

***Reanimating Storywork: Indigenous Elders' Reflections  
on Leadership by John O'Leary (Sahnbadis)***

Edited and introduced by Alannah Young-Leon

SFU Indigenous Student Centre, 2011

## ***Reanimating Storywork:***

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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 Elders' 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 Elders' 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 LaFrance 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**

Sahnbadis is of Wabanaki descent. He has an MA and is an Elder in Residence at the First Nations House of Learning (FNHL). He facilitates men's sweat lodges and wellness circles. He is a Traditional Red Blanket man in the Lakota Sundance tradition. He is a veteran, agriculturalist, and has worked with numerous health and educational organizations in Canada and the USA and specializes in cultural education.

## Author's Foreword

I was quite taken aback by Alannah Young's request for comment on the paper "The Role of Culture in Leadership". I have been a contributor to her works over the years of our acquaintance at University of British Columbia (UBC), and our mutual participation in spiritual ceremonies. I have from time to time drafted up articles at her request some of which reappear in this leadership paper. I am deeply touched, and honoured, to be selected a contributor to this recent work of hers. And bound by spiritual practice accepting the tobacco from her hands, leaves me feeling a bit inadequate. Age has taken its toll, but I'll soldier on.

Without asking directly I'm presuming her effort to tie leadership to culture, not just "a" culture but to an "Indigenous" one is well worth the struggle. And from my hasty skimming through the manuscript, and even a dictionary to assure myself that I've got it right (it's listed perilously close to "indigence" and "indigent"), Alannah made a good and timely start by clarification. With the nature of the leadership having been established, there remains the responsibility of the recognizing and supporting the culture and the leadership that emerges.

***Reanimating Storywork:***

*Indigenous Elders' Reflections on Leadership by John O'Leary (Sahnbadis)*

My surname is O'Leary. It comes from the Gaelic language of my Irish forebears. It means a "keeper of calves". I heard or read something from early Irish folklore about a cattle raid (of Cooligh, if I've got the names right) whose provenance would signify that cattle and their keepers were held in some esteem. Some years had passed before I recalled this cultural bit of my heritage. I was raising cattle on a small farm ranch in Oklahoma and doing well despite being new to ranch work. It just came to me one day that my affinity for raising cattle was the heritage of my name.

The other part of my heritage comes from Gaspé, Quebec. That is where my mother's family originated. They were numbered among the Wabanaki, the People-of-the-dawn, who by custom, welcomed newcomers. Many, who were absorbed by marriage in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, were among the Wabanaki population on reserves that had been set aside for them.

I'm not as knowledgeable about the reasons for closure of the reserves as I ought to be because of my heritage. In the sixties, when I went there to search for relatives, there were only two reserves left out of 12 in the turn of the century. I didn't feel I could welcome discussion with the people living on the two reserves.

On my return to Oklahoma I was adopted Pawnee and received my spiritual name cho-coo-soo ra-wiki rou-ah (meaning Pipe-stays-full). I take that to mean that I make a spiritual connection that fulfils an obligation to serve others in spiritual matters.

**Ms. Young:** *What lead you the House of Learning community?*

My wife was going to school at UBC with the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP).

**Ms. Young:** *How would you describe the work you do with the House of Learning?*

It is a bit different, the difference between assigned work and stuff that just pops up than like when we were asked, do we know anything about sweats and we said yes. Would you like to do some? So we were on our own and it was self-serving because it gave us a place to do our sweats. That would be different compared to when I was asked to be a resident Elder for a program which was specific and then I did a group which was a support group and that again was when someone asked if I would do that and I had done groups before. Yes in this case, I did groups for men at the First Nations House of Learning. I don't really have anything for women unless it's to say you should

talk to so and so . . . . Not always but as a concern for conducting a group. Treatment programs elsewhere I managed mixed groups and has caused some discomfort.

**Ms. Young:** *How would you say you acquired your cultural knowledge?*

I had only very high disciplined constituent experiences as a child. A mom telling me not to talk about the playmates I had, because the playmates were creatures. Certainly not to talk about them, especially. She thought it was weird because they used to talk when we were planting stuff in the garden and they would talk about important things. I didn't think it was anything. I was either too young or too sceptical to make much of a difference. I thought everybody does that – get in to situations that are not every day humdrum – they have more significance to them. I don't know whether it is like opening the door or making yourself open to the supernatural or creature natural. I don't know, maybe it is a gift. I just didn't recognize it or have a name for it, it just happens.

**Ms. Young:** *So to interact with the land and other beings.*

Yes.

**Ms. Young:** *How did you find your Pawnee brothers and get in touch with Sundancing?*

Oh that came about as the result of the Gourd Clan. Performing the Gourd Clan, I got permission to do that from the Kiowa because it belongs to them. They checked us out I guess and decided it was okay. They come along, inducted us with a ceremony, so we were officious Gourd Clanners. One of the guys I didn't know very well, but that I had seen around dancing, John Owl, was the person who was going to do the ceremony. So as time went by we did things like we got a drum and we started dancing. And then he said he needed to have a sweat. I suggested, "Why don't you come into the city with us and we can have a sweat?" He said, "No, I have to have my own sweat." I said, "There's plenty of room here why don't we just have a sweat", and he said, "I can't do that it has to be Pawnee land".

John Owl was right. The land we stood on was not Pawnee land. It was Chickasaw land. He asked, "Do you own it?" and I said, "Yes, but I am not Pawnee." He says, "Well I will talk to my uncle. My uncle is John Night Chief." Johnny Night Chief, a respected Elder. I didn't know much about his spiritual activities but since John referred to him I assumed that was his mentor. So he went to John Night Chief and was told that if he was willing to be adopted into Pawnee he could build and use a sweat lodge on Pawnee land.

In order to do that then he would have to have someone adopt him into the Pawnee society. That was all he had to do so he could have a sweat where he wanted to build his sweat. So that being done and said, we forged ahead. I found out it was quite a bit more involved than I thought it was going to be. I found out it was very involved and



very spiritual, requiring a lot of things. For example he couldn't do it just anytime, he had to wait for a specific time, the stars had to be in a certain place, when the cottonwood is releasing its cotton into the air, when you hear the male thunder and you can see the lightening. Those were the signs we were to expect, then you could go ahead and build a lodge. Well that was just the beginning. More and more stuff was involved.

It was really gruelling because anytime you did some work for the lodge, we had to fast. So we were out looking for willows and when we found some, we had to perform a ceremony before we harvested the willow for the lodge. When the lodge was complete, we had to fast and then use the lodge.

It became a process of learning, acquiring some of the language, least enough for the prayers for the ceremonies. As time went by it became doctoring learning how *lancing* had to be done. Little by little the things they teach to learn the medicine. All of sudden you take a look and say this isn't exactly what I had in mind.

It was participating, which was important. My visions began to increase as I went through the process of learning how to build a sweat lodge. There were some remarkable healing results. We were right next to an Indian hospital there. There was a man there, who had difficulty with his spine and x-rays failed to identify the problem with his spine. The man's spine was abnormal and the medical physicians couldn't find what was wrong with him. So out of desperation, he came to the sweat lodge. It was there that his missing vertebra was replaced. This was amazing. I'd never seen anything that.

A lot of things came along that were not necessarily Pawnee. It came about with the participation in the Sundance. I didn't really know anything about a Sundance really. I used a sweat lodge with a bunch of people from the city and they were all Sundancers. Most of them danced at Rick Two Dog's Sundance. The sweats were getting increasingly more difficult as they were preparing to go to the Sundance. They were getting excited to going to the Sundance. It was there I met Billy Walkabus, he was a hearty man, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honour. He started to sweat with us. We brought him to the Sundance. When they returned they were talking about the Sundance.

They spoke with excitement about shooting out road signs. I thought that was an immature thing to do. Then I realized that I had a different attitude then they did.

Not that I didn't want to go to the Sundance but there must be something different about it. It can't be just a bunch of macho stuff. I didn't think I needed macho personality. So time went by and then the Gourd Clan got Indian Veteran members. They started getting organized and wanted to be part of a powwow up in Sisseton. They sent a member up to Sisseton to inquiry about the powwow. When the member

returned he announced that they welcomed the Gourd Clan to come up and support them. A lot of the Gourd Clan members were veterans.

We went up to Sisseton to dance, and while we were there we met Andy La Franiere. He came from Portland Oregon and he was having trouble. He couldn't go home because everybody at home was drinking. So we told him to come to our place. I told him to call ahead and come down to stay with us. I told him, "*mi casa, su casa*" and of course he doted on my daughter. She was precocious. He told us he was a Sundancer. I asked him where and he said here, Sioux Valley. He said what I need to do is ask you to come and support me at the Sundance.

Andy said, my family are all church people and they just frown on any kind of activity like that as part of the church so they never come here. Other people have their families come and support them and look after them, I don't have anybody to do that. He gave me instructions and he said I want you to wear your Gourd Clan regalia when you come up and dance under the arbour. I said okay. When I got there, I met Aldon Pompana, the first person I met up there. He came over and I recognized him and he gave me a job. He said he wanted me to look after that east doorway. No one was to cross it. Anyway I was part of the group and when the Sundance was over at the giveaway it was Andy's fourth year, he called me up there to stand up with him. He held up a box of eagle feathers and said give these away as he called people up. As they came up Andy introduced me as his brother. He gave gifts and feathers to people as they were called. I was adopted, so now I became doubly adopted. Then of course, the next year, I danced at Sisseton. It was the last year there. We followed the Sundance pipe to Sioux Valley and stayed there for the four years. I was awarded a "*Red Blanket*" after five years of Sundancing.

**I've explained some of my examples to illustrate some of what goes into leadership.**

First, you have to know who you are in relation to your environs. Then, you look to see how you can be of service. Always show respect and gratitude. Only then can you aspire to leadership.

I have been an organizer, a supervisor, and an innovator. I have developed programs that continue to provide needed services. Not every program or service was a success, but served a purpose for a time. Some exposed my weakness.

"Stay with-it-ness" is very much the way I am. I tire quickly when I have to perform repetitive tasks. For me that's an ultimate challenge to leadership: How to convince others to perform a task you abhor.

I think *leadership is a gift*. Those who have it, know they have it. It's not kind to be heard saying so if you're trying to inculcate it in others who aren't particularly gifted.

So what is there that can differentiate Indigenous leadership from, say, political, cultural, and traditional, etc?

Perhaps this might help....

**Indigenous means people that have their roots in this particular world.**

It's the best we can do for the time being. That's not helpful to say if you're trying to develop leadership. You need to go beyond it somehow for those who aren't particularly gifted. At least give some tools so they may be able to function as leaders. And I do have something to say about that, that's later on in the questions.

**How I would describe Indigenous leadership?**

If an Indigenous person is leading something does that make him a leader? Or is he Indigenous and just happens to be a leader? So I am not going to waste time and try to figure that out.

*Ms. Young: Right, yes. When I talk to people about this they talk about political and cultural or traditional, there seems to be some differentiation between these two, in general.*

That's the problem because I think some people take those generalized observations and establish them as something that's been etched in stone; it's not. I don't think there is any culture that's that way. I think that when we do get around to using those terms some may describe something that is unique, for this place only. Well it's not. Making it universal makes it all the more difficult to recognize when a person is beyond the ordinary. That's what leadership is. . . . Beyond the ordinary.

Also, when we begin to talk about Indigenous culture specific to North America we have an awfully difficult job. If ever there was a unique, it long ago became intertwined with neighbouring cultures. People have assimilated with good heart and mind. They find some value in something that doesn't come from their own Indigenous background. We make a great mistake when we subject all Indigenous persons by birth and geography as thinking alike. That's a mistake and it wreaks hardship on people who have tried to become what they are not. It closes the door to change, which is essential to any living thing in order to stay alive.

**I'm going to clarify what I mean by telling a story of one of my experiences**

There was a native Blackfoot woman whose background is the same as mine; each of us had a native and a non-native parents. We each had the same complexion problem, too. She used our own association for accessing each individual's degree of (for want of a better, term) assimilation.

We thought about that and developed an assessment tool that would measure how an individual rates the degree they place in each of these categories: their Indigenous beliefs, creation stories, developing, skills, education and financial situation. The scale would begin at zero and advance to 100% and the individual would indicate their own graph scale. By looking into different aspects of a person's existence. We have a spiritual existence, we have a location existence, we have an educational existence, etc. and we use some criteria like that and for each participant I've long since forgotten the exact criteria and it's unimportant except that it is a good tool.

It turned out to be a valuable diagnostic tool which was very valuable in treatment programming because a lot of people don't realize where they are in that, how much of the new culture have they adopted and how much the old culture do they retain. Usually there is a difficulty that people don't recognize it. They don't really know how come they feel that way. And it's because they are making a cultural great leap. Going from one culture to another is always hazardous for any people, whether it is from immigrant European ethnic people just differing from their origins or Native people, some, many, many complicated reasons. When an applicant is finished they are given an opportunity to see themselves as others see them from a chart. They can also make changes in their daily lives or communities or just take advantage of new goals for personal change

So once we established that tool, a way of assessing where you stand, then ask the person, "Are you comfortable with where you are or is there something you need to add or change?" and go from there. That's why I call it a diagnostic tool because you begin a treatment plan to help people get to where they want to be. And it could be used to decide what is Indigenous about this tool.

Again deciding what's in the new and what is in the old is involved in whatever activity they have, for example the person who is quite religious maybe doesn't have a whole lot of spirituality but is very devout in worship in an inherently foreign church because it came from abroad. And even the church itself comes from another origin because it comes from a people who no longer practice that.

One of the oldest documents among the *Haudenosaunee* is something about their origins how they came to be and it's written by someone like myself whose name is Gaelic in origin. And he uses the thee's and the thou's and maketh in writing about the origin of *Mohawk* people the *Haudenosaunee* and it's just as though you were reading from a section of the bible King James version. That's how much for him the language has been taken; by doing that he makes it somehow rather spiritual when he uses English language to do that. There is evidence there of some cultural exchange and that's an eighteenth century, it's quite old and there's some things about Native people written.

**Ms. Young:** *Yes like in the book the Sacred Pipe book it is written in a similar context, there is bias on if that interpretation is authentic and limited by the written language used at the time. Would a Native person actually say something like that using those terms. . . . But that helps to think about other contexts - bicultural or multicultural [lens].*

While we are in that area talking about those people specifically. That's the first place I know of where there's any attention paid to good and evil. Because in the origin story there are two people who come from the same mother, one is obviously appealed to everything that that person does is good and the other one is obviously evil because they appealed to everything that the person does is evil.

**Ms. Young:** *This is the Haudenosaunee?*

Yes, and they end up in combat and the good one conquers the evil one. I don't know of any other Native stories that are like that. That has got to be taken directly from the way Christian people see the world as the conflict between good and evil. And doubtism, satanic and devilry and all that stuff and while there are plenty of tricksters in Native stories there are plenty of people who can hurt you if you hurt them. I don't see a consistent theme of any good and evil in any Native writing, but it is there in that old Haudenosaunee story.

**Ms. Young:** *And it's not just a translation of English?*

No, no.

**Ms. Young:** *So it's an adoption of a worldview.*

That's right, and that's way back when. . . .

**Ms. Young:** *What three hundred or so years . . . . What was the name of the diagnostic tool or I where I can get that information, later?*

I've lost contact with my Blackfoot colleague. That was twenty-five years ago.

**Ms. Young:** *One of the jobs I perform is as a counsellor and people often ask what does counselling have to do with leadership? How you talked about that diagnostic tool, how people self assess themselves, where they are and where they want to go. Well, that's what leaders and counsellors do. By coming to university one agrees to better oneself in some way or professionally develop oneself. A lot of people are resistant to thinking of themselves as developing leadership but that's actually what is going on, and it translates to other contexts. Eventually no matter what we are doing we are leading in something just because we are living. So that was helpful to hear about that diagnostic tool. . . . So, I hear what you are saying about Indigenous; what makes us really different than any other culture and does this inquiry really help our leadership? It's like the*

*discourse around race, is there really such a thing – other than our own constructs and yet race does have ongoing direct [negative] impacts. Understanding that there's oppression for most folks and to create understanding [about power differentiation and the responsibility that comes with power] through sharing experiences and stories to illustrate what we mean by Indigenous culture. Culture and identity discourses can be thought of as political smoke screens that distract people's awareness and connections to lands – an anti-colonial position. However we need to provide options for all aspects of leadership inquiry. For the purposes of this inquiry, how would you describe culture?*

Yes that kind of descriptions provides different criteria, which describes different areas of human activity. Every culture has these things in it. We have a way of procreating through unions, we have a way of praying, thanking, we have a way of working; how do we work to feed ourselves, how do we raise our children how do we learn, these become institutions. They may not become that, they may be as simple as “I don't know, go ask your uncle”.

You look at those institutions and then say how does one culture differ from another? Very simple is how does a powwow differ from a PTA meeting or . . . . And you can put that into concrete terms and how does that differ and which one do you prefer? And what you said about it being offensive, it is offensive to some people and I had a tough time finding a title for that, and said, what is this you are subjecting me to? And one time out of sheer exasperation I asked “How much of an Indian are you?” Boy did that get some angry response especially to me personally.

We can call it whatever, but I think that's essential to see who and what you are where you are in that spectrum. Acknowledging that there is no person who stands at the ends of the spectrum. There is no one there. We are all in between. As an example in Okalahoma there's the *Tulsa World*? We were doing feature articles on full-blooded Indians. What does that say when we have to write articles about full-blooded Indians?

**Ms. Young:** *It's like the 'status' and 'metis' Indians discussion.*

And then for a person like myself to get involved in that, is suicidal, they don't pay attention to anything I have to say. I'm discounted immediately because of my facial and skin appearances.

In looking at a useful side of diagnostic tool is *respect*. I think that is an absolute essential. I think that is what marks leaders. The leaders who don't have respect are demigods. They may have a plan but it's not going to last long. What they do may hurt people in the long run if they don't have that respect.

I love the way Dr. Seuss does it. I wrote this down.

It's in Thedwig the big-hearted moose. When it came time to shed his antlers as all the others were doing, Thedwig held on to his because there was a family of bugs, probably spiders, nesting in his antlers. His fellow moose asked why he didn't do what moose culture dictated, which was to get rid of the antlers. Thedwig quoted Dr. Seuss' words and said, "*A person is a person no matter how small*". Thedwig is not going to harm those little creatures. No matter how insignificant they are to others. They were significant to him.

And I think that an Indigenous person would agree with Thedwig. And now, unless they were also Buddhist, who have *respect for all forms of life*, you have to take a look and ask is Dr. Seuss an Indigenous person?

**Ms. Young:** *Indigenous thinking maybe? Reflective of Indigeneity?*

Yes and he expresses that so well which is what we try to inculcate in people, that's our teaching. That's what we do, we try to honour all forms of life. The English to my way of thinking is bias, and, for example, have put our way of thinking as animism; it's like something nasty, when it just means that we recognize that all things have a spirit, even the so-called inanimate have a spirit.

Physics, nuclear physics, by the way, recognize that because the forming principle for any created thing is atomic, little atoms hanging on to one another make that thing.

**Ms. Young:** *And they are active?*

Yes. Not so different that we go to science to support something that is very spiritual. We have respect for all living things. Now if we are to make anything of that as a necessary principle for leadership, then we go ahead and say now what do we do that would give a person the ability to respect others? First of all they have to respect themselves.

So self-awareness is important and now we are back to the diagnostic tool as a starting point. Self-awareness is there; do you really like where you are with these things? Are you really at peace with this; do they really satisfy a need that you have? Or is there something more? Every troubled person there is something more. A person who is fortunate enough to be at rest and peace with themselves and the world around them is probably a good leader, certainly by example. Doesn't have those concerns.

**Ms. Young:** *My sense is that many people don't know what it is they are missing, they have a vague sense that something is not quite right so I imagine those self-assessment areas give a person a place to start.*

I'd like to mention Philip Deere and the connection I had with him. I was listening to him talk about the treaty when the Dutch came up the Hudson River to the

Haudenosaunee. They used the *wapum belt* to show the two streams, one with the ship in it. The other in a canoe and Philip Deere said that it made the differences; a person can't be in both canoes. And it hit me I can't help but to be in both canoes. I was born that way. As painful as it has been to deal with that over time I come to see that's a gift. Now I can see, bifocals and all. I think that's true of a whole lot of other people who haven't recognized that in themselves. And it doesn't matter if they do or don't.

**Ms. Young:** *It may have been true for his reality, so it wasn't maybe quite within his experience. Although I am not sure about when people say that I am not part of that or I am not Native enough to do . . . whatever, it's like they limit themselves to concepts that get in the way. So knowing yourself is helpful.*

Let's go back to Thedwig, the moose story from Dr. Seuss' story. If a Native Elder told the story about a moose, it would be immediately accepted. It would go unquestioned by a young listener. But Dr. Seuss, who has no claim to the Elder's story, would be thought of as a "*cutest little story you got Dr. Seuss.*" It doesn't mean anything when the reader of Dr. Seuss story is heard . . . but it is something to the listener who values the Native Elder's version of the story.

Looking at the story differently might make it right. The way I think, if I might, that is a distinguishing feature. As Vine Deloria does he traces it back from the biblical origins, the fall of man. Now take literally in the King James Bible version it says take dominion over all things, like he's in charge. That's putting him above all others and then we have a hierarchy it builds on hierarchical with human beings on the top and way down below is probably gravel. It's not that way we think. Not in those kinds of terms, but those kinds of terms that *we are all connected essential to one another* and the circle is the strongest of structures. The tiniest little "uh oh" destroys the entire circle. We get to see that in so many different ways, it's right in front all the time.

Many attached motives to this thinking. It's not a morality issue. It's the recognition of the *necessity of getting along with one another*. We are not good guys and bad guys we are just necessary. So anyways, in order for a person to become a leader, going through that gaining respect for themselves where they are in life, and reached a point in life not all questions are answered, at least they have a pretty good idea of who and what they are what they have to offer, and I think that's where spirituality comes in. Because I think spirituality supplies that; our way of looking at things transcends boundaries of physical being and we start talking about things that don't have a physical being.

*Gitche Manitou* is not a physical person, but is very real to us, as a Cree woman and Miqmac man. So real in fact we can't even conceive what it looks like; and what we do in our prayers is we establish *Mishomis* because that's an immediate we know about the grandfather is that they love us and care about us – *Gitche Manitou* what that is and that really cares innately in the first place but I don't know why. Everybody has that separation. Way back in the bible like at the very beginning *Yahweh* they didn't even



have a name for that powerful being, they didn't know what to call it, so what did they talk about they talked about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men and established prayers that have the word father which has nothing to do with begetting at all. It's the only way you can describe we always have an intermediary because of that.

**Ms. Young:** *That describes the relationship?*

Right, and that's the reason for the relationship too because it's that debt, it's a debt we have. We are given something precious called life. We didn't earn it; it was given to us when we were born.

**Ms. Young:** *So respect for self, interconnections, and spirituality are some of the cultural value.*

I think that's an expression of that; those are manifestations of that. Hindus have different terms I have to think about it, but they have an all-knowing being that manifests itself in various forms.

**Ms. Young:** *Shakti & Shiva?*

Yes. That's exactly what all people do in one way or another. Sometimes losing sight of the fact that there are all these other forms, things like Christians you could probably say if you ask, who's God, they probably say Jesus. No! Jesus is the son, not the father. There's a whole thing that happens.

One of the things I was involved with around the Roman Catholic Church of course because Miqmacs are Catholics from the sixteenth century on. Indian day is the feast of Sainte Anne and I think that's true for Ojibwa too in Canada. I always, as a kid, thought this is weird. This is supposed to be Indian Days what are all these non-Indians doing here. Where are all the Indians? People weren't sensitive to that fact until black people came along and said, "*How come Jesus is not black?*"

**Ms. Young:** *But isn't he?*

Yes. I know, but anyway Catholicism attention paid to the blessed mother became almost like a sect unto itself so the whole church was consumed with what they call Mariology and getting all tangled up with that, the *eight* holy days essentially something else now, the whole thing had to do with well guess what folks way back when we had mother gods, before we had father gods. Maybe it was re-establishing a very old concept. I guess Vine Deloria's thing in his last chapter in *God Is Red* is where are we going. He doesn't know but we are going to be changing we are going to be doing things in a different way. All living things change, if it doesn't change it's dead.

**Ms. Young:** *So that's consistent here if we say change describes the relationship between culture and leadership. I would like to provide you with the opportunity to describe how you develop your leadership. What leadership values or principles or stories emerge when you reflect on the topic?*

I don't know . . . . I am the oldest of four children. I think that that's stereotypical, that the first-born gets some kind of attention that the others don't get. I guess that's consistent with what I am talking about respect; you get a certain amount of respect by accident. You haven't done a thing except to be born. You may not pursue that, I don't think I consciously pursued that, but I would end up doing that.

When I would get into an organization I would end up executive position. When I went into a vocation as a counsellor and a therapist I ended up developing programs and directing activities of others. I just did and I have to be aware during those years I was an alcoholic. I had this whole other kind of life going on which is opposite from what my everyday sober life was like. And it was always done with a difficulty.

I think I sought solace and refuge in philosophy and theology because I think that validated me and gave me some kind of, I hesitate to say smugness. I became really impressed with myself because I really had everything tied down. I knew everything I needed to know. However when I got sober and I began to look at my life in an entirely different way I began to recognize that *life is a gift*. I didn't earn it or deserve it. It was just given to me. When I opened my eyes, got out of the daze and realized what a precious gift it is and now I started ordering my life on those lines of *humility*. Everyday is supported now look at the responsibilities that I've already got. I really mismanaged my children, marriage and out of a job. The whole thing came crashing down on me. I guess because it isn't the way I was living my life. I wasn't really happy where I was or what I was doing.

And how to *make change* without making change, with having to go through all that. The person who helped the most was a remarkable person, he was a biracial origin he was Dutch and Japanese. He had a sallow complexion I though he had liver problems but it turns out he has occidental origin; he was helping me, I was delivering a yacht, I was hired to deliver a yacht. I ran into a storm and the equipment on the boat failed and broke down and just fell apart and so I ended up on the beach. He was a manufacturer's representative that came down from Massachusetts to see what could be done to salvage the boat. We immediately got into talking about spiritual things. I don't know why. In order to get the boat out we were going to have to take wet sand.

I was a fisherman and strong and healthy and all that. But he was just sickly looking guy. It was like we were throwing wet sand in the July fourth sun in Massachusetts. I was concerned about him because I don't think he's up to doing this but I am doing my thing. All of a sudden I notice that he's not shovelling anymore, I thought he was taking a break and I looked around. There he was prostrate lying under the sun with his eyes

wide open. I said, *"He is dead"*. I said *"Oh geeze what do I do now?"* Here's a dead guy and there's nobody on the beach. It's a hundred yards to a house to get help. I don't know what to do. So I ended up thinking I am digging a trench I don't know what he's going to do. I am doing this. It's the only thing I could think of. After a while I hear him digging the trench again. He's alive.

Afterward we are talking we got the boat out and we are sitting there talking and he said, *"You know I died back there."* I said *"Yes I know you were dea- I saw that."* He said, *"but my will & my body said no it's not time"*. He had to be tolerated. He was well adjusted and that kind of spirituality. He talked about Zen Buddhism; the guy was just a fountain of wisdom and spirituality. He didn't have much to say about that. Then he turned and he said, *"You know you're a god, you are a god."* And when he said that I just stood back and said, *"You know you are right, I am the only one who exists."*

I know that there's other people around, their life is not my life. In my life I am the centre of my universe. Everything here is what I need. Everything has been put there for me. I have to be here. I have to get along with what's around me. That didn't take much thought to go from what's around me to what's above me and what's responsible for all that's there. That's fundamental spirituality for all people and how they get to recognize that could be like me by accident or it could be education by design but that's essential we recognize that those are primary relationships. First, I acknowledge myself, then I acknowledge you and then I acknowledge that it is simple.

**Ms. Young:** *It's one thing thinking about it, then feeling it, seemed to deepen the experiences on those other levels.*

And to the Christians need to look at the concept of others' view about their life. At one time the Pharisees were nasty guys who were always trying to put Jesus *down* . . . . *There's only two: One is love God and two is love thy neighbour.* It's right there in the testament. That's what this guy told me about the word of god says that you have to be in relationship with all things and then develop and strengthen your relationship with all people.

**Ms. Young:** *So that really helped you in your leadership development.*

Absolutely. Now that didn't change what I already did. I was already used to doing this kind of leadership tactics. I was always like most people who have done that kind of malady; we have two lives going on at the same time. We live in two worlds, you have that other secret life that's always going on where you are worthless, then you are showing to other people how worthy you are.

I use the illustration in counselling, you know what gumbies are? They started out as a little jujube, it's just a crude form of a person but then they made into gumbies out of rubber sponge. Some people put their gumbies *in cars or in houses*. I drew a triple

gumbies picture. The one on the outside is how we survive. The one in the middle is what we show other people and is our healthy self. The smallest one inside is what we really think we are. It's the hidden part of us. It's tiny and scared.

Most healthy people are between – they don't have this exaggerated sense of self nor do they have this other fearful kind of self – it's right in between and that's not to say that they are so wonderful and they always walk a good road no, they win the lotto a few million bucks and they are out there whamo or house gets washed away in a flood – why did you do this to me – and they are back there and we fluctuate back and forth but never lose sight what's the line between that's where we really are.

**Ms. Young:** *Would you call that the quest for balance?*

To recognize that, that's what loss of reality is, it's not being able to recognise where we always have one on the outside and one on the inside and that we always have a good idea of where we are and what we are as a group, that's what we work with.

**Ms. Young:** *How can we present this when we are training people in university? Are there cultural practices that can assist people?*

Sure almost every culture practices, doing all kinds of things that show that you have a value.

**Ms. Young:** *Like smudges, sweats. . . .*

Scott Momaday who is a Kiowa, mixed blood Kiowa, wrote the introduction I think it was to the Reader's Digest book called Indians, he writes four things that we are; one of them was that we are beautiful and we have a sense of the almighty. He's not using these words. I found them useful and maybe could be basic elements for leadership training is recognition of these four things or six things to draw on whatever.

But basically find out what you think you need to do as a person to get the most of life. Your vocation you choose, and whole bunch of complicated things and you put those elements in training program how you train a person using those elements. If you have this as a goal chances are you find the means to that goal and have Indigenous people look within their culture to find what it is they need always recognizing there is going to be some people who are going to be saying no, do it this way, support that too.

**Ms. Young:** *Many people say that's not part of my culture and if I look at my context rather than the place it seems to be more about relationships, following other people's teachings and protocols where I am a visitor and adopting what's useful and respectful.*

There was a Dr. Drew he was a southern Cheyenne from Oklahoma. He started out in Indian health as an orderly, and then became a doctor and now a psychiatrist. He talked

about his early internship and his family was fairly traditional and very affluent and so they had an investment in the status quo of the outside world.

So he had an old man come in for treatment, he was working in the south west, and he came in; his English was fairly accented and thought he was a traditional person. He had a boil on his neck and had swelling and it was a very simple procedure but because this was an old man, apparently a traditional, he wanted to do a traditional thing so he smudged himself and his instruments and the guy turned around and looked at him and said, "*What are you doing that mumbo jumbo stuff, you just cut that boil right away.*" So Dr. Drew was making an assumption about the old man. He assumed that the old man was traditional and that would enhance his healing you know, he did it well intentioned and thought it was the best thing to do.

So how many times have I embarrassed myself by making assumptions about people? I recalled the hospital in Oklahoma, which was mental health hospital. There was one of the workers, a therapist, was a young black man who was very outgoing. He had a lot of energy. He was a very intelligent guy. I started talking about cultural things. Then I said, "*You are a church going person. Going to church must be a very important part of your life.*" He looked at me and said, "*What church are you talking about?*" I said, "*Well you know the black church that does all that singing.*" He quietly said, "*I am a Roman Catholic.*" Then he says "*Gotcha.*" He laughs. I was making a cultural assumption about this young therapist.

**Ms. Young:** *What cultural components would you like to see based on your experience at the FNHL?*

I don't know how it could be done. I think it would be important for the people themselves to *be exposed to the necessity of understanding where they stand in terms of their expectations* of themselves whether it is in geometry or spirituality. Like where is this really going when a person goes to university. They may say to get a good job but that's not it all. As a vocational rehabilitation counsellor, I was often dealing with people who came from reservations in North and South Dakota, Montana or Portland Oregon. Their intention was to make it in any city so they can be in the mainstream of America.

I felt I was deceiving them, that I am taking someone and putting them something that's not going to be good for them, it might hurt them. They are not going to be able to survive. I felt my job was like that and, only change that I had to *keep putting it upon people to make their own choices*. People make the decisions, it wasn't my responsibility, except to expose them to choices.

To question choices, why do you think that would be better? Is it a better option that was shown to them and convinced that it was a better choice for them? Or was it to stand by the principle, that we don't have the right to tell anybody what to do? It's a

choice that person makes because it is what he wants to do. What he likes would do better than something that's more lucrative. In time this is going to provide rewards that are more than just the tangible things. He will be a better person, his life will be smoother, his kids will grow up smarter.

**Ms. Young:** *So something that's meaningful for them.*

That's right. I used to have to subject people to batteries of tests and have to share with them that said, *"You have aptitudes for these different vocations."* I didn't want to tell them that. I wanted to ask, *"What do you want to do? Do what you want to work somewhere you know you're good at it. You might not get it right away but you will in time and you'll get it done in your own way"* . . . . I faltered, I mean, I didn't always follow my own precedent.

There was a day in Oregon and I was working late. I had a few pages of paper to do as a state office employee does every time a job is completed. I thought I was by myself. Then suddenly I felt someone's presence standing in my office. It was this guy, who was passed onto me, because nobody could get through to this guy. I gave him a lot of attention. I fixed him up with an "on the job training" with one of local offices. He had excellent reports from his boss on his progress at the work site. The boss was about to release him because he had fulfilled the number of days at that location. He worked so many days, which I failed to notice. I looked up at him. There he stood there intoxicated. I looked at him and he suddenly started crying. He didn't understand why he was released from his job position so he thought it was because he was a bad guy.

It all just seemed to come together I didn't have a plan or have a shopping list. I had no idea what would come along. So everything just seemed to fall in place without thinking about it. It was there and then, that a day of reckoning was when I got the Red Blanket from Soloman Hall after Sundancing for five years. I witness other men getting their Red Blanket and the way I got mine was totally different. I didn't get it like the other men did.

Solomon Hall wanted to give it to me himself. Red Blankets were given out during the summer Sundance. Soloman told me kneel down by the tree and then he came out and put the blanket around me. Then he went to the east door and chanted a song. The song he sang was the *Redcoats*. It was a song they sing for the *Western Turtle Chief* and Soloman sang that song. It was one of those times when I thought, *"This is really good but what am I doing here?"* because it was going to be an obligation. I wasn't so sure I could continue as it required me to travel to Oklahoma several times a year which I didn't know if I could do. But anyway when you look back at everything like that, it's like I say, everything just happened, one thing lead to another.

I think there was an impact on my work too because I was counsellor at a treatment centre and at the same time I was fasting monthly. Well we had group one time and I

left the group, my spirit left the group. All of a sudden the group was over, I was looking around at people and everyone in the group had big eyes, looking weird. Then one of them said, *“How come you never talked to us like that before?”*

Well I am too cool to say, what do you mean? Well sloughed it off but little by little what I found out I was doing was talking about basic spirituality and it’s based on how it comes through a person you know that it is a natural part of our being. The irony is that most of those guys that were in that treatment centre now are down by the Red River, the border between Texas and Oklahoma. Those guys they can’t get it. They go to church all the time and they read the bible responsibly as much as they are able. They have a religious life but they don’t have a spiritual life.

I see the difference and I think that is what they saw also. I hadn’t really thought out the reason why I am doing this other than it was good for me and that was reason enough. It seemed like everywhere I would go somebody would always say that they knew me that they had seen me someplace that I had never been. I knew there wasn’t anything I could say respectfully but it was kind of unnerving for a while.

A remarkable guy who was a resident Elder, an Arapaho, who ran the traditional Native sweat. Everyone came down to a sweat and somebody went to introduce me to him and he said *“Oh I know John”* and he said *“You know I wanted to talk to you about your bickering”* and I never saw this guy before in my life. I asked him, *“You know anything about dog soldiers?”* and he said *“They are the keepers of the peace of the camp, protect the people, it is their job, they were all young warriors, young guys who would show off and once and awhile he would get together and pick their bows and would shoot their arrows right straight up in the air and just stand there and not flinch as the arrows fell.”*

The bickering flashed through my head. I said wait a minute. Said to myself, you don’t shoot arrows in the air. Could that be what you do when you’re angry with someone or some thing? We would shoot it up in the air and it might come back and hit us on the head if we don’t watch which direction the arrows are going.

I had never seen the medicine man before in my life nor had there been any exchange between us, except for the medicine that was placed on people watching the ceremony. I was amazed at what I witnessed that day.

**Ms. Young:** *Sounds like the spiritual aspect has been a big part of your leadership development?*

Sure.

**Ms. Young:** *When I think of holistic education and programming, it sounds like you are giving examples of this approach. How was it helpful for your leadership development to describe and reflect on what’s meaningful?*

See I had an experience before where I was technically shipwrecked when I was delivering in between jobs. I was delivering a boat for a company, got caught in a squall and found out he hadn't equipped the boat with an anchor which is just stupid. I knew better. I should have looked. He had attached an outboard motor in case we needed a motor on the ground but he didn't bolt it down. I went to give the outboard motor a yank and it clunk down the water. So we are going ashore and we were going to hit the beach, we weren't going to get hurt or anything, it just looked really stupid to let a boat be beached. We had to get the boat out of there so we called the company representative out with their equipment to get the boat back onto the water. We used the hind to sail it. It had come loose from the mast and that was just the last straw before we hit the beach. We tried to make a sea anchor out of the canvas to slow us down. Anyway, they sent a company representative down to help get the boat out.

I took one look at this guy and he looked like he had Hepatitis. He was a little skinny guy who was jaundiced. He looked like a very intense person. For some reason we started talking about the point of life, it was like a religious experience but he started giving me this stuff just so profound I was stunned.

I had sobered up by then. I had attended AA meetings and began to live my life one day at a time, which was a totally new concept for me. Anyway we got talking about spiritual life as we worked to get the boat moving. We had to dig out a trench so that when the tide came in the keel would be able to get up off the beach and float off.

I was a fisherman and used to heavy hard work, long hours. He looked like he never lifted anything higher than his mouth and that was eating a slice of bread. He didn't look like the kind of guy to be digging a trench out in the sun on the fourth of July. And sure enough he shovelled quickly. I looked up and he is dead. He was prostrate on the ground, his eyes wide open, the sun in his eyes, and he wasn't breathing. I didn't know CPR or anything like that though I had a vague idea and there is nobody on the beach, there was nobody that I can call to, no houses in proximity to run to. I was just gone dumbfounded; what do you do now? So I kept on shovelling, pretty soon there he is again. He was down there shovelling again himself. We got the boat out.

So after all was said and done at the yacht club, he was having a drink and I was sipping on a pop. I told him about my studies. I studied theology, with a philosophy major. I was really arrogant. I was really smug about my knowledge, I knew everything that was to be known about knowledge.

He turned and he looked at me and said *"Oh this one day at time changed everything including long held catechism lessons"*. I realized that I was really left with nothing. That beneath there was no filler and I was trying to deal with a whole lot of things. I guess you could say it was some sort of spiritual crisis or awakening. Anyway he had absorbed all that information before and then in his time turned around his seat and looked right at me and pointed. He seriously replied: *"You are God, you are God."*



I thought, how could he make an accusation like that? I immediately noticed the tone of his voice and I agreed, *"You are right, I am."* What just came to me, without having to put it into words, was that I am responsible for myself. All this stuff that is around me, everything that I see and hear, was put here for me. It could be the same thing for anybody else too. It was put there for us. I am at the centre of my own universe; no one can see it but me. Just all the thoughts that really changed a lot of things for me is there for me to acknowledge.

He was a Zen Buddhist he kept sending me reading material long after our meeting. I finally had to tell him not send me anymore. I couldn't deal with it. It is too much.

**Ms. Young:** *Wow! How old were you then?*

Forty years old. I had to be that old in the early 1970's.

**Ms. Young:** *Were there particular stories, legends, creation stories or dreams that were significant that stand out or help guide your life?*

I am not sure. I had visions and dreams but I have not been able to figure out everything about them. I didn't walk around wondering if I am supposed to know this or that, because I really didn't care. I knew that if I was supposed to know it, I would figure it out. I had been pursuing theology and philosophy. I had been chasing anything and everything. The quest for knowledge had become my focus, so I had to change my way of thinking. I told myself, *"I am not going to go anywhere or do anything"*. It was business as usual in an uncomplicated way. I was getting sober and that was it. So isn't that the way? You really want something and you don't get it and if you don't care if you get it or not, you get it? So it was like a game, but it wasn't a game.

**Ms. Young:** *So what do you see our communities and schools need?*

My classical response to that is always the same thing. It is that you can't give away something you don't have. If you don't have a spiritual existence in life, you haven't come through well enough. With what you have, you are in no position to deal with anybody else. I have to think that I didn't gain anything in formal education that had to do with spiritual knowing. It was developed over time, just by happen stance. Like places and persons, nothing formal like reading. Well maybe after I read *Seven Arrows* was a turning point.

**Ms. Young:** *So with the teachings you received through your interactions and happen stance with the different cultures and people, what did you pass on to your children?*

Not much I guess because I didn't do very well. The youngest child was raised around ceremony so it was an entirely different life. She was born in sobriety. We named her

Seanna Rose and she is pretty self-sufficient. When she was very young, she wanted to be a tree chopper at a Sundance. When a tree chopper wants to volunteer to do the ceremony, she must go alone to seek permission from the Red Blanket Men, who lead the Sundance. As she was going to seek permission she looked at me and asked: *“Well! Aren’t you coming with me?”* she said. I said *“No. Rose, if that is something you want to do, you have to go speak for yourself.”* So she did, sniffing and in tears all the way to the tipi where the Red Blanket Man waited for people who were making pledges for the Sundance. She was scared. She asked them if she could be a tree chopper. Rose was given permission and she was very happy. I think that was healthy because it proves something to her and she allows herself to say, *“Look at what I can do and speak for myself”*. If you want something, you do it. If you don’t have to have someone else do it for you.

**Ms. Young:** *How would you describe the role of the tree chopper in general terms?*

It is taking part in a Sacred Ceremony of the Sundance that only a young girl can do. This is something that is missing in dominant societies now days, with some exception of this Native Sundance Ceremony. In most dominant societies, children are not considered an asset. They are a liability unless they live in the outskirts where they can be useful doing minor chores on a farm or ranch. There is really nothing for them to do and society itself moves away from the home, doesn’t offer the children much either. Now days you are looking at giving the children a whole lot of formal education in order to get any credibility. If anything they are not maturing in terms of responsibility to their potential and tend to defer accountability quite a lot. It is not their fault or that they did anything wrong. It is just that society has changed in order to have certain people to develop. I don’t say that is where everybody is in life.

The truth is as in all families, it is a generalization, and so by us having access to an active and communal and spiritual life I think that takes care of a lot of those things. It meets a lot of needs of people. So a tree chopper is probably one of the first things the children can get for some independent responsibility.

Tree choppers have to get outside and go in the rain, cold, and storms to support the Sundancers. Surely the tree choppers are thinking, *“I am not sure why I am doing this except this is what mommy wants me to”*. I mean I would fall over if a tree chopper started lecturing on a spiritual life. Here they think *“I am doing a very important thing”*. I not sure its importance is apparent, not right then and there.

**Ms. Young:** *So they are doing something for the life of the community. So your daughter, by sharing some of the Sundance traditions, she was able to take some responsibility and contribute to the community at a younger age.*

Absolutely and nobody can do it without them, nobody else can do it. It is just for them. She was a Buffalo Calf Woman for eight years for the Eagle Society Sundance, which was

at Sioux Valley Indian Reserve in Manitoba. Solomon Hall was the Sundance Chief and he had a vision to have a Four Winds Ceremony. He asked Seanna Rose to get a pipe so she can help him with the Four Winds Ceremony. After a period of time it became apparent that is just not going to happen so he released her and told her to get on with her life. But in that role she could dictate to spiritual people, not just to the other pipe holders but to the dancers as well. I heard in her instructions she said, *"To my dad too?"* Soloman said, *"Yes especially him."*

**Ms. Young:** *So really learning from the children about taking the responsibility. I guess not all children can and want to do that, eh?*

No but I must have told you, one morning at the Sundance it was raining and cold all night. We were shivering in the cold and the Eagle Man, I can't recall his name, came in and stood there with his hands on his hips, his head cocked looking at us. He said *"Look at yourselves and you are all standing out here looking pitiful. You are all cold and miserable and wondering why the hell you decided to do this. I want you to look out there and see those people out there; that is what you are here for, those people they are counting on you. The people come from all over the world, from different nations and tribes. You are here because you were sent here. You were selected and you were sent here and that's why you are dancing."* It is the same thing with a tree chopper's job.

**Ms. Young:** *So something about being sober and living a sober lifestyle led you to like-minded people who expressed their spirituality. And then you were able to pass that on to the people to be sober and to make a sober community.*

Sometimes. I describe that as two different lives. A life of the healing variety that was a knowledge in a sense and then there was big jobs within big corporations. I actually had a suit patterned in Clarke's where I would go down and order suits I had patterned for myself. And when I sobered up and thought about what I was doing. I haven't a soul and had pandered my life away, a spiritual prostitute. They pay me, I ask how you want it and they do it back for you.

**Ms. Young:** *So what shifted there? Was there a particular event that happened?*

Yes. I had gone off on a job that wasn't working out. So I called my old boss and said this job isn't working out. I asked him if he had anything, before I could even finish he said, *"Come back here."* I said what am I going to do and he said *"What do you care just get back on the payroll. You get back here, I want you here."* So I did, I got back on the payroll and puttered around for a while.

Then I read my grandpa's biography and I didn't learn a damn thing about him. Then my boss asked me to go down to Annapolis Maryland, USA. He was on the technical board for the American Ordinance Association, which is the biggest weapons lobby in the

world. They were having their annual meeting in Annapolis Maryland and he was to suppose to chair it.

He decided to send me instead. So I had to glad hand everyone. I had to set up a table at the banquet and introduce the entire general list of this and that. Anyway when they were making up the agenda, this guy who I worked for got this trouble shoot program for this ABM System.

I thought it is going to really do wonders for the system because it is not organized yet so he was counting on it. Well the agenda was all made up, but I agreed to put him on the agenda. He gave the presentation and he captured the people's attention. The people got all excited. It was a great scientific breakthrough. After the conference I couldn't decide to leave or to stay with the company. I didn't appreciate what they were doing to me. They were sending me to their jobs that they didn't want to do themselves and they were doing it at a short notice time span. I left because they asked me to develop a manual for the system. It was updating a manual that was already obsolete. They had a contract for me but I refused the position to develop the manual. I told them, *"That's it. I am done"*.

I made enough money to be independent until I got work elsewhere. So I left. *Charlie*, my boss called and he said, *"Stop by. I don't want you to go"*. So I stopped by his office. He is a big man, he was way up there (indicating with my hand, that he was more than 5'8" tall). He said, *"You know my son is going to graduate to business education"*. I went to Union College and his son was there at the same time. He said, *"He is going to come in here on a summer work program and I am going to put him to work right here and he'll go back. He will finish up his school, he'll come back down and there will be a job waiting for him. He has got his life all set. He won't have to worry about a thing. Because you know we are going to keep on doing this stuff over and over again"*. I shook my head in agreement because I didn't want to tell him that is why I am leaving. I am not going to be doing nothing forever. I am not going to do it. I don't do that sort of thing anymore. I am now pure and I don't do that anymore. I walked out and said, *"That is it!"* I went back fishing.

**Ms. Young:** *So working directly with the lands and food.*

Indirectly, we would catch fish and send it off.

**Ms. Young:** *So that was a lot more meaningful than making a bunch of money and contributing to a downfall.*

Of course.

**Ms. Young:** *So what is the role of Aboriginal cultural values in the development of leadership?*

Well if you haven't gathered that by now it is the spiritual centre. If they have that then they have assurance of who they are and what their role is before they go out and instantly their power is well.

**Ms. Young:** *Earlier we talked about an identity self-assessment model. The few things that were mentioned earlier were about language, working with a sober community, spirituality – working at a person's spiritual centre. Were there other things that might be useful or were helpful in your experience?*

I'll end up saying the same thing in a different way. I don't envy the job you are doing because I really I think it is something. You are going to lose a certain amount of the person. Somehow, it doesn't fit within the walls of ivy if it's not there. It just isn't there, the buildings are sterile and even teaching academics is sterile. There is no spirit. So you can't capture it within the academic route alone.

**Ms. Young:** *And so with your experience with the House of Learning, the more leadership we can provide, even though it may not really be our place belonging or where we may aspire to live, we must aim to provide leadership options and choices which adds other dilemmas to navigate . . . some people say, why put culture in there at all?*

It is the same dilemma I had as a vocational counsellor. Here are these people that got out of South Dakota because they are looking for this big job in the city. I couldn't be more wrong. They want me to help them get a job so they can become part of mainstream America. I've been in mainstream America and didn't like it there. I wouldn't want to see my worst enemy there. How can I be that deceitful to encourage them to do something that I personally held that it was not good for them? At the same time I ask myself, "Who are you? You are not God. You can't do that. Why do you worry if it doesn't concern you?" Well I don't know.

**Ms. Young:** *Except to encourage people to pursue their dreams, provide information that will create paths and opportunities as you know people have choices.*

I'll think of an example. It just happens. You know like when some of those guys that knew me before saw me here and I was sober. I didn't drink and everybody was there had this respect. I don't know. There is something there that doesn't communicate itself in the language. It is something about people. They see things, like some of the things I talked about earlier and some things a few other people talk about.

There was this other guy who talked about fire keepers. One of the oldest people in that part of the continent said, "Once you brought fire to the Comanche, the stomp grounds" he said, "You have this old man and we all went down overnight. By accident we couldn't decide but he knew all about it. Everything. How the rattlesnakes were and

*how the ceremonies were holy. And there was this guy and the next thing you know things . . . . changed”*

**Ms. Young:** *So having a presence, for the people who do the bicultural or multicultural expressions like providing ceremonies as requested by the community and having spiritual people like yourself there to inspire their leadership. What recommendations do you have that might enhance the cultural program because you were involved with the Elders program, circles, pipes, sweats, are there other things that might enhance in terms of the culture so that they do get a sense of belonging, a better sense of who they are, and provide an introduction to spirituality if they want because often people are saying they cant find it anywhere? Although they probably aren't looking very hard.*

I did a mini-workshop for teachers in the school district. I wanted to show the likeness of spiritual people in the way they look at things, in the way that they see things. They seem to see the same things, they express them slightly differently in the cultural context. I used two books: *“Release God”* by Rabbi Harold Krishna and *“God is Red”* by Vine Deloria. I just excerpted parts of that side by side and showed how it was consistent with what I perceived as Native beliefs that they are everywhere, the spirituality.

And the very people that said they were of the spirit said that they did have that in their history way back when. In their own ways and the places are alive and all people had that at one time. Somehow or another they are rediscovering and reconnecting to that.

I used to do annotated family trees called a genealogy and it would be culturally orientated. Cultures are used to map and reconnect to that. You would be surprised how like life people who come from a strong cultural background, how they have the same things they do in common and so these two writers understand.

To be written out in something so recent in the two authors I mentioned earlier, *Vine Deloria and Rabbi Krishna*. Rabbi has done a lot of other books. He wrote one called *“Bad things happen to good people”*. His son was born with *Lou Garrets* disease. He was a rabbi and worked for the people and prayed to god, keep kosher and do all these things. He prays and asks: *What is the deal here? Why send me a son that is going to die?* He was trying to understand and come to terms with it. *“God is Red”* is just as brilliant and very pragmatic reading. If it works you do it. Don't ask why or if it's good. He doesn't really talk like that but you get the gist. Now it's time for the Celtics game.

**Ms. Young:** *Chi Migwetch! Mitakiasyn, Nikaniganan, Thanks so very much.*