

***Reanimating Storywork: Indigenous Elders' Reflections
on Leadership by Norma Rose Point***

Edited and introduced by Alannah Young-Leon

SFU Indigenous Student Centre, 2011

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Introduction

By Alannah Young-Leon

Although post-secondary institutions provide training for future leaders, few provide relevant models of Aboriginal leadership training and often do not have relevant resources by Indigenous authors. To address this gap we have, in this project, *Elders' Reflections: Reanimating Storywork*, compiled eight full text interviews on Indigenous leadership with local Elders, to be accessible to the wider community through the SFU Institutional Repository.

While the Elders have embraced the possibilities of wider access through technology, we affirm that they remain the rights of authorship and retain copyright of their stories. In this way we aim to reaffirm and restore Indigenous pedagogical forms and contribute Indigenous knowledge perpetuation from Indigenous perspectives, while honouring Indigenous intellectual property rights/protocols.

These interviews were originally conducted as part of my MA work entitled "Elders Teachings on Indigenous Leadership: Leadership is a gift." I identified nine themes important in Indigenous Leadership that emerged from the Elders' teachings: Aboriginal historical perspectives, positive cultural Indigenous Knowledge (IK), decolonizing and self-determined education, community service, holistic pedagogy, respect, responsibility, relationships and reciprocity. Guided by the teachings of the Elders, I concluded that strong Indigenous leadership is developed by empowering people to reclaim cultural values through the investigation of local living genealogies, oral histories and reflexive praxis, within an environment that supports self-determined changes. It was clear in the Elder's stories that leadership is a gift and a responsibility: we must step forward and demonstrate community responsibilities.

These nine themes delivered within an anti-racism education framework contribute to the understanding about Indigenous leadership and broaden the existing views of leadership and inform Aboriginal programs, pedagogy and retention at post-secondary.

While small word bundles were extracted and published in my MA study of Indigenous leadership, this is the first place where the extended interviews of the eight Indigenous Elders are available. This project reflects an Indigenous storywork process and supports a political self-determined sovereignty initiative that aims to reflect the teachings of the Ancestors in ways that they would recognize.

Location/Place of the Researcher

My name is Alannah Young-Leon. My background is that of a member of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Treaty #5 and former member of Peguis Anishnabe, Treaty #1, in Manitoba. I am a visitor to British Columbia's unceded traditional territories where I share my life with my Coast Salish partner from Chehalis BC. My perspectives and positions are outlined next.

I acknowledge the leadership of the sacred directions, the earth, air, water and fire and the plant and animal relatives. I come from the Muskeg Ininiwak peoples and acknowledge our place in Creation through my clan systems and the teachings of Treaty inherent in Indigenous wisdom traditions. We acknowledge these relations as extended families and the life-long responsibilities associated with these relations. Our engagement with research confirms that the Ancestral Teachings continue to provide education leadership excellence that benefit of all peoples.

I acknowledge many circumstances that have brought me to this work: while I understand the history and ongoing dispossession of Indigenous lands and access to resources in this place, I also acknowledge that I am a responsible citizen of sovereign nations governed under treaty agreements; I consider my work to address solutions that can repair this on-going violence rooted in the history of dispossession, enforced and founded on racism and violence.

The Indigenous Teachings are gifts and this knowledge demands that leadership aspirants (everyone is a leader) prepare themselves to be ready because they contain lifelong responsibilities. The Elder's life histories and stories tell a narrative that engages the political, the educational and the spiritual dimensions and inspire and animate our own life long leadership explorations.

I understand the serious commitment to reciprocal relationship building that is required for working with and protecting Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and thus I approached the SFU First Nations Study Program's Deanna Reder, the Indigenous Student Centre's Jenna La France and Chelsea Mackay, and the Institutional Repository's Don Taylor. We acknowledged and followed the local Indigenous protocols and involved the Elders in a series of consultations to reflect an appropriate respectful, reciprocal relationship building process, while discussing how to protect the Indigenous Knowledge holders' responsibilities to the collective knowledge characteristic of IK and thus the Elders specify that they remain the holders of the information and stories they share herein.

In briefly referencing my own stories here I intend to convey the braiding together several Elders' life histories, to contribute to Indigenous narratives that engages the political, the educational and the spiritual dimensions of Indigeneity. Indigeneity that invokes a decolonized sense of being in the world, one that sustains other ways of being in a place and space that operates beyond dispirited and displaced patriarchal notions of

nationhood (Grande 2004, 174) and an adamant refusal to dissociate culture, identity and power from the land (Lyons 200, 457).

Context

The Elders were interviewed at the University of British Columbia, as part of the development of the Longhouse Leadership Program (LLP) at the First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) –a non-credit student support service. In order to further explore aspects of Indigeneity, I interviewed nine Elders who have worked with the FNHL. The MA was entitled “Elders’ Teachings on Indigenous Leadership: Leadership is a Gift”. We discussed what the role of culture is in leadership development and how cultural aspects and storywork processes were factors in their own leadership development.

Reanimating Archibald’s storywork principles provided a relevant research framework for the work the Elders and we create together. Storywork and storytelling is central to Aboriginal education and incorporating anti-racist education with culturally relevant pedagogy will transform leadership education, theory and practice. Lifelong learning that reflects the teachings of extended family relationship responsibilities are still relevant today and are conveyed herein.

I applied Sto:lo scholar, Jo-ann Archibald’s storywork principles to help guide the research journey. This project is part of the post research engagement relationship responsibilities. Storywork as described by Archibald (2008) brings together Indigenous ways of knowing and leading and teaches how to remain connected to the land and to each other.

Author Biography

Norma Rose Point/Papet is from Thompson River, Seabird Island and xwmuthkwey'um Musqueam and has worked for the Musqueam education committee since 1965. She is retired and has worked for the Vancouver School Board and numerous community health organizations in Vancouver. She is the Elder in Residence for post-secondary institutions at the UBC First Nations House of Learning, British Columbia's Institute for Technology (BCIT) and the UBC Institute for Aboriginal Health. She was a post-secondary student, foster mother and grandmother. She has received numerous awards for early childcare education service. She has been a long time committee member of xwmuthkwey'um Musqueam education, Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Coastal Health, UBC Institute of Aboriginal Health, and Native Indian Teacher Education Program at UBC. Rose has witnessed seven generations of her own family, fostered many children and was trained by family midwives. She shared her long standing knowledge about traditional infant child care, medicinal plants and general health care practices as she worked many years within the health care systems.

Reanimating Storywork:

Indigenous Elders' Reflections on Leadership by Norma Pose Point

Alannah Young (AY): *How would you describe Indigenous leadership?*

Rose Point (RP): How would I describe Indigenous leadership? I feel that leadership does not start all of a sudden in adulthood. Leadership training starts at a very young age. Leadership is being able to help people that are in need, being friends with people, as your peers; looking at what things that need to be done and making the effort to make sure things are done; never making comments today to anyone or to say anything wrong to anyone that you might be sorry for tomorrow. 'Cause that reflects on them and anyone who demeans you in any way or says a cross word to you -not to take it personal because it may be a bad day for that other person. Not to retaliate or keep grudges.

I could remember I must have been about eight years old when someone was sick on my reserve, we would walk and bring something to that person and try to help the family. I remember my aunt would bring me walking in the moonlight and snow on the ground. That person, he was quite ill, he was bedridden; we bought some fruit to him and some bread my aunt had baked. It was about three miles from my place and we walked and the first time I was able to walk in the moonlight and the snow had a crust on top and I could remember how I didn't think of the distance because I saw the sparkle of the moon and the snow and hearing the crackle of the snow under my feet. Getting to the house it was so quiet. The doctor was there and other people were there visiting and I never ever thought of the length of time we had to walk it was getting there. I was so happy that we were able to visit. And I think that this is the strength to keep on going, to help other people even though they are old and they are suffering. Helping the ones that are left after they go, saying good bye and helping the family. That carries on I think for the rest of your life. I think the joy in your heart in helping others continues.

My aunt, this is what I can remember, said that people are going to make fun of me because I am Indian – don't take it. They are being bad people but because they don't know me as a person they are saying those things, but if they knew me, they wouldn't be saying that – they used to call me a dumb dirty Indian. So when people are being racist I take it – it's not me but there's a wall that this person is building in front of them. It's their wall it's not my wall.

Not very long ago I took my foster grandchildren to a restaurant in Harrison Hot Springs and explained to them, we are going to this restaurant and they had all this fancy tablecloths and everything set glasses white table cloths. I was bringing in my four

children in with me, Indian children. They said that we have no reservations, we have no room but there was all this room, about a hundred tables and the children said, but look, there is all this space there. I said, well actually I know that we were rejected because we are Indians, and children, we were not the type of patrons they wanted in their place. So we went to a Japanese restaurant and they welcomed us. The children had a good time and we ended up spending \$140.00 in that restaurant and I told the kids, you know it's their loss and we had a good time there and not to begrudge that other restaurant for not accepting us.

AY: *Leadership involves teaching how to respond to racism in a positive way so that it doesn't affect our well-being. Our family's experiences and stories teach us how to think about our relationships and we remember that caring for people helps us become better people and builds leadership.*

RP: Yeah, and I tell them that if a person points a finger at you, then they have three pointing back at them. I can remember my grandson he was quite upset because a bus driver had passed him by and I didn't know that he almost cried. I told him, well, that bus driver must have had a bad morning. It wasn't you that it had to do with and I didn't know that my son had told him the same thing. So I think that what we teach goes from generation to generation. I think if leadership had an understanding of human nature then that understanding of human nature is a part of building leadership. I can remember my aunt and uncle who brought me up used to always say, come on chin up if you're feeling kind of down.

To carry ourselves in a proper way – we were not allowed to slouch in a chair. I think that is part of leadership training, acting the part appropriately and presenting yourself in the proper way. I can remember having to walk around the house with a book on our head. If we were slouching they would put a book on our head and walk around. The way that you carry yourself is important. How to act in public, your mannerisms, it doesn't come natural, it is taught. It was taught in preteens from ages 7-10. Part of training was to know how to look after yourself and your environment and being safe. Safety for oneself and the environment around you. What I mean about the environment is that your peers, the animals and whatever was put on earth you have to take of those relationships. I know that as part of the leadership training. That we stay with it and make sure that we stay with it until it's finished.

Building self-esteem with our children I know has always been my leadership priority and accepting children's inquisitiveness and seeing inquisitiveness as being a tool to learning. Accepting the children's good times, bad times and how to cope with and redirect and children that have anger. I know that a lot of parents are unaware of why children have tantrums and understanding what triggers tantrums and how to handle it and how to redirect are skills that can be taught and learned. Like for instance in the store you see a lot of children have a difficult time coping with everything that's there they want everything but the parents say no they can't afford that. I think the child

today, bringing the child to store could be a learning experience because we have the woods, they don't have the experience of seeing things grow. They don't know how things get there, to the store. And helping children to understand these that – this is where the preschool or early childhood educators could have a child experience in planting something and seeing it grow.

AY: *Fostering relationships to land and to develop land literacies are important leadership skills to cultivate beyond the human relationships. At the Indigenous Graduate Symposium you mentioned one project where a baby was part of the curricula to help children relate to children from other age groups. You also have experience in midwifery.*

RP: I know that parents are often afraid of jealousy among siblings and one way parents can handle that is to have the older children help with caring for the younger one. When I was eleven I witnessed my first childbirth. This is one of the problems I have that when a child was being born there was bright lights and nurses and doctors there, but when my sister was having her child at home and I know it was in the afternoon that there is only one doctor there and it was in a small corner of the room and they put a dark blanket the windows even though it was the north side of the house so that when the baby was born they wouldn't get a light shock because the baby comes from a dark place and when the baby opens their eyes it won't be so frightening.

As soon as the baby was born they had the water for the bath in the kitchen. Of course we didn't have any running water so, the water and the kitchen had to be warm. I was taught how to bath and exercise the baby. My aunt put the baby's foot under the table like this and as soon as the baby's toes touch the table it will push up and sure enough that's how you test the reflexes of a new born baby. So if the baby does that then you know that the reflexes and the mind are working. And then you bath and massage the baby and wiggle its toes arms and legs so that they would get moving because it was so cramped up in the womb, you know, nine months.

After the bathing, the mother would nurse the baby and after the first bowel movement, wrap the baby up. The first bowel movement is very important it has to be done within so many hours and then you wrap the baby up. Wrapping the baby up and putting the infant in the cradle. You have to wrap the baby so that the bones will grow straight. The arms, the legs, the feet, if the toes are what they call pigeon toed or bow legged, you wrap a face cloth and put it between there and wrap them together in a receiving blanket and straighten it, so that the baby will walk straight and will not have any problem running. The first three months that's when you wrap the baby because that's when the baby grows the fastest and will double their weight. When you put the baby in the basket, you put another cloth at the nape of the neck when you lay the baby on its back so that the baby head won't flatten. Wrap the receiving blanket at the ears too, so that the ears would flatten.

When the baby is in the womb sometimes the ears get twisted and it kind of sticks out, so wrap tight just enough so that by three months the ears will be flat. Children who have ears sticking out too far have to get an operation when they are older to pin their ear back. Each morning you exercise the baby and massage the baby anytime the baby is out of the basket for circulation and to strengthen the muscles. Talking and singing to the baby is also very important. I learned that keeping the baby dry, nobody told me this, but when the baby wets itself, clean them right away because the baby doesn't like the feel of anything wet or messy. If they are trained before they are a year old then they will try to let you know before they have to go on their own. I don't believe putting a baby on the potty until they go, if they don't go within two minutes take them off. If they feel like going they will let you know.

AY: *A lot of people don't consider themselves as leaders even though other people see that in them – what do you think helped you to be where you are now?*

RP: I have always believed in children and when my children were going to hockey if they needed a timekeeper I was always there volunteering for something. I think volunteering and helping to make things happen. I can remember when the priests needed altar boy cassocks he came and asked me if I could do it. I said okay. All I had was a singer treadle machine and I said I could do it. These altar boy cassocks were down to the floor. He says you know that the reason I asked you, is because I always ask the busiest person, if I want to get something done. I asked them. I was always helping others, my sons went to elementary, a catholic school, and I was always helping there on hotdog day and driving the class around.

Before I got married I was working at Coqualeetza hospital, I was also volunteering there outside of work hours. We used to sing Christmas songs for patients or at staff Christmas parties or at other events. And at the residential school we always had something to do. There were concerts or dancing and I don't know why they picked my sister and I to show movies to the preventorium patients. They always showed the movies to the younger kids and to the older kids. So they taught us how to operate these huge movie projectors. We used to watch *Tom Snow*, *Roy Rodgers*, *Gene Autry* . . . I was about fifteen. Oh yeah, one of my jobs when I was sixteen was working infirmary. I used to look after the children who were sick. I would bring them their breakfast, make sure they had their water and in the morning or if they had a scratch or a cut I would put a band aid on it. I made sure their hands were clean, I always had about ten children each morning. If any of them had head lice, I had to do that too.

As I was growing up at home my aunt always said cleanliness was important. We may have old clothes but we always had to look after them no matter how old they were. And Saturdays was my day for washing clothes and I could remember how it got carried on through my life because I remember my aunt would be boiling dish towel and face cloths over the stove and put them away. Especially dish and face towels had their own special place they were not mixed in with other things and that each time we did dishes

we had to have a clean dish cloth and towels each time and I think that really helped us health wise. We didn't have kleenex in those days, we had handkerchiefs and those had to be boiled as well. Now I think she was helping us to keep almost disease free.

And eating well. I can remember that we did a lot of canning fruit and vegetables and drying fish which was important for the wintertime. My grandfather would trade vegetables for smoked fish because we didn't smoke fish. That was traded for fruits and vegetables, so that we always had our salmon. People would come to our place to trade.

We had cows; my grandfather must have had about twenty. I think we had eight or ten and of course chickens, I was in Seabird. I think that having worked in the hospital helped reinforce what I learned about hygiene and carried it on with my own children about how to look after our health. I am not the cleanest person. I sometimes think what would my aunt say if she sees me today? We have the dishwasher and the washing machine. I can remember we had to wash and rinse twice and that's what an automatic washer does. I can remember not having a washer and then having two children right after each other, there was quite a lot of chores. I can remember my children the first two loads include clothes and then diapers. We didn't have disposable diapers, seven dozen diapers to wash every other day.

My aunt was telling me when I was born she was there because my mother wanted her there and my grandmother was the midwife. They always had a young girl as a witness for the birth and that was part of the training for young women. So that we would think twice before we had sex. You don't just sleep around to have babies. Babies are supposed to be brought up with a purpose.

That is the part that I call protecting innocence. You teach people the purpose of having children and having to protect them from making mistakes and understanding the consequences of their actions. You don't do anything today that you be sorry for tomorrow and giving them guidelines on how to live. Choosing the right partners and seeing the signs in a person that you are interested in. A person has to be treated with respect like the way you should treat others with respect.

Mistakes can happen and that people do learn from mistakes in life, like trial and error. We have to let children learn from their mistakes and not isolate them from the world that they are going into. Allow them to make choices. I don't believe in punishing children. I don't believe in corporal punishment. I don't believe in spanking or reprimanding a child for doing something wrong because they are learning. And this is one thing I had a problem with the public schools.

When I was working as an education coordinator and they said well they have to be punished. Sometimes punishment is too severe and the child may begin to resent the punisher and resist. I think that is what happened with the residential schools. You have to be punished no matter what. The school that my children went to, my first two sons,

they had punishment there but with my other two sons they start the conflict resolution which I really believe in. Public schools, I think they expel a child for breaking the rules or getting into a fight.

I believe conflict resolution is part of our culture: I never remember getting spanked, sworn at, or getting punished for anything that I did wrong. We were talked to and explained why we shouldn't do those things. Conflict resolution is where you take the two parties that are getting into a fight and talk to both of them apart and then talk to them together; have them talk to each other about why they got angry. Then write a letter to each other saying I am sorry, but this is how we will handle it. And that way the two parties don't miss school and then they get an understanding of each other. I believe that how it was handled when I was growing up, it was conflict resolution. If they were going to discuss a conflict they would never do it at mealtime, they always do it at another time. We were never sent for punishment or had to do chores for punishment. I find that a lot of parents do this, oh you're behaving bad, you have to do dishes for the week. Like the school that I worked at, they made the students clean the yard for a punishment. I believe that they get to hate doing chores because they see it as a punishment, not as something that has to be done.

Or sending your child to bed, the bed is supposed to be a place of serenity and peacefulness, rest, but if you send the child to their room to bed as punishment then that's what they will learn. They will wonder why they are having a hard time getting their kids to go to bed when they get older. I can remember I used to love dry rolled oats, still do, and I know that my aunt could see the trail of rolled oats going to the bedroom and they never said anything to me about taking rolled oats to bed. So I was never punished for it even though they saw the trail.

When our sons would come home late past their curfew fifteen minutes late, the next day they would have to come home fifteen minutes early. So that was the consequence. One of my nieces came home and her mother said she is going to be grounded for a month. I said, don't ground her, she was thirteen. They said, no she's our child and this is what we are going to do, and they did ground her. I said, the school has already punished her don't punish her at home. She started climbing out of her bedroom window and running away. So the grounding didn't help.

I know when one of my foster children had been expelled from school for three days, he was riding around the reserve the days. He was expelled and the principal called me in and says, what is he doing riding around the days he is expelled from school? She said I should have kept him in and I said he's already got his punishment from the school. I don't have to punish him at home. She said, you are supposed to be helping. He would have a double whammy and that reinforces his hatred for school.

I feel that reinforcing the positive when they do good reinforce it by rewarding it. In September I use to increase their allowance so that they could look forward to school

because their allowance would be going up. And then by accepting each child for what they are and not what we would want them to be, encourage them. Encouragement is I think the greatest part of bringing up a child as a leader.

I never realised how we teach our children and how that carries through to the next generation. Taking responsibility with your children but letting them take chances in what they believe. I've seen children be so insulated where the families say these are the rules of this house and I am talking about parenting styles where the child doesn't have any rights where they can't even decide what TV show to watch. So I feel democracy like when my late husband was alive we would take a vote on what we are going to watch tonight.

So that we have respect the rights of the children even though we are the bread winners of the house and get them to understand that their rights are not only inside the household but out there anywhere. I can remember when my son was nine years old there was a lady behind him tried to get ahead him and he said no, I was here before you. The clerk had to serve him even though he had a little package and she said she was in a hurry. So they have to learn to stand up for their rights and understand that they have rights and learn this in the home. I know that this could be in the leadership program.

I like what they do here in committees they not only have the administration and faculty here but they also have students as part of the committee which is also a form of leadership. A form of accepting and affirming. Sometimes as leaders we pigeon hole ourselves this is the way things are done where as you get the new blood in get new fresh ideas because the world is always changing.

The Longhouse culture has four direction witnesses. Calling witnesses was traditionally no written histories, they always called two witnesses to pass on the information to verify the facts. Like in child was born to this family and was born on this date. I remember I was working at the Vancouver museum and I was reading an old newspaper about a mask and they said miraculously two people survived an attack. Well when our people would attack they would always leave two people, like two witnesses. The reason you leave two witnesses is because one person only sees one side and the other person sees the other half. My aunt and uncle says only believe half of what you see. You can only ever see one side of a story and not the whole thing. Also one verifies the other.

One of the things my aunt says that I never mentioned. I tried to live by it, is to refrain from alcohol until you are 21. She said alcohol ages you faster. So I was 22 when I had my first taste of alcohol. Do not drink alcohol two years before conception and all during the childbearing years. From the nine years old we had to sit in front of the community and raise our right hand and say we were not to consume alcohol until we are 21 years old. In those days Indian weren't allowed to drink, it was against the law. Even when I

was 21 we were allowed in the beer parlours but still I didn't go because I had no hankering for alcohol.

All during childbearing years, so my late husband and I got married, my aunt reinforced this and we didn't have alcohol at our wedding and in 1957. Our first son was born and so all during the child bearing years I didn't consume alcohol. The other thing that kept us young was to keep out of the sunshine in our youth up to sixteen between 11 am and 2 pm June, July, and August. In fact, when we were picking berries she would send us indoors. I have pictures of my two young children sitting in the shade it was during that time and they were toddlers at that time. So I carried that through. I think about how it's helped me and helped my children and now we find out that exposure causes cancer too much exposure to the sun and that must be the times it was dangerous between 11am-2 pm in June, July, and August. Alcohol it was part of protection of innocence and protection from the sun is also protecting them.

In thinking it over I thought of leadership as having purpose in life and being able to make decisions. You have a plan of action and then you follow those plans. And if those plans aren't necessarily the right plans then you can always seek help from someone else that you might confide in. I will listen to someone who may know something more than I would.

When I got my first job out of high school I was working as a waitress and I thought being a waitress was a pretty good job. I was the first Indian to work as a waitress at Agassiz or even at a store at Agassiz. I held that job for a year and then the priest came and said, that kind of job is not for you. You need another job, a better job. He said this is not for you, you can't be doing this for the rest of your life, you need a better job other than being waitressing. He said, I am going to look for another job for you and so he did. He said there are positions opening at the Coqualeetza hospital, and I always wanted to be a nurse because I worked in the infirmary at the residential school. But then when I went to apply to the nursing school, I failed the exam and I thought there was nothing else left.

Then I went to the hospital and applied for a job and that is how I ended up working at Coqualeetza hospital. I don't know if I told you the last time but when I applied they put me as a maid rather than a nurses' aid. All the white girls that applied for a job, if they had grade nine education, they started working as a nurses' aid. While the Indian ladies, if they applied for a job, they started out as a maid, cleaning and washing floors and windows. There was quite a few of us that just got out of residential school had gone for nurses training the following September and they started work in the kitchen as a maid.

I guess that was a government position. They didn't put Indian people in those positions or places. You had to prove yourself and so I went there for about six months and then they put me as a nurses' aid. And other jobs such as when the dentist came I had to be

a dental assistant. And then when the x-ray technician came and needed x-rays to be developed they taught me how to develop x-rays. We used to do about three hundred at a time and we would do that. Then after that the position as an assistant lab technician came up and I applied for the job and I got it. They taught me how to do x-rays and they wouldn't have to call the x-ray technician in on Saturdays or Sunday. They taught my friend and I how to do x-rays so we would just go and do the x-ray and then develop the film and then the doctor would have it on Monday. The willingness to learn to do these things without hesitation, learning new things is part of leadership. Instead of no, I can't, or no I won't, it is not in my job description. We just do it. My friend and I alternated being receptionist, which meant that we were administrators because the doctors, the nurses and orderlies, nurses aids had to report to us if they couldn't come in. They gave us a list of names that would substitute and even the doctors if there was an emergency at the hospital there would be a doctor on call. This was a two hundred and forty bed hospital today it sometimes scares me to think here I was a receptionist doing those things. And I didn't even think about it at the time, things had to be done and I did them.

AY: *You had a lot of responsibilities sounds like, to know where things go, who to call, how things get done. I imagine it must have been comforting for Native people to see you there.*

RP: I never thought of that. I never thought of myself as being racist. In a way I think that was over in away because there was a consultant that came in and he was reorganizing the whole office and he asked me out to dinner and I said no. I was definite I was going to marry my own kind.

AY: *I was just at a talk that it makes sense that people are working with racism because that is the history we deal with so it's one of the skills we need to work at, our own and others racism because it caused unnecessary pain.*

RP: I think the racism at that time was so great and yet I never let it take me down. It was there, it was a fact, and I would never lose sleep over it. Plus my aunt said no matter what anybody says to us we know who we are and what we have to do. If they are going to treat us like that it is they're problem, not ours. Don't take it on as your problem. She says chin up, chin up. No matter what anybody says we don't hang our head or cry over something that is not our problem. I am really glad she did because there was many times that there was racism.

AY: *So by her encouragement and letting you know as long as you know who you are that is the most important thing, don't let others bog you down. It is more about their problems.*

RP: Yes, I tell that to my son and that they must have had a bad day.

AY: *It was your aunt and the priest who encouraged you, to go for your plan of action, support you to achieve your goals in life, what direction you wanted to go.*

RP: I didn't know where I wanted to go after being turned down for going into nursing, seemed like there was nothing else left. Then having the priest talked me into going to the hospital helped me to take the next step.

After I got married I really wanted to get an automatic washing machine. I had two children and we just had a wringer washer. I did some substituting at Vancouver General hospital as a nurses' aid I did that working two months I was able to get a washing machine. Even there I learned to, well I already had the experience of working with other people and there just broadened my experiences with all different types of people and patients. There were very ill people and parents of children that were very sick or who had great distress.

AY: *So that was some of your experience in high school and when you had children, how did you start working with the House of Learning at UBC?*

RP: I was on the Aboriginal advisory committee for the school of social Work, invited me to sit on this advisory committee in 1990. Then the director of House of Learning he invited me there and that is how I became member of some of the committees there, the First Nations Health Careers committee and Native Indian Teacher Education Program committee. I am still with the Institute of Aboriginal Health and I found it very interesting people from all over B.C. want to help people. Knowing that you are helping in some way, in any way you can. You help people not only helping the students, but you are helping these students help other people. And it spreads.

I never thought of it that way until I was talking to a friend, she was a preschool teacher here and I was telling her about what I was taught about childcare and on how to look after my children and sharing what I learned when I was a preteen and teen. She said I hope you thanked your aunt because she didn't know that you also helped me and my children. Intergenerational leadership, I think this is how I see it sitting on an advisory committee. Everyone gains when we put our minds together. If I feel that I have something to contribute to the situation or the discussion you are not only helping the students but you are helping the students help someone else. So that's filling it the intergenerational gap.

AY: *The advisory committee is usually people in the know, from a variety of perspectives so you get to receive lots of expert information in a short amount of time from diverse professions and disciplines. I am sure they value your intergenerational perspectives because the work is about creating healthy communities and that we get realistic perspectives on how to be helpful.*

RP: I can remember in one meeting they couldn't figure out why a mother didn't want her band notified about her situation. I explained that because some mothers and grandmothers lost their status and even though they gained it back there is some intergenerational feelings of rejection from the band and it may be the reason why there is a lot of resentment. There are some ladies that have lost their status close to sixty years before they regained it.

AY: *So the imposed state legislated racism of the past, has ongoing consequences in the present and understanding this is crucial for effective leadership. You have a wide variety of leadership experience. I was wondering if there are any memorable, defining moments or event that happened during your time at the House of Learning that you would like to share?*

RP: After getting to know the people I felt more comfortable. Getting to know the students and becoming a student myself made a difference. I am really glad I did go back to school and being a student, I found it very difficult to take on the writing, it is very hard for me. But then what has helped me in the last month is that when I am writing I don't worry about the mechanics of writing but to think about talking to someone and telling them what I want them to know. Getting the message down in paper, it was easier to do it that way. I really didn't think that I had anything important to say until the Indigenous Graduate Symposium in 2005.

I can't remember if it was after the opening or the farewell she came to me with tears in her eyes and said that was just great. I never ever knew I had that effect on people. It kind of scares me to think that, it was like when I was in social work we would talk and say things to people you know is right. They are looking for help and you help them. This is how I do the opening or the farewells just say things that will help and give them guidance. This one time that kind of frightened me but then people do need guidance to open their hearts and do the right thing for themselves and the people.

AY: *It is important. I remember hearing a story where people who have heard the drums for the first time and they cried. They get overwhelmed and it helps them.*

RP: It is like what people say, oh, it gave me goose pimples. I have heard the warrior dancers from Musqueam and I have even been part of them but this one time I heard them and it gave me this really feeling over my whole self. They gave it a Musqueam word for it and they say there is no translation for that feeling or affect. There is that feeling that you can't put into words the unspoken words.

AY: *Yes so something about you or your message really resonates with people who maybe didn't even know they needed to hear that, sometimes it is like that. So you were able to recognize that gift that you have that other people recognized and reflected it back to you. It is really important to have the intergenerational continuity because it speaks to our need for family and community and so if an older person is there with their*

experience usually the people who are younger recognize that and if they don't then it is a helpful reminder. What do you think the youth are missing from our culture that might help to develop themselves?

RP: To have an understanding of their history. What it means. How it developed. Interpreting what is being taught to them and take what is necessary to carry on with life.

AY: *Earlier you talked about the coming of age ceremony to get the information they need to help them, to connect them to history and how we have maintained our values despite the racism.*

RP: The coming of age ceremony it is not necessarily a ceremony, I guess it is, in that you do pass on teachings over a period of time, information that would not be harmful. Always being safe and in a safe atmosphere. I can remember my aunt would take us to a dance and if anybody had alcohol on their breath we weren't allowed to dance with them. Even at age thirteen, fourteen she would take us to dances and it was being able to learn your social graces how to act in public. Going to church which was necessary. Learning right from wrong. Confirmation at the Catholic church was when we made the oath not to drink until we were twenty one.

A healthy lifestyle and after that we said no smoking and no sex before marriage. Keeping ourselves busy at all times, we all had chores to do and how to keep ourselves clean. How to wash clothes and so on. The part where witnessing childbirth and bathing the baby right after the baby is born because the after birth as the midwife was helping the mother, there was always something else with the baby.

AY: *When I had my girl, we had an urban homebirth with a Cree midwife, my family buried the placenta near our ceremonial grounds. So the placenta was buried at our ceremony grounds, some people put them in the tree but that signifies her relationship to Mother Earth as being the mother, beyond humans. So that she would remember that. My sister had her girl with the same midwife and it was the first birth registration on reserve in over fifty years.*

RP: I don't know if they did that because I was busy with the baby.

AY: *When my girl had her coming of age ceremony we negotiated several different protocols – my parents, extended family here, all were involved and we negotiated with my daughter how it was going to work.*

RP: My neighbour, her sister had a baby and she went to the hospital when she was twelve years old, she got to see her niece born.

AY: *Lucky, I got to witness a birth with my daughter, very special experience, a sacred ceremony.*

RP: I was twenty five when I had my first child. He just turned forty six yesterday. I got married when I was twenty three and there was no alcohol at our wedding. Everybody that came to the wedding respected that.

AY: *It is similar in our medicine society; we have to commit to a healthy lifestyle.*

RP: We always had the priest come after mass on Sunday. The priest would come to the house for dinner and we looked forward to that. We always would bring out the special dishes and utensils and things were proper.

We always had to pray at the table and I don't remember the conversation. But there was one thing: we were never scolded during meal time. Nobody was reprimanded, we always had to have pleasant conversation. We were never forced to eat everything on the plate. We threw it out, we said somebody else must be hungry and that is why we threw it out. I think that really helped with our health because mealtime was never a punishment or food was never used as a punishment or reward. So I try to carry that out with my own family.

AY: *For the food we have a similar practice. We get a spirit plate, they get a piece of food from all the dishes and bring it outside to remember the ones that fed us. If the ceremony is outside the food needs to get buried or burned so other spirits get to eat it.*

RP: None of us had an eating problem. I think that is where food is used as a reward or punishment. Eat all your food or else you won't have this or that. I really cringe when I hear that when I am visiting others. Food was appealing to the eye and the palate. My aunt said if you want your children home make sure you cook a good meal and make them want to be home.

And then you don't have to be yelling them to get home for supper. We didn't have to do that because they wanted to be home for that meal. We always had a good snack when they would come home from school. They would want to come home for that snack and we didn't have to go looking for them after school. Make the home a pleasant place. Parents know that and they didn't have problems persuading.

My father didn't read or write but was a very good organiser, he could sign his name. He was a member of council for a long time and he was very good at starting things and planning things. He was a hard worker. He always looked after his mother. I can remember him going in the blizzard to make sure she was okay. She lived about two and half miles away. He made sure her wood stove was burning and had a lot of wood. This is what I believe, that no matter how old you are, you keep going.

His mother was about ninety something and she would walk and walk. She would walk to town (4 miles from her house) and she would make sure that when she passed by our house it would be lunch time. It was like we as First Nations people always cooked enough for another person in case somebody came in. That is the way it happened all the time in our home in case somebody came. People would always feel welcome. We always had enough for another person and if nobody came it was for the spirit or somebody else who came late.

AY: *We say that when we drop food that someone is hungry.*

RP: So generosity at work and it is part of the way we were taught to be generous. If we were generous then there would be pay back. You always helped somebody who needs help. I feel my car has been costing a lot to keep running, I was going deeper in debt and people would come and say can I get a ride to the store and I was getting angry. Why this costing me a lot of money we will give you five dollars I said to my son five dollars doesn't help. It cost me sixty dollars a week to keep that car on the road. I was getting madder and madder and all of sudden the transmission went, I said I got paid back for those mean thoughts now my car is gone. I am not getting it fixed I find it cheaper to get a bus pass. That is how I feel I got paid back for those mean thoughts. If you do something for people you do it generously not to have fake or mean.

I was brought up to believe that we have to do a good deed everyday. If we don't we are going backwards. So that happens, I wasn't doing my good deed for the day. So this generosity is part of life. If we don't do something for someone that needs help then I have had to learn to say no because there is family that you have to look after. Knowing when to say no and not to say no because of that mean streak but because there are other priorities not that you are being mean but you do it out of generosity because you want to do.

AY: *That helps us to build our leadership skill by knowing how to prioritize and balance family with community and time for yourself. If there was more activities at the Longhouse what might help students?*

RP: There was one thing I mentioned to Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) and First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) there should be a program for teachers and leaders because they are always asked to organize something. I don't know if there is an elective offered for an events organizer.

AY: *How to be an effective events organizer and have it as a presentation or elective in the Longhouse Leadership Program (LLP). I remember parenting workshop was also mentioned.*

RP: I wouldn't mind doing a presentation on that. I did one for a class, but that was for health.

AY: *The FNHL student services and the Longhouse Leadership Program have a wholistic approach to supporting students and have developed a brochure/model called the Longhouse Teachings. For two years had annual meeting and interviewed folks to get community input on how to create a healthy home away from home. We do need to be looking at children and youth because there is a primary focus on adult learners. So could have some more representation and balance there. Well Rose, at anytime we are open for suggestions and new ideas. So thank you.*

RP: Like the one I was telling you about traditional infant care. [Brings in cradle basket with baby doll] This is how I use this. I never thought of this as unique but for instance the baby's belly button some are in and some are out but some people prefer them out. What we used to do put a wad right on the belly button and this is a fifty cent piece put this wad of cloth over it. Did you do this?

AY: *No, she had an in belly button.*

RP: So then you would put the face cloth under the baby's neck to prevent a flat head. If the ears are sticking out you put cloth over the ears and we put the hat on and wrap the baby so that when the baby went to lay down you would have another one on this side so that the ears lie flat. Make sure that the feet and legs are wrapped with a cloth so the legs would be straight as well. It would depend on the baby size you would only have to do that up to three months when the baby is in the cradle. Then the bones get harder or more solidified. Then after that you wouldn't need it.

AY: *The flat head problem solution you have here also prevents the sudden infant syndrome. It is reduced by forty percent.*

RP: See these baskets are made for the babies made up to three months old and it is symmetrical so that when the baby would be symmetrical. I did have a pillow and this is too big for the baby's size. This is what my mother told me: if the window is there you put the baby here, the next day the opposite place so that the baby's head naturally looks and turns towards the window so you switch them around. But not to have the window over it's head because the baby will try to look up. So to develop the muscles evenly, you are all set to go.

This is what I would do in a workshop and we can practice. I don't know if I could use that basket because it is not mine, it is belongs to my son but I can use the doll.

AY: Well we can certainly work at a workshop and produce a teaching video as well. Hyska O'Siem, Chi Migwetch thanks you so much for visiting with me. Let's eat and finish our tea.