolved”, so did the language used to manipulate the “oppressed” or those under control.

I became increasingly aware of language that creates controlling constructs which did not resonate with my personal beliefs, as discussions revolved around content, subject-matter and classroom organization, with little talk of how to meet the students exactly where they were. The word “student” became synonymous with “empty vessel”, illustrating our task – to fill each

student container as effectively and efficiently as possible. Paulo Freire refers to the phenomena as the “banking system” in which a person acts *upon* another rather than working *with* them. In the context of education, this translates into someone with more power making ‘deposits’ into the student (Smith, 2002). Current educational environments support this banking belief as teachers are valued for their ability to transfer knowledge, rather than their capacity to foster passionate, curious and self-directed learners.

With pre-determined curriculum the primary focus, the self of the learner disappears from sight, and whatever arises in the present moment often takes a backseat. As a teacher, I was taught that deviating from curriculum could seriously impede the learning “schedule” for the student; yet in doing so, I believe I not only discount the human in front of me, but the one within me as well. Consequently, I developed my own pedagogical creed in which learning isn’t something that happens *to* a learner, it is something that arises *within* them, and as such is a deeply personal experience. This belief resonated with the notion that “knowledge cannot be transmitted, (as it) has to be constructed afresh by each individual knower on the basis of what is already known, and by means of strategies developed over the whole of that individual’s life, both outside and inside the classroom” (Wells, 1986, p.218).

Furthermore, my experience taught me that fundamental to supporting youth in making empowered choices in their life is the need to build trusting relationships. This cannot be emphasized enough. For me, this means that my actions and words are genuine and that I sincerely believe that each youth I am in relationship with has wisdom and the ability to meaningfully direct his or her life. Unfortunately, during many exchanges between “troubled”

youth and adults, a great opportunity is missed when the “problem” becomes the focus. Flipping this notion upside down means engaging youth in meaningful conversations about what *it’s like to be them*, what *they* need and how we can support them. It is about putting aside assumptions and judgments and engaging in respectful, curious and honest dialogues.

When working with youth, problem orientation reduces the whole person to a negative problem that requires “fixing”. Moreover, the issue with this perspective is that it rarely engages the intrinsic motivation or desire to change *within* the individual, but rather places the knowledge or direction on the “outsider” to prescribe a solution to the problem. Unlike a positive or participatory approach that engages the youth in the process.

Furthermore, problem-orientation often overlooks a number of critical questions, such as: Who defines the problem? Whose problem is it? Who decides on solutions? And how are these solutions implemented? My experience has shown me that more often than not, youth are not invited to participate in these processes, and are often embedded in the problem for which they may not feel a part of. In order to illustrate the difference between the two approaches, I will offer one scenario (regarding health) and apply both perspectives.

A Positive- or Participatory Approach:

This approach would likely begin with open-ended questioning. The dialogue might unfold like this:

Person A: Tell me about times in your life when you felt great.

Person B: I love the way I feel after I go jogging, but I haven't made the time to do it a long while.

Person A: What else did you notice when you were jogging more regularly?

Person B: Well, I tended to eat better because I felt so great after a jog and didn't want to "wreck" my good work with fattening food.

Person A: What was going on then that helped support you going jogging?

Person B: Actually, a colleague of mine at work initiated it. She was complaining about how work was piling up and making things quite stressful and she suggested we jog together a couple times a week after work. It was great. We kept it up until the Christmas holidays then fell off the bandwagon.

Person A: Is jogging something you'd like to create start again in your life?

Person B: Ya, I think so.

Person A: Is this something you can do on your own, or did you enjoy having a buddy?

Person B: I think having someone to go with will help keep me accountable – plus I like being distracted with conversation to keep my mind off the hard work! I have a couple people in mind that might be interested in starting this up.

Problem-Oriented Approach:

This perspective focuses on the aspects of my health that are problematic, and would likely result in observations such as: I eat too many sugary foods, my exercise is erratic, I drink too much alcohol and am over-stressed. I may be given a list of things to improve on, and while some of the feedback may be useful, I may also feel defeated, embarrassed or a failure when given such a list of deficits. There may be the warning that an inability to change would result in a further deterioration of my health. And while many of us have experienced such a critique in one way or another, there is very little motivational energy behind this approach.

A participatory approach does not assume what the problem is or how to fix it, but rather engages the individual in open-ended questioning in which he or she is able to generate possible solutions based on positive experiences or past success. During my experiences with youth, I noticed a great deal of engagement when they were asked to define and design what success means to them. Often times, the input they offered surpassed anything an adult group alone could have generated.

My curiosity has drawn me to wonder how we can nurture and acknowledge the positive contributions of our young people – both within their own group, and within society at large. As an adult, I choose to embrace the belief that it is my responsibility to engage and support the passions and needs of youth, to listen with open heart and ears, to challenge my assumptions and to build genuine relationships while maintaining clear, consistent and compassionate boundaries from within which youth can explore the world. I see my responsibility as an adult and an educator to present learning that is relevant and meaningful. I believe it is fully possible to learn traditional subjects (language, science, math) in ways that are culturally appropriate, that engage the learner in the design of their experience and leave space for open curiosity. Therefore my job

is not to force curriculum, but to listen, support, value and *see* the unique contributions that our youth make to our communities (Cajete 1994; Cameron 2006; Satir 1991).

Resonating Methodologies

“Knowledge becomes lived, not something placed on a bookshelf” - Dr. Jo Ann Archibald

During my visioning process, it is important to articulate the methodologies that arise and resonate with my beliefs. I have found that many Indigenous perspectives on learning and development have been in alignment with my own views. For example, it was during a course with Dr. Jo Ann Archibald at UBC, that I was introduced to an assignment she referred to as a “mobilization project”. The intent of the assignment was to identify an interest – a topic we were motivate to explore – and to connect our learning with a group or program who was doing related work on the ground level. Specifically, to find out what they were doing and how our project could support or complement their work – in essence, to learn from each other.

Dr. Archibald explained that for non-Indigenous instructors, mobilizing knowledge was similar to service learning. The Community Service Act of 1990 defines service learning as:

"a method under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community; and that is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students; and provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.”

Furthermore, knowledge mobilization projects are closely related to Indigenous views of reciprocity, in which teaching and learning are not only interconnected, but also linked to past

and future generations. The knowledge of today is in thanks to the work and contributions of those who have gone before; likewise, it is each person's responsibility to contribute to this body of knowledge for our collective selves as well as future generations – to pass it forward. For me, participating in a mobilization project ensured that the work I did not only had meaning for me, but also contributed to an evolving body of knowledge. As such, for this visioning process I hope to connect my learning with those interested in the field of youth work.

The Relationship Between Western Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous Knowledge (IK), as I understand it, is that it is based on a worldview, cultural lens, or personal experience in which knowledge is seen as dynamic, process-oriented, interrelated, deeply relational, multidimensional, intuitive, experiential, holistic and spiritual (Antone, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Cappon, 2008; Doige, 2003; Warner, 2006). Many indigenous perspectives believe that knowledge creation is a collective product, and that individuals contribute to this shared understanding in many forms, such as experiences, dreams, and expressions (Cappon, 2008). Knowledge is considered co-created and co-shared – including the contributions of children and youth.

As I explored the relationship between IK and Western Knowledge (EK) several images arose. Below, Image 1 represents knowledge from an Indigenous perspective. Each circle represents a person, or a group of people, with their own understanding of Indigenous Knowledge. Each personal 'truth' contributes to the collective understanding of the topic. Because this collective container holds multiple beliefs and ideas in a mutually inclusive way, varying viewpoints are

considered added value to its meaning. The more people who add to this shared understanding, the richer it becomes.

Image 1

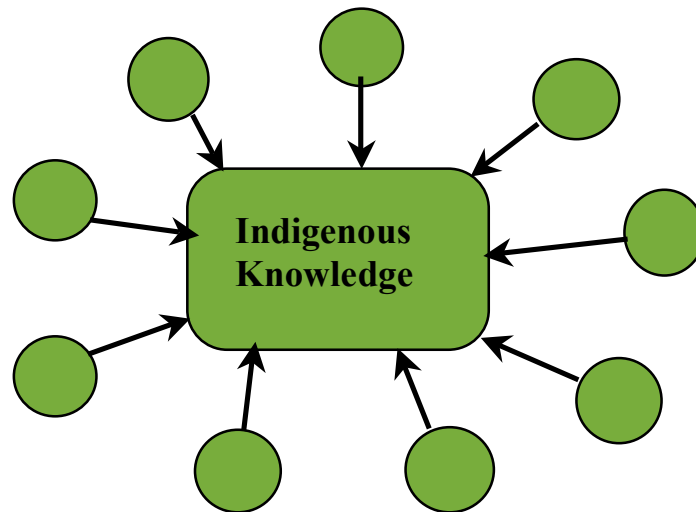
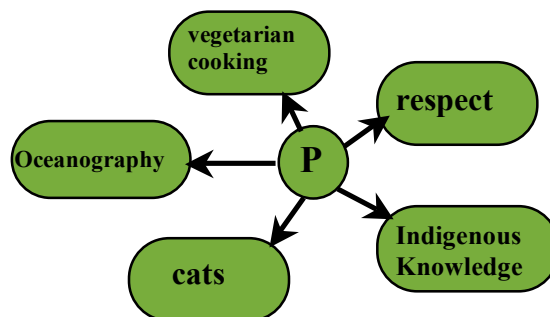


Image 2



My image of Euro-centric knowledge is that one person holds knowledge about specific subjects. Image 2 represents the specific knowledge that one person possesses. Often times an individual is considered ‘intelligent’ if he or she is able to ‘hold’ accurate understandings for many topics. Furthermore, this perspective often purports that certain topics have only single truth. Perhaps instead of an either/or model, both expressions of knowledge can fit together in mutually beneficial ways? What if the EK model of the individual is incorporated into the IK model so that you begin with each individual gaining personal knowledge and insight, which in turn is

shared with the collective? Therefore, our personal knowledge can also be broadened and developed as we interact with the contributions of others – including youth.

Moreover, for some Indigenous cultures, reciprocity is understood in terms of affirming relationships and sharing which is vital to the collective benefit of Indigenous peoples (Kuokhanen, 2007). According to Smith (1999), this means that I must “share the theories and analyses which inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented” (16). I believe that youth have many gifts and teachings that they share as we mutually affirm our relationships with each other. Archibald (2008) articulates this reciprocal action in her metaphor “hands back, hands forward teaching”.

My Dear Ones,

Form a circle and join hands in prayer. In joining hands, hold your left palm up to reach back to grab the teachings of the ancestors. Put these teachings into practice in your everyday life and pass them on. Hold your right palm downward to pass these teachings on to the younger generation. In this way the teaching and knowledge of the ancestors continue and the circle of understanding and caring grows stronger

-Dr. Jo Ann Archibald, (p.50).

Interrogating Theories

"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." Albert Einstein

I have chosen two theoretical bodies of work to help me think about youth initiatives in Masset: Resiliency Theory and Appreciative Inquiry. I believe that both approaches presuppose that the search for "betterment" begins with engaging individuals and communities in open explorations of possibilities in which there are no set answers or outcomes. Furthermore, it is believed that shifting emphasis to the positive aspects of our 'selves' and our communities attains increased and more sustained sense of wellness - a marked departure from traditional methods that focus on features deemed negative or "bad".

In practical application, this might look like an individual who makes decisions that move him or her towards breathing healthy air, increased stamina and improved health rather than quitting smoking for fear of cancer, medical bills, or scorn from loved ones. In a youth setting, this same theory can be applied by directing the energy and work that one does towards creating positive and encouraging experiences with youth, as opposed to primarily responding to negative problems such as drug or alcohol abuse or crime prevention.

In "Affirmative Challenges in Indigenous Resilience Research", Andersson (2008) raises promising advantages of Resilience Theory with his example:

Concern about risks might show, for example, that 72% of Aboriginal youth smoke cigarettes and that those who smoke are more likely to drink. This is not nearly as useful

in public health terms as finding that youth who do *not* smoke are three times as likely to be involved in traditional activities (p.3).

Resilience Theory

In its simplest definition, resilience is considered to be an individual's ability to overcome adversity. Over the past few decades, this definition has developed to include the belief that resilience is a social construct based on how an individual determines the processes and outcomes that relate to his or her wellbeing (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). Therefore, for the sake of my visioning process, I assume that resilience exists both within individuals and communities and as such, can be viewed as a quality that exists in collective spaces. Based on extensive work facilitated by the Resilience Research Centre (RRC) in Halifax, Canada, the following definition has been crafted by Dr. Michael Ungar –“In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their wellbeing, and their capacity, individually and collectively, to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally meaningful ways” (Resilience Research Centre, Oct. 6th. 2010).

At its core, Resilience Theory invites an individual or group to define the challenges facing them, define *how* they wish to navigate through them, identify relevant resources and define the meaning of “wellbeing”. Indigenous views of resilience include relationship to the land, and a collective aspect that combines spirituality, family strength, Elders, ceremonial rituals, oral tradition identity, and support workers (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; Andersson, 2008).

Maturana and Varela (1987) explain that knowing unfolds and is enfolded in the dynamic of living. This means that what we know, who we are, and how we live are co-emergent phenomena and are, thus, inseparable. Some Indigenous scholars believe that living one's culture fosters a secure personal and cultural identity that serves as a foundation for resiliently coping with life's challenges (Castellano et al., 2008). More specifically, it provides a sense of cultural continuity wherein the child's first teachers are members of the family, extended family and community. The tenets of this theory fit with my vision of youth services in that they are ever evolving and progressive, both personal and relational, and are driven by the input of those involved.

Navigating the Waters

Current trends in resilience research are “demonstrating the need to understand resilience as an artefact of both individuals' capacities to navigate their way to health resources and their communities' capacity to provide those resources in *culturally meaningful* ways (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Wong, Wong, & Scott, 2006). Researchers collaborating on resilience work through the RRC have outlined a number of factors that influence an individual's ability to negotiate and navigate to a place of wellbeing in the face of adversity, such as “meaningful relationships with others at school, home, and perceived social support”.

Programs that promote culturally embedded and meaningful expressions of power, control, identity, relationships and cohesion are likely to help young people navigate to health resources effectively. There is a “shared understanding among many indigenous peoples that education is

really about helping an individual find his or her face, which means finding out who you are, where you come from, and your unique character. That education “should also help you find your heart, which is that passionate sense of self that motivates you and moves you along life” (Cajete, 1994, p.10).

Ungar and Brown (2008) support a fluid interpretation of resilience espousing the belief that it is the outcome of navigations to health resources where individuals are able to negotiate for resources to be provided in culturally and contextually meaningful ways. In remote, rural contexts, youth may demonstrate resilience by piecing together the best resources they have access to. While these may not look like ‘typical’ resources, they should still be acknowledged as the best one is able to do given limited resources. Lalonde (2006) notes that children avoid self-harming behaviours when their communities provide them with the culturally relevant resources they need and acknowledges the dynamic nature of the relationship between individuals, resources, and culture/context (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Along with relevant resources, is the importance of each community defining what health and wellness means to them. As a result, communities are beginning to relate resilience to what the community defines as healthy and socially acceptable functioning for their children (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003).

Urban Native Youth Association, in Vancouver, BC, is an excellent example of how youth are engaged in the design and structure of youth services, as well as the governance of the program. Youth advisory groups are enlisted to survey youth to identify areas of interest (needs assessment), as well as factors requiring further support and development. This organization acknowledges the need to tease out the factors that are relevant and specific to their context.

Likewise, other communities would need to keep in mind their own considerations when developing their services, such as demographics and Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal populations. The opportunity to develop communal resilience exists in a multiple of contexts – integrated throughout many domains of daily life.

Guiding questions for a community might look like:

What factors would the youth identify as strengths?

What would the youth pinpoint as the prominent challenges they face?

What support would they describe as needing?

Optimally, what does wellness mean to our youth?

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) explores the positive qualities of any given system or group (Bushe, 2005). Appreciative Inquiry's aim is to bring to light examples of excellence or strength and to inquire into the parts that are working *really* well. Underpinning this theory is the belief that we move towards the best image we have of ourselves, therefore if we focus on the 'negative' aspects of what we'd like to change we are left with a void – knowing what we don't want rather than generating an image of what we'd like to create. Appreciate Inquiry taps into our ability to envision our self at our best – a positively directional course of action (Bushe, 2005).

Also fundamental to this work is the notion that the moment we inquire or begin to examine a phenomena, it changes (Mohr, 2002). A physical example of this would be how the action of adding a thermometer to a glass of water to determine its temperature will inevitably affect its

temperature. In a youth context, this means that the moment a question is asked, something begins to shift, as attention is drawn towards something that may never have been thought of before. Inviting youth to recall examples of how they meaningfully contribute to the community or a time they felt inspired or passionate inherently shifts something within. As such, I interpret and value the concepts of AI as fuel in positively-directional work – that within each individual there exists wisdom, strength and resourcefulness – the ability to create wellness (Satir, 1991).

In a larger youth context, Bernard Mohr explains that learning from moments of excellence, rather than failure, encourages a broad range of stakeholders both within and outside of the organization to ask certain kinds of questions, make shared meaning of the answers, and act upon the responses (Mohr, 2002, p.2). Moreover, AI asserts the importance of shifting our inner dialogue because nothing that the “rational mind” decides it wants will actually happen if the “inner dialogue” is resistant to it (Bushe, 2005). In terms of working with youth, this means engaging in dialogue focusing on moments of success, joy or resilience; which in turn may indirectly interrupt inner dialogues of self-hate or low self-esteem.

Cindy Blackstock (2007) illustrates this point by explaining how “we can tell the story based on victimization and concordant healing of Aboriginal peoples, (or) we can tell the story from the perspective of the multi-generational strength, wisdom, and resilience of Aboriginal peoples, which enables them to survive the multiple harms of colonization, from disease and expropriation of lands and resources, to undermining traditional spirituality, language, culture and ways of governance” (Blackstock, p.8).

My personal beliefs about how I wish to approach youth-friendly initiatives resonate with the principles of the theories mentioned above. Focusing on the positive intent embedded within each situation and every person, increases the likelihood they will connect to a desire to learn something new, to contribute in meaningful ways and to make empowered choices. Both Resilience Theory and Appreciative Inquiry place the individual or group involved at the heart and center of its work, and both theories balance one another in that they address and access both individual and collective needs and strengths. As opposed to other models that approach their work from an “outside knows best” point of view, Resilience Theory and Appreciative Inquiry enter into the realm of sincere curiosity and open unknowingness as to what lies beneath the surface. Both theories are grounded in the belief that people want to move in healthy and positive directions, and that within each action there exists a positive intent.

My Visioning

*"People connect on the basis of being similar and
grow on the basis of being different" - Virginia Satir*

The aforementioned steps of this visioning process have led me to a place of personal insights regarding how I envision a future of youth services; in particular, how I wish to support such initiatives. My vision for a new paradigm of youth initiatives includes collectively changing how communities talk about “teens”. Beginning by truly honouring the youth – their perspective, knowledge, wisdom and experience – as insightful and valuable members of our

community. I see a shift in the way adults (educators, family, community workers) support youth: to focus our attention on maintaining healthy boundaries (protective factors) from which youth can explore the world, and most importantly, make mistakes. In essence, an invitation of youth perspective and engagement in decision-making processes that not only affect them but have meaningful societal implications as well.

Throughout my visioning process, a number of key elements came to light. These can be summarized in the following four P:



I envision a future where youth initiatives consider each of these factors in the design and implementation of its services.

Progressive

Progressive means finding the balance between knowing where I come from as well as continually moving towards a vision. This forward motion propels me to a desired future, one that is open with endless possibilities and outcomes. It is about the ever-evolving journey forward, the process and growth.

In order to better serve our youth, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, I believe that adults and society at large needs to reflect and review whether our current models are adequately meeting all the developmental needs of our youth. Namely, the need to connect knowledge with our every day lives. It is the need to connect with our spiritual self. It is the need to express our emotional self in healthy ways. It is the need for meaningful, relevant and purposeful learning experiences. As communities of learners, the answers to our questions will not be generic, but rather locally specific and relevant. In doing the work, we “will have found in (our) quest for a meaningful education for (our) school or community that the answers (we) have been seeking can be found within (ourselves), within (our) own communities” (Kirkness, 1998, p.15).

One excellent example on how to create meaningful learning experiences is the Community-Based Education Model (CBEM) out of New Mexico. The philosophy behind this model is that “community-based education is the most relevant type of education for Native American students because it acknowledges and accesses students’ home community and knowledge” (Lee, p.197). The students involved in the project worked in collaboration with community and government groups to conduct research and environmental assessments. The data collected was meaningful information used to make decisions about the development of the community. This was not ‘pretend’ work.

Progressive means that *how* we do what we do will be in constant flux along with the need for

continual reflection. The way in which challenges are addressed and new ideas emerge will inevitably vary, however it should remain directed towards growth and resilience. In our progress, we make choices and decision based on the knowledge and understanding gained from our ancestors and with the best interest of the future generations at heart.

Participatory

I envision a future in which youth are increasingly involved in the design of their learning, making decisions in their lives and contributing to the growth of their community. Participatory involvement is an open-ended process and can happen in multiple of settings – educational, community, family, youth programming.

For example, there have been a number of successful youth initiatives that have utilized multi-media tools to empower youth in meaningful projects. In particular, these kinds of projects can prove to be empowering experiences for youth when they are encouraged to choose topics that are relevant to them, that engage them in open dialogue with the community, and result in meaningful outcomes. Having control over their project (and ultimately their life) increases youth sense of empowerment. One “of the critical social factors found to affect health is that of control (Tsey, 2003; Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait, 2000; NAHO Policy Research Unit, 2003), which refers to the amount of control people have over their own lives, as well as to the network of supportive relationships they have that protect them from isolation and disconnection” (Scott, p.44).

Tish Scott spearheaded a project involving a BC First Nation's community in which she invited grade 6/7 students to choose a topic of interest revolving around the question "What does education mean?" Students created interview questions and connected with community Elders.

The resulting projects opened up new areas for learning and inquiry including the importance of food/plant knowledge, cultural practices, etc. Students and community members alike felt that the project was a positive experience that created new dialogue around important of daily life and culture.

Multimedia technology is an excellent way for students to share what they know in a personalized way. Like being behind the steering wheel of a car, students are able to direct the lense of their camera and reflect their learning back to the community – often initiating further dialogue and opening pathways for new relationships. Scott reflects on how this kind of work requires a great deal of openness, willingness, and trust to engage in these processes (Scott, p.55). In other words, trusting the process enough to "get out of the way" of the youth to allow them to steer the direction of their learning.

Tish Scott's example is one of many ways to engage youth as involved participants in the design of their learning, as well as actively connect with the greater community in meaningful ways.

Furthermore, Cameron (2006) exerts that a new paradigm of intelligence, based on loving relationships rather than IQ testing, can increase the chances of bringing forth a more respectful and collaborative world.

Positive

A positive approach to youth initiatives would highlight the presence or possession of positive qualities, rather than their absence. This means functioning from the belief that youth have the ability to make empowered choices in their lives.

Dr. Larry Brendtro, Dr. Martin Brokenleg, and Dr. Steve Van Bockern, authors of *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*, suggest that children who are often referred to as "alienated", "troubled" or "difficult" are at risk because they live in an environment that is hazardous - one that breeds discouragement. By contrast, an environment that promotes courage is one that fosters changes to meet the needs of the young person and society and subsequently reclaims youth at risk. The Circle of Courage is a philosophy that integrates the best of Western educational thought with the wisdom of indigenous cultures and emerging research on positive youth development. The circle suggests the importance of the shared values of belonging, generosity, independence, and mastery. While the four dimensions of the Circle of Courage can be described individually, they must be viewed as one.

If we assume that an appropriate amount of choice fosters a life of empowerment that in turn nurtures a sense of wellbeing – then youth programming that encourages and fosters these opportunities should be supported. If our goal is to empower youth to make healthy choices in their lives and to aspire to great things, then what factors might hinder the process? I believe that ideologically most adults would agree that they support this type of programming for youth. However, many adults themselves have not personally experienced an upbringing that was empowering. Therefore, it may be useful to consider how the family might be supported along this journey.

It is important to note that there are a number of things occurring in this situation. First, the youth wasn't blamed or punished for his actions, but rather invited to be part of taking responsibility for creating a solution that supported his needs as well as the needs of others. I believe that opportunities like these encourage life long learning skills – skills that increase the likelihood that youth will continue to develop abilities to create win-win solutions, negotiate challenging situations and feel empowered by their choices

Protective

How do we shift our focus from blaming youth for our problems to engage them in developing a community that is thriving and resilient? When I envision a friendlier future for youth, it includes a co-created and shared definition of healthy boundaries. How a community chooses to define and maintain these boundaries will differ from place to place. However, the key consideration, in my opinion, is to maintain that the *purpose* of boundaries is to create a safe and appropriate space from which youth can explore self, other and the world at large, not to keep our youth confined, controlled and “out of trouble”.

Furthermore, I believe that the intent of healthy boundaries is not to *prevent* our youth from making mistakes – as this would rob them of the opportunity to learn how to take responsibility for their actions or how to make amends – but to create a compassionate environment in which they can learn from their new experiences. Making mistakes is an integral part of becoming an adult – the ability to “pick one’s self up”.

Mentoring can play a powerful role in shifting the life of an “at-risk” youth who has “been devoid of understanding people who listen, physical and emotional safety, chances to express themselves democratically, chances to make reparation, and appropriate role models” (Wotherspoon, T. & Schissel, B., 2003). From an Aboriginal perspective, informal mentoring has had a long history, developed around shared societal values. Prior to contact with European culture, First Nations people had tribal customary practices for providing mentor-like guidance for children and youth (Klinck et al., 2005). Therefore, while formal mentoring practices may

not have been customary – the role and importance of mentoring children and youth has a long history.

In terms of protective factors, it would be essential to include the role of the family while providing safe space for youth to develop. In doing so, it is important to support the involvement of the family in such a way that does not cast blame, judgment, nor see them as deficient in any way, but rather acknowledges their strengths and successes while addressing that there is learning/healing needed in order to fill in gaps left by residential schools and other external factors.

One example of how mentoring can be incorporated into an educational setting is the Won Ska Cultural School in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. In this program: The school administrators create a democratic context in which students have the final say in their educational development. To this end, the teacher as mentor is of deep importance. The mentoring process includes not only training and the transmission of knowledge, but also the creation of mutual, idea-sharing, context in which the mentor listens as much as she or he speaks. (Schissle & Wotherspoon, 2003, p. 72)

Examples of Inspiration

"Knowledge can be communicated just through words but children learn and gain strength through experience." Dr. Martin Brokenleg

Youth Programs and Services

In the appendix of this paper I have included a number of youth services that I believe illustrate many of the ideas shared in this process. Each one either fully or in part embrace the idea that youth should be at the center of their educational or learning experience, that they should have choice in the direction of their lives, and contribute to important social and community decisions

– particularly those that affect them. These diverse programs focus on various aspect of youth support, including work experience, cultural opportunities, education, and mentorship.

Closing Reflections

During this process, I recalled my own experience as a youth. In particular, an urgent energy that had began to rise within me and it was as though I had awoken to realize that I was part of the world that I lived in, and as such had some control or influence over its state of wellbeing. News of oil spills, endangered species, child poverty all began to affect me deeply and profoundly, as though I was personally experiencing the loss and pain. Yet with this awakening came a sense of powerlessness, of despair and of apathy. We studied these events yet rarely discussed what to do about them, and it felt as though I was watching a movie whose ending had already been written despite a genuine urge to change its path. The lack of connection between math or the analysis of narratives written long ago and the “real world” seemed pointless and as a result I stopped caring about my grades or marks. What likely looked like a “lazy, unmotivated teen,” perpetuating the long held stereotype, was actually a cry to be given a chance to meaningfully contribute to my community (local or global). Given the chance, I’m sure the disinterested persona would have given way to a determined and committed agent of change.

Has much changed since the days I was a youth? Do I “see” youth as being lazy and unmotivated? I use these memories to help ground me when I imagine a more youth friendly future. Our youth are not separate from the events in the world, but rather are often highly attuned and affected by the things happening around them. In our ever-shrinking world community, our actions and the actions of others are inextricably linked. Therefore, I feel

strongly that a connection to self, place and culture will help ground us as these global tides ebb and flow. Likewise, the ability to be equipped with both traditional tools and modern technology will likely provide our youth with the resources and knowledge they need to create innovative solutions to the challenges they face.

Through this visioning process, questions arose and lingered. How can communities co-create space *with* youth that supports their talents, passions, questions and struggles? How can we further tap into the already existing potential of our youth to meaningfully contribute to the health and wellbeing of our communities? There will not be one right answer or universal truth, but rather limitless possibilities when each community comes together to design and direct their future.

My personal experiences have led me to believe that people are inherently wise, resilient and resourceful beings, able to overcome great challenges with courage, strength, creativity and humour. I believe that in general, we are compelled to move towards wellbeing, in the best way we know how. Our pursuit for wellness moves beyond physical health to equally include the spirit, the heart and the mind. This journey into wellbeing meanders in diverse and interconnected pathways that are woven into our social, cultural and personal fabrics. We learn from the people around us, the thoughts in our minds, the land we are a part of, the feelings in our heart and the song in our spirit.

References

- Andersson, N. (2008) Editorial affirmative challenges in Indigenous Resilience Research. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 6(2) 1-4.
- Antone, E. (2000). Empowering aboriginal voice in aboriginal education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 24, 92.
- Archibald, J.A. (2010). Public Lecture: "Making A Difference for Good", UBC, Vancouver October 27, 2010.
- Archibald, J. A. (2008). *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Battiste, M. (1998). Enabling the autumn seed: Toward a decolonized approach to Aboriginal knowledge, language, and education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 22, 16-27.
- Baum, A., Singer, J.E., & Baum, C.S. (1981). Stress and the environment. *Journal of Social Issues*, 37, 4-35.
- Bernard, B. (1991). *Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in the Family, School, and Community*. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

Bernard, B. (1999). Applications of resilience: possibilities and promise. In Glantz, M.D. & Johnson, J. (Eds.), *Resiliency and Development: Positive Life Adaptations*. New York: Plenum Press.

Blackstock, C. (2007). Building on the Multi-Generational Strength of First Nations Communities. *The Vanier Institute of the Family*, 2006-2007, 7-10.

Boyden, J., & Mann, G. (2005). Children's risk, resilience, and coping in extreme situations. In Ungar, M. (Eds.), *Handbook for working with children and youth: Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts* (3- 26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Burack, J., Blidner, A., Flores, H. & Fitch, T. (2007). Constructions and deconstructions of risk, resilience and wellbeing: A model for understanding the development of Aboriginal adolescents. *Australian Psychiatry*, 15 (1), 18–23.

Bushe, G. R. (2005). *Appreciative Inquiry: Foundations in Positive Organization Development*. Champaign, IL: Stipes.

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education*. Durango, CO: Kivaki Press.

Cameron, B. (2006). *SelfDesign. Nurturing Genius Through Natural Learning*.

Boulder, Colorado: Sentient Publications

Cappon, P. (2008) *Measuring success in First Nations, Inuit and Metis learning*. Referenced in:

www.ccl-cca.ca

Castellano, M.B., Archibald, L. & DeGagne, M. (2008). *From Truth to Reconciliation*

Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools: Prepared for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Council of the Haida Nation (n.d.). *Historical and Cultural Information*. Retrieved from:

www.haidanation.ca

Dewey, J. (1916/1963). *Experience and Education*. New York: Macmillan.

Doige, L. (2003). A Missing Link: Between Traditional Aboriginal Education and the Western System. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*. 27, 144.

Fine, M. (1993). Making controversy: Who's 'At-Risk'? In Wollons, R. (Eds.), *Children at risk in America: History, Concepts, and Public Policy* (91–110). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Fleming, J. & Ledogar, R.J. (2008). Resilience and Indigenous Spirituality: A Literature Review.

Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, 6(2), 47-64.

Friere, P. (1989). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Frank J. B. & Fry, R.E. (2008). *Appreciative Inquiry – A Positive Approach to Building*

Cooperative Capacity. Ohio: Tao Institute Publication.

Gatto, J.T. (1991). *The Public School Nightmare*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.lewrockwell.com/orig11/gatto6.1.1.html>

Holt, J. (1995). *Escape From Childhood*. Cambridge: Holt Associates.

HeavyRunner, I., Marshall, K. (2003). Miracle survivors. Promoting resilience in Indian

students. *Tribal College Journal*, 14, 15–18.

Kirkness, V. (1998). Our peoples' education: Cut the shackles; cut the crap; cut the mustard.

Canadian Journal of Native Education, 22, 10.

Klinck, J, et al. (2005). Mentoring programs for Aboriginal youth. *Pimatisiwin. A Journal of*

Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, 3(2), 110-130.

- Larson, R. (1989). Is feeling 'in control' related to happiness in daily life? *Psychological Reports, 64*, 775–784.
- Lee, T. (2007). *Connecting academics, Indigenous Knowledge, and commitment to community: High school students' perceptions of a Community-Based Education*. University of New Mexico. 196-216.
- Liem, G.R. (1975). Performance and satisfaction as affected by personal control over salient decisions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 31*, 232–240.
- Magruder, J., Watkins, B., & Mohr, J. (2001) *Appreciative Inquiry – Change at the Speed of Imagination*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer
- Maturana, H. R., & Varela, F. (1987). *The Tree of Knowledge*. Boston: Shambala.
- Milloy, J. (1999). *When a language dies*. Index on Censorship. 28 (4) 54-64.
- Minkler, M., & Wallerstein, N. (Eds.), (2003). *Community-based participatory research for health*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mirowsky, J., & Ross, C.E. (1983). Paranoia and the structure of powerlessness. *American Sociological Review, 48*, 228–239.

Misty Isles Economic Development Society (n.d.). *Historical and Cultural Information*.

Retrieved from: www.gohaidagwaii.ca

Mohr, B., Magruder, J., & Watkins, B. (2002) *The Essentials of Appreciative Inquiry: A Roadmap for Creating Positive Futures*. Waltham: Pegasus Communications.

NAHO Policy Research Unit. (2003). *Ways of Knowing: A framework for health research*.

Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization

Pham, L.B., Taylor, S.E., & Seeman, T.E. (2001). Effects of environmental predictability and personal mastery on self-regulatory and physiological processes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27, 611–620.

Rosenberg, M. (2003). *Life-Serving Education. When students love to learn and teachers love to teach*. Encinitas, California: PuddleDancer Press.

Resilience Research Centre (October, 6th, 2010). *Resiliency and youth initiatives*. Retrieved

from: <http://www.resilienceproject.org/>

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996). *People to People, Nation to Nation:*

Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Ottawa:

RCAP.

Satir, V. (1991). *The Satir Model: Family Therapy and Beyond*. Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books

Seligman, L. (2001). *Systems, strategies, and skills of counseling and psychotherapy*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice-Hall.

Smith, M.K. (1997, 2002) 'Paulo Freire and informal education', the encyclopaedia of informal education. [www.infed.org/thinkers/et-freir.htm. Last update: November 04, 2009]

Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Zed Books.

Stearns, M.L. (1981). *Haida Culture in Custody: The Masset Band*. Washington: University of Washington Press.

Stevenson, I. (1975). The belief and cases related to reincarnation among the Haida. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 31(4), 364-375.

Swanton, J.R. (1905). Contributions to the Ethnography of the Haida. *Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition 5: Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History*. 8(1): 1-300, New York.

Tiessen, M., Taylor, D.M., & Kirmayer, L.J. (2009). A key individual-to-community link: the impact of perceived collective control on Aboriginal youth well-being. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 7(2), 241-267.

Troyanek, T. (n.d.) Personal web journal. Retrieved from:

<http://www.troywoodintarsia.com/cfsm/cfsm.htm>

Ungar, M. & Brown, M. (2008). Distinguishing Differences in Pathways to Resilience Among Canadian Youth. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 27 (1), 1-13.

Warner, L. (2006). Native ways of knowing: let me count the ways. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 29, 149.

Weisz, J.R., Stevens, J.S., Curry, J.F., Cohen, R., Craighead, W.E., Burlingame WV, Smith A, Weiss B, & Parmelee, D.X. (1989). Control-related cognitions and depression among inpatient children and adolescents. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 28, 358–363.

Weisz, J.R., Sweeney, L., Proffitt, V., & Carr, T. (1993). Control-related beliefs and self-reported depressive symptoms in late childhood. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 102, 411–418.

Wells, G. (1986). *The Meaning Makers*. Toronto, ON: Hodder & Stoughton.

Whitney, D., & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2003). *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry – A Practical Guide to Positive Change*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Wong, P.T.P., Wong, L.C.J., & Scott, C. (2006). Beyond stress and coping: The positive psychology of transformation. In P.T.P. Wong & L.C.J. Wong (Eds.), *Handbook of Multicultural Perspectives on Stress and Coping* (1-28). New York: Springer.

Wotherspoon, T, & Schissel, B. (2001). The business of placing Canadian children and youth “at-risk”, *Canadian Journal of Education*, 26, 321-339.

Additional Internet Resources/Sites of Interest

Aboriginal Healing Foundation	www.ahf.ca
Circle of Courage	www.reclaiming.com
Urban Native Youth Association	www.unya.bc.ca
Canadian Council Learning	www.ccl-cca.ca
Aboriginal Traditions and Storytelling	http://cado.ayn.ca/index.asp
Canada’s Digital Collection Initiative	
Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council	www.afnyouth.ca

Appendix

UNYA (Urban Native Youth Association)

www.unya.bc.ca/

About:

The Urban Native Youth Association was founded in 1989, and manages numerous programs for Aboriginal youth. They owe their success to the active engagement of youth at every level, including their board.

The programs range in age from 13-29. Their work includes community development, training, research, educational materials, and advocacy. UNYA's main goal is to provide opportunities for Native youth that will help them reach their full potential and personal goals.

What I value about this program:

- Youth are involved at every level of program development, including engaging youth in peer surveying
- Building relationships with youth is fundamental. Mentors and youth workers are chosen because they demonstrate high levels of genuine respect and rapport with youth.
- Through these relationships – youth seek out additional resources, such as drug and alcohol counseling
- UNYA operations include a Youth Advisory Council that contributes to the direction of the organization

The Aboriginal Community Youth Resilience Network (ACYRN)

<http://www.ciet.org/>

About:

The Aboriginal Community Youth Resilience Network (ACYRN) takes a community approach to reducing what is usually known as “youth risk”. ACYRN believes that First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, through the practice of their traditional values and culture, have an underestimated potential for collective and individual resilience, which can be channeled into the prevention of youth suicide.

What I value about this program:

- ACYRN promotes wellbeing, and believe that reducing risk and boosting resilience go hand in hand.
- They believe resilience includes spirituality, family strength, Elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, identity, and support networks.
- ACYRN believes that ultimately it is up to each community to decide how to participate, and take preventive action based on available evidence and resources.

Resolving Conflicts Creatively Program (RCCP)

<http://www.ncrel.org>

About:

The Resolving Conflicts Creatively Program (RCCP) has been lauded for its success in creating school change by effectively introducing a value system that results in students solving conflicts peacefully. In operation since 1985, RCCP is aimed at all youth, not just those in the high-risk category. The program involves continual training of teachers, who then train their students in RCCP. The program does not advocate walking away from conflict. Rather, it focuses on constructive problem solving by using such skills as perspective taking, cost-benefit analysis, decision-making, and negotiation (DeJong, 1994).

What I value about this program:

- Youth create their own solutions to challenges
- Teaches conflict resolution strategies versus avoidance

The Circle of Courage

<http://www.reclaiming.com>

About:

The Circle of Courage, is a model of youth empowerment supported by contemporary research, the heritage of early youth work pioneers and Native philosophies of child care. The central theme of this model is that a set of shared values must exist in any community to create environments that ultimately benefit all.

The model is represented by a circle - the medicine wheel - and is divided into quadrants. Likewise, it expresses the sacredness of the number four - the four directions, the four elements of the universe, and the four races. Each quadrant of the CIRCLE OF COURAGE stands for a central value - belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity - of an environment that can claim and reclaim all youth. It represents the "cultural birthright for all the world's children."

What I value about this program:

- The use of traditional models (eg. Medicine wheel) with contemporary application (belonging)
- The philosophy has been used in many youth contexts with great success
- The empowering nature of the four grounding values (belonging, mastery, independence, generosity)

McCreary Centre Society

www.mcs.bc.ca

About:

The McCreary Centre Society is a small non-profit organization concerned with the health of young people in British Columbia. Since 1977 McCreary has conducted community-based research and projects addressing current youth health issues.

Of particular interest is their “Aboriginal Next Step” Workshop that was developed to give aboriginal youth a chance to identify their health issues and the opportunity to develop recommendations and solutions for improving the health of young people in their community.

What I value about this program:

- The Next Steps workshops are youth centered, youth-directed and youth friendly
- They believe that projects and research results are shared with participating communities and that they interpret findings and decide on course of action
- Their broad and inclusive definition of “health”

Future Cents

<http://www.futurecents.ca/>

About:

Future Cents is a program designed to help at-risk youth overcome the many barriers confronting them. They are a not for profit organization providing a range of services by youth for youth. Future Cents is a team of youth who utilize their experiences by providing confidential support while advocating for services, which relate to the ongoing barriers of a youth. They believe in the potential of all youth to become positive contributing members of the community. Future Cents enables this by empowering youth to develop their internal qualities to achieve their goals. It is their belief that by doing this it will encourage the youth of today to do the best they can for the youth of tomorrow.

What I value about this program:

- Youth to youth mentoring
- Belief that all youth have potential to contribute in positive ways
- Personal goal setting and learning plans created by each youth and supported by staff
- Youth decide what outcomes to work towards