

# Program Report 2008-2009

## Emotional Healing and Renewal for Youth, Families and Community at Roots 4 Peace

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## Report

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The program titled *Emotional Healing and Renewal for Youth, Families and Community*, subsidized in part by a grant from TELUS and held at the Roots 4 Peace Sharing Centre on the Six Nations Mohawk Reserve in Ontario, is based on Dr. Beth Hedva's Spiritually Directed Therapy Protocol (2006) and is adapted to a community setting. The program was a unique and significant educational training for participants as well as a successful consciousness raiser for the broader Aboriginal community. It was also a fundraiser benefiting the Roots 4 Peace counselling center as it attracted professional counsellors and participants from beyond the Six Nations Reserve. Unified around the central purpose 'to renew ourselves and bring self-renewal to our communities', this grass-roots train-the-trainer program builds bridges of respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups including youth and elders, and socially disenfranchised at-risk or high-needs populations, together with professionals, paraprofessionals and the greater community.

Days 1 and 2 focus upon self-healing/self-care/self-ecology skills, followed by two days of leadership development and facilitation skills on Days 3 and 4. The program integrated psycho-educational models that included:

- 1) an Aboriginal sharing circle
- 2) Mohawk healing ceremonies
- 3) conventional psychological best practices
- 4) group work
- 5) leadership development

Participants each received a personal workbook, plus eight additional workbooks to distribute to others including friends, colleagues, co-workers, clients, and/or students, and an educational CD with lecture, stress-reduction 'Tonglin Breathing Practice' with a 'Forgiveness Mediation' and two DVDs titled 'Preparing to Help Others Heal'.

The success of the effort has been enthusiastically tracked by the Roots 4 Peace organization wherever possible. Self-report feedback from the 10 participants who attended a class reunion

six months post-program was very positive. (See samples on pages 9-12.) They were all very keen about their participation, and each subsequently trained an average of 22 people. Even with attrition and/or non-respondents to the request for an evaluation six months after the October training, we know that at least 250 people across communities have been touched by this program.

The quantitative evaluations from the four-day training program corroborate the subjective reports of those who attended the reunion and are confirmed by the post-test submitted again in May. The data on the 17 submitted evaluations that were complete and usable in October show consistent trends towards improvement such as: increases in spiritual wellness, decreases in stress and trauma, and participation in both personal and community healing across communities. (For details, see Results, page 3.) Analyses of the specific measures, (see Method on page 3), indicate favorable tendencies toward improvement for at least 81% of the participants, (17 out of 21 people who gave feedback and who participated in the entire four-day program), and 100% of participants who completed the pre and post-tests indicated positive benefit. These scores tended to improve over six months, based on the May post-tests. (See Results on page 4-12 for details.)

More important, the program helped to build bridges between communities that might not otherwise have had much contact. Friendships between youth and elders, professional and non-professional Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities were established by the end of the six-month program. Thus, based on the number of people trained in the greater community, as described in the self reports, combined with the data in the more standard psychological measures, the intended outcomes have been achieved.

- 1) Extend learning, sharing insights and knowledge between communities and within one's own social circle, family or community.
- 2) Strengthen self-responsibility, accountability, compassion, and spiritual leadership (leading by example) within one's own circle and the greater community.
- 3) Empower each member of society, one person at a time, to become a change-agent in support of greater health and community well being.
- 4) Support and publicize Roots 4 Peace programs with an educational fundraiser.



This groundbreaking work blends advances from the fields of human communications, social-network technologies, and social, transpersonal and cross-cultural psychology. It serves as a pioneering model, offering means and methods that successfully provide personal, interpersonal and community healing, one person at a time. This kind of approach has the potential for large impact on

individuals, families, and community by building bridges of respect and honor between diverse groups of people that make up our Canadian and global landscape.

#### **METHOD:**

Each day of the program began with some form of ceremony facilitated by Grandmother Sara or an elder in the group followed by a Sharing Circle ceremony in which each person speaks as much or as little as he or she wishes, for as long as he or she wishes, while all other participants listen without interruptions or questions. This was followed by didactic information, an experiential process including psychodrama and guided meditation along with dyad work or group work. Each day ended with a closing Sharing Circle.

Ceremonial work included a daily Sharing Circle, traditional Native healing songs, plus a Smudge Ceremony. Participants were also invited to attend additional Aboriginal ceremonies. These were voluntary so as not to offend the differing religious beliefs of participants, although all participated.

- 1) water ceremony
- 2) tobacco/pipe ceremony
- 3) full moon ceremony on the final day

All participation in program activities was voluntary. Participants were instructed to attend daily and to participate as much or as little as each wished. This voluntary participation included completing pre and post-tests which were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Seventeen out of the original group of 30 submitted completed evaluations. We used the Los Angeles Symptom Checklist (L A S C) by Foy, D. et al. (1995), (2005) Spirituality Index of Well-Being (S I W B) by Daaleman, T.P. and Frey, B.B., Spiritual Intuition Inventory (S I I) by Slocum, S.L. and James, S. (2004), Betrayal to Trust Self-Assessment Questionnaire by Hedva, B. (1993, revised 2009). A total of eleven participants completed the post-test, 10 at the reunion and one by post. These were submitted in May, six months following the program. (See RESULTS for interpretation of evaluations.)

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

It was originally hoped that each participant would take at least eight others through the program or share the material with at least this many friends, family or community members. Those who reported in writing after the May reunion helped us to determine that the number of friends, family, colleagues, students, clients and community members trained or impacted by the October program was a **mode of 5** and **the mean number of 22 people impacted by each reunion participant** over the course of six months which was better than we hoped. Based on the number of participants at the May reunion, this would total at least 220 people. Together with the original 30 that we trained in October, at least 250 people were impacted by this train-the-trainer program.

**Program Evaluation Methods:** This program used an essay style self-report evaluation method and a 5-point Likert-scale self-report measurement to help us determine whether we had achieved our desired outcomes. The evaluation tests were administered three times: **October 11, 2008** when participants registered, **October 14th** on the last day of the four-day training, and again **May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009** at the reunion approximately six months following. (Raw data results available upon request.)

- 1) **Los Angeles Symptom Check List (LASC)** to measure stress and post traumatic stress symptoms.
- 2) **Spirituality Index of Well-Being (S I W B) by Daaleman, T.P. and Frey, B.B. (2004).** This is a popular and widely used measure of subjective well being as correlated with spirituality.
- 3) **Spiritual Intuition Inventory (SII)** (Slocum, and James, 2005) The inventory provides a multi-faith perspective on spirituality and was used to measure changes in one's ability to use inner resources for self healing.
- 4) **Betrayal to Trust questionnaire (BTF)** (Hedva, 1993) developed to identify an individual's progression through five stages of healing from trauma and loss to recovery and resilience as reflected in cross-cultural rites of passage.

5) **Self-Report** After six months all participants were invited to write a report, in their own words, about why they came to the program, what they gained, how many people they had impacted, and/or how they might see themselves applying the program in the future. (See samples under Results.)

NOTE: In addition to at-risk populations we had a broad based population group, ranging from youth to more mature individuals and elders, as well as both professional and psychologically-sophisticated participants to those who have no training or background in psychology. Our evaluation methods were based on psychological measures that we used to ascertain whether the program would support personal and community healing across communities. All participation was on a voluntary basis. Because evaluation measures were not delivered with the intent to perform psychological assessment of the participants, and we did not administer these measures for the purpose of scientific study, (which would require written consent from each participant along with a statistical analysis comparing participants' results to a control group), we did not require mandatory submission of evaluations or questionnaires as a requirement of participation in the program.

### **1) Los Angeles Symptom Checklist (L A S C) by Foy, D. et al. (1995)**

This is a self-report measure for assessing stress and is used by psychologists and medical practitioners to diagnose Acute Traumatic Stress, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and associated features. For our purposes, only the 43-item severity summative score was used. Symptoms of PTSD are embedded among other items that assess more general psychological distress and are rated on a five-point scale ranging from 0 (no problem) to 4 (extreme problem). A sum of all 43 items provides an index of global assessment of distress and adjustment problems that may be a consequence of trauma exposure. PTSD can be determined if the 17 items indicating PTSD is rated at two or higher.

Because we were working with at-risk populations this measure could help us evaluate the degree of trauma, stress and post-traumatic stress among participants. Not surprisingly, for the 23 participants who attended the full four-day training, a wide variety of perceptions of the intensity of stress was noted among the participants by the LASC for both test days in October.

For our group, the summative scores ranged from two to 81. On average, the LACS score tended to improve between Day 1 and Day 4 in October, and continued to improve from Day 4 to the day of the reunion six months later.

<b>Los Angeles Symptom Checklist L A S C</b>	<b>Oct 11 1</b>	<b>Oct 14 2</b>	<b>May 2 3</b>
<b>Mean Scores (based on completed questionnaires)</b>	<b>26.71</b>	<b>24.97</b>	<b>22.00</b>

These tendencies towards improvement do indicate the benefit of this kind of program in general and our program in particular. Whether that benefit comes from having contact with others across communities, or due to didactic material presented, or the ceremonial/spiritual healing aspects of the program, or combinations of these three components, is not clear. However, it is confirming to see a general trend toward decreased stress for the participants in the program which is sustained over time.

## **2) Spirituality Index of Well-Being (S I W B) by Daaleman, T.P. and Frey, B.B. (2004)**

This index measures subjective well being as correlated to spirituality. A high correlation was found between spirituality and subjective well being. Existential well being is inclusive of life purpose, life satisfaction, and positive and negative life experiences.

<b>Spirituality Index Of Well Being S I W B</b>	<b>Oct 11 1</b>	<b>Oct 14 2</b>	<b>May 2 3</b>
<b>(Based on completed questionnaires) x̄ (mean)</b>	<b>45.09</b>	<b>49.25</b>	<b>50.38</b>

In our group, the mean score on the first day was 45.09 and improvement was visible by the end of four days' training, with the mean score increasing to 49.25 indicating there was an overall trend toward greater well being, life purpose, and satisfaction. Scores after six months increased to 50.38 indicating that, for those participants who attended the reunion, their subjective experience of well being was both sustained and increased over the six months period following the program even in the midst of life's many ups-and-down, including the more recent and quite dramatic economic downturn between October, 2008 and May, 2009 which affected so many, particularly those residing in southern Ontario and the greater Toronto area.

Combining this information with the Los Angeles Symptoms Checklist which evaluates stress and trauma improvements in one's sense of well being might well support a decrease in one's perception of stress and trauma. It is possible that the increased sense of well being, together with a greater sense of purpose and satisfaction in life, may be independent of one's stressful or traumatic history. Further analysis and a more controlled study of this correlation would be in order before drawing any conclusions, however.

### 3) Spiritual Intuition Inventory (S I I) by Slocum, S.L. and James, S. (2005)

This multi-faith measure of spirituality uses an integral approach to understand how people make meaning of experiences and includes perspectives from various cross-cultural wisdom traditions to assess one's spiritual beliefs and practices. The questionnaire is a measure that was constructed upon the theoretical foundation of transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber.

<b>Spiritual Intuition Inventory S I I</b>	<b>Oct 11 1</b>	<b>Oct 14 2</b>	<b>May 2 3</b>
<b><i>(Based on completed questionnaires)</i> x̄ (mean)</b>	<b>72.19</b>	<b>71.96</b>	<b>80.17</b>

In our group, the mean was slightly less after the first two days of assessments with a larger increased mean score after six months. Given the amount of new information presented during the four-day training, it makes sense that the experience of well being based on making meaning of the material presented might be challenging, in which case the mean score would decrease. New concepts take time to integrate, and experience versus theoretical understanding is the best teacher. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that the mean score was down by .23 points, at a value of 71.96 compared to the first day of the program.

Six months later, as participants had a chance to integrate the material and practice what had been taught and train others, the mean score increased by 7.98 points to a value of 80.17. The program introduced a number of new concepts as well as bringing in meaningful rituals and ceremonies from very diverse cultures which may account for the need to integrate all the new experiences and make meaning over time. Trends indicate that those participants who attended the reunion not only gained personal insights, many reported how they had established personally meaningful spiritual practices which this measure also evaluates. The higher mean score on the SII after six months confirms these reports. Moreover, the increased score may



indicate that participants tend to be able to both sustain positive change and increase the tendency towards enhanced well being.

SII higher scores also indicate that there was an increase in spirituality and using a variety of inner resources and personally meaningful spiritual practices as a source of healing. It is also important to note that those participants who attended the reunion reported they did indeed share the program with others, and this is most likely part of what created greater personal meaning.

#### **4) Betrayal to Trust Self-Assessment Questionnaire (BTF) by Hedva, B. (1993, revised 2009)**

The BTF instrument allows us to assess one's passage through a specific incident of stress, trauma or injury, (for example: job-lay-off; health crisis, death, divorce, child abuse, acts of violence, social injustice or natural disaster). This questionnaire follows and measures an archetypal pattern of growth and change through five distinct stages or transitions as found in ancient and indigenous cross-cultural initiations and rites of passage. The rite of passage is a circular pattern of growth which cycles through shock, threat of loss, and symbolic death, (also known as ego-death), to an ultimate symbolic rebirth which inspires a renewed sense of self and the desire to return to one's community with renewed purpose. Facing loss as both meaningful and essential, as is the case in a rite of passage, is not part of the dominant Canadian cultural milieu. Because of this, many individuals in contemporary society have never experienced the renewal phase of a life passage or significant life transition. The experience of stress and trauma, including symptoms like sleep disturbances, negative anticipation or suspicion, worry, anxiety and depression, seem to persist and impact many areas of one's life, health and well being.

Individuals who experience the fourth and fifth stages of growth, (i.e. new knowledge, renewal, rebirth), naturally tend toward extending their learning to others. They often have a desire to give back to the community. Increases in the number of individuals who identified with the new knowledge and renewal/rebirth phase after four days of training including the leadership development training indicates that those participants might be more motivated to take on roles of leadership in their communities. This did seem to bear out in our evaluation of the BTF measures.

In our initial group on Day 1, participants could be found in various stages of initiation ranging from shock/separation to renewal and rebirth. After four days of training everyone was either in new knowledge or in rebirth or in both. At our reunion, everyone was in new knowledge, indicating that participants seemed to be able to sustain their newfound insight and the sense of purpose they found.

### **5. May Reunion Results from Participant's Self-Reports Evaluations:**

All 30 participants were invited to complete the same instruments/evaluations on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and May 2<sup>nd</sup> or to submit their third assessment by email or post so we could gain a longitudinal assessment of the effectiveness of the four-day program. Submitting assessments was voluntary. For those who attended the May reunion, all showed further improvement in the second post-test six months later. From the original group of 30 participants who attended the October four-day training program, 10 participants and one guest attended the reunion held in May, 2009 and filled out the post-tests. One participant mailed in her questionnaires but did not attend the reunion on May 2<sup>nd</sup> so we had 11 complete evaluations with pre-test and post-tests in October and May. Of the 11 attendees at the reunion, 80 % of these participants also attended some of the webinars, but not all of them had done so.

For example, one Aboriginal participant who did not attend the webinars due to lack of access to a high speed computer internet service nonetheless had better scores on her May questionnaires indicating a tendency toward sustained improvement, including decrease in stress and trauma (LASC), and an increase in well being (SWIB), use of inner resources and spirituality, including personally meaningful spiritual practice (SII), when compared to her October pre-test. This would indicate that taking the four day training had a positive sustained impact, in spite of not attending the webinars or participating in on-line groups for at least one participant. (See Sample Self-Reports from Participants below. Note: not all participants submitted written evaluations.)

#### **Aboriginal Student (group 1)**

*"I came to this program because I plan to work in the healing field and wanted to gain new knowledge. I have trained five people [since October].*

*Three words that describe my experience of this program are: 1. surprise, 2. fulfillment, 3. gratitude" [I have renewed] belief in self. I now trust and honour my intuition/feelings. I'm able to go more deeply to understand my feelings."*

### **Aboriginal General Audience (group 1)**

*"Firstly, the entire process was a genuine learning situation for myself' and I guess that is where it all, starts,' . . . to know one's self'" Also, to recognize that the self is made up of many contributing factors; more so 'all the ones that make up a you' . . . . My intention was to offer parts of myself to the entire group, and to wish them well ' if, there was anything that I could contribute to, in their hearts, and on their journey of discovery. I came because I observed that this is an area where I needed to grow, to mature, and to contribute to. I came because I knew it was important and because it was where I needed to be, for whatever reasons."*

*" . . . If, I were to choose three words to represent the experience these would be them . . . **grace, love, and loyalty.** The spark I take is **TRUTH**, and to apply what all it is to every moment of existence and to strive for it. **"It all can be applied."***

*I can not count the people that this will be shared with, has been shared with, and the effect that this time [and training] will have on humanity. Nor can I ever even begin to acknowledge the natural law and continual law effect. Again, no words. These ideas will go on forever, as I see it. I would encourage, firmly the continuance of this programme and the work of Grandmother Sara D. Smith, Dr. Beth Hedva, and associates. Those who funded this experience I acknowledge' for it was a once in a lifetime experience.*

### **Non-aboriginal / Student (group 2)**

*With the insight and knowledge I received from the [4-day] retreat I have been telling my friends my story and how things resonated for me. Many people are very eager to start an emotional healing group with me, it is I who cannot make the time commitment as yet since I am in the thick of my thesis writing and research but I KNOW it will be a huge success and transformative experience for all of us when we begin. For now I talk with them about the importance of TRUST--your acronym--turning inward.*

*The 3 other co-creators of POR AMOR\*\* all have a copy of the workbook right now to browse through and do the exercises on their own if they so choose. I'm also going to give a copy to my psychotherapist because perhaps she will find it useful as well . . . I am grateful.*

**Note: \*\*Por Amor is a volunteer initiative that was started by four youth in 2003, to provide free educational workshops for at-risk youth. Current projects focus on using art and spoken word poetry/hip-hop to resolve gang violence in Toronto.**

### **Professional / Non Aboriginal (group 2)**

*" . . . instead of the usual 'movie night with beer and wings' [I'll] invite friends for a healing ceremony, full moon prayers, equinox and solstice ritual, or any occasion that presents itself to create sacred space that allows for a more conscious and meaningful transition transformation (and, of course, food is always good, so wings are still good to have.)*

*I believe that as these tools become a part of me I impact pretty much everyone I come in contact with because I view people in a different way. Specifically I see their potential rather than their imperfections, I can acknowledge their injuries and wounds and feel compassionate rather than being turned off, and I can relate to them because I went through the same experience rather than feeling estranged.*

*I have used those tools in my therapy sessions with clients as well as taught some of them at Toastmasters, and when visiting with my friends and family I incorporate more and more. . . .I would say [I have trained] about 20 clients, 20 people at Toastmasters, and about 30 other friends and family that I can think . . . at a minimum. I intend to:*

- to continue teaching this material in therapy sessions*
- to offer this material in workshops (Austria, and locally, etc.)*
- to give myself the time and training and experience needed to grow into this role as a*

*facilitator*

*I have just started teaching my supervision classes with the hypnotherapy students, and their feedback is really positive and encouraging.*

*AND OF COURSE: the best way to teach is to become the teachings and live the insights, to share my own experience, to speak my truth, and to allow access to my heart, to make the material real by being real.”*

### **Aboriginal Ceremonialist (group 3)**

*The model is super simple. It brings the light of awareness into those places where we are constricted. It's a good guide and an amazing reference. I have used this material with at least five people that I can think of over the last year.*

*Watching people go through their transformations, those people who applied the model, and how they were able to use the model to catch their own patterns, and transform them was really inspiring. It's revitalizing and thought provoking. And with the support group, having everybody really support each other through the winter was really powerful.*

### **General Audience / Non Aboriginal (group 3)**

*At the time I took part in the program, I had been through a particularly difficult job loss. It was not simply losing a job due to the reigning economic environment but it had involved a very difficult betrayal as part of a very toxic situation that had existed for months prior to the actual termination. As a result I was very depressed and anxious and felt very hopeless about my life and situation.*

*I think the program helped in two ways; it allowed me to see myself as larger than the trauma I had undergone so I was not so consumed with what had happened.*

*Through reconnecting with my real/truer self, I became more than just this person who had been completely "screwed over" and was able to see that although I had been terribly mistreated, I didn't need to internalize it as unworthiness and self blame. To clarify, I think most thinking people can understand this at an intellectual level, but the challenge is to integrate this emotionally and spiritually, which the program enabled me to do.*

*I believe it is fairly well accepted that forgiveness is very important to the healing process. But although the concept is simple, in practice forgiveness can be very difficult. Furthermore, there is usually an element of self-betrayal, or perceived self-betrayal, which requires self-forgiveness. This is often more difficult than forgiving others. In my particular case, it is often the main obstacle to healing. Not only was I able to achieve the self-forgiveness I needed, I feel like I am less likely to betray myself in the same way going forward in my life.*

*Most importantly, I came away from the program with a sense of hope which I had been sadly lacking.*

*I am not a practitioner, however, I have a friend who was also undergoing a very difficult time around the time of the program. Although I did not formally take her through the program, I provided a lot of ongoing support based on the material I had learned. As a result she has ended up coming through her crisis quite well. She has had a couple bad experiences with therapists in her past and therefore looks to friends to provide this kind of support to her.*

*I also stay in touch with the small group I worked with in the course. We continue to support each other using the program and content as a resource.*

### **Student Non-Aboriginal (group 3)**

*“The work that happened during this program was extremely effective and I left with a new found feeling of strength that I don't think I ever knew before. In particular, I attended the emotional healing weekend with my life-partner, and the skills that we both learned has contributed to a new dynamic within our relationship that I feel is more healthy.*

*I have concrete plans to facilitate an emotional healing and renewal group in my church. Further, there are many people in my life, mostly family and some acquaintances/work colleagues, who would not be open to discussing these concepts formally, but because of my new awareness and intention that I bring into our relationships, it has consequently changed my relationships with these people. . . .the emotional healing program has touched approximately 15 of my friends, 12 of my colleagues, 25 people in my family and I can estimate that about 10 people will sign up for the group at my church; . . . if the interest is there I will continue to lead groups in my church, ideally affecting a much greater amount of people. . . . my participation in the emotional healing and renewal group has affected a minimum of 63 people.*

*I came to the emotional healing and renewal program because it looked like something that was right up my alley. I am a MA student in community psychology and have always been attracted to the more 'applied' side of psychology. . . .Upon arriving at the weekend, however, I realized that there was just as much, if not more, content and learning that could contribute to my personal well-being. For this I am very grateful.” . . .*

*“One spark that I'll take with me is that I am okay. This sounds very simple, but in my life it is quite huge. Due to some family trauma that happened when I was a child. . . I have spent my life either hiding from others out of fear and shyness, or trying desperately to prove myself to those around me, which is exhausting. At the emotional healing group I learned that I don't have to do either. I am okay just as I am. . . .*

*“These simple tools have provided so much empowerment and illumination. . . . I was in therapy long before I came to the emotional healing and renewal program, but the tools and skills that I got from this 4 day intensive program have impacted me in a more practical, useful and long-term way than a lot of the other therapy work that I have done previously.”*

### **Non-Aboriginal Student (Group 3)**

*I took the Emotional Healing and Renewal program for both personal and professional reasons. Personally, I believe that each of us needs to undergo our own process of emotional healing and renewal in order to be able to serve others in the world. Therefore, I came to the program to continue my own process of healing and learning. Professionally, as a doctoral student in Education and Community Development, I took the course with the intention of using the training program and framework with others. I shared the materials with at least 5 people (including books, DVDs, etc.), and intend to continue to promote the material and concepts through my work as a professor and in community development . . .*

*I experienced the creation of loving and supportive community (as a circle of participants in the program)*

*I carry many things with me from the program, but in particular, I have carried the idea of maintaining a "centre" of peace and spiritual clarity in the midst of whatever is going on in my life. Therefore, I may swing out into different emotions and reactions of fear, anger, or hurt, but these do not represent my true self. . .*

*I also really carried with me the idea that I am not alone - that the experiences that I have that I feel are so powerful and overwhelming are linked to archetypal human experience.*

*This means that: 1) the experience itself feels more powerful because it is tapping into a greater human experience and teaching, and that 2) even though I feel very alone at the time, that there are countless others who have experienced the same situation. If I remember that the situation is really a means for learning about a greater human lesson, and that I am not alone, then I will be able to understand, learn from, and move through the experience as an opportunity for healing and transformation.*

*I believe that Beth Hedva's work provides one of the clearest frameworks that I have ever seen for understanding human experience and how healing and transformation occur, and includes extremely tangible and useful tools for facilitating those processes of healing and transformation. I continue to use the materials personally on a regular basis, and see myself sharing them with others for many years to come.*

### **SUMMARY:**

This innovative and revolutionary program stretches across socio-cultural barriers and has indeed laid down a few girders to enable us to build stronger bridges between communities, Aboriginal, and non-Aboriginal youth and elders using a number of modalities. Blending ancient and indigenous spiritual healing traditions with best practices in psychology, together with leading edge social-network technologies, participants were able to extend compassion, healing and support to themselves and each other, as well as to extend this learning to the greater community.

Combining information from both self-report evaluations with quantitative tests and measures, participants reported tendencies toward a greater sense of meaning. Based on the Spirituality

Index of Well Being and the cultivation of meaningful spiritual practice based on the Spiritual Intuition Inventory, it is plausible to interpret that leadership within one's community could add meaning and value to one's life and become part of one's personal spiritual practice, leading by example. This kind of meaningful participation in one's community is correlated with the experience of psychological resilience and, according to our measures, this tendency toward having meaningful participation may have the added benefit of decreasing stress, according to the LASC, and increasing well being, according to the SIWB.

Additionally, life's ups and downs over six months didn't seem to impact participants' scores negatively, so it is very possible that new knowledge can be sustained over time, even in the face of life's daily stresses and uncertainties. Finally, at least 250 people have been impacted by this grass-roots train-the-trainer program across communities.

*“Dedicated to the Children of Today and ‘Those-Yet-Not-Here’ —  
the Children of Tomorrow. . . to promote peace, unity,  
harmony, and understanding among all peoples.”*

*Roots 4 Peace*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT: EMOTIONAL HEALING PROGRAM**

As a pilot program, this innovative cross-cultural/cross-community program has great promise though there is a significant drop in attendance with each level of commitment. The first level, self-healing and personal wellness, had the greatest attendance with a decrease in three participants who chose not to complete the first two days of the program. However, there was a 24% drop in enrollment after the first two days, leaving 76% who chose to continue with the Leadership Development program. Two of these registrants left early on Day 4 due to scheduling conflicts. As for webinar participation, 43% of the original group participated in the on-line mentorship option, though 38% who lived on the reserve mentioned that they did not have access to high speed internet and/or computer. And only one-third, (10 participants), joined in the reunion after six-months.

There are ways that the author believes the program could be strengthened to be even more effective, to decrease the attrition rate, and/or increase commitment:

**1) To enhance participation/reduce attrition:** In addition to offering professional Continuing Education Credits, offer a Certificate of Participation after the first two days, and a Certificate of Completion after the 4-day training. The sense of accomplishment that builds personal self-worth for participating in the program, as well as a defined sense of value added by completing the full 4-day training based in specific skill building and confirmation of greater competence as defined by the two kinds of certification, may motivate individuals to commit to the whole program, and participate in greater community leadership as was demonstrated by ten of the participants who attended the reunion six months later. A third certificate, Community Leadership Certificate of Completion, could be awarded to those who demonstrate leadership, (see # 2 below), and attend the reunion after six months.

Another option might be to consider offering the program only as a four-day commitment instead of splitting it into two days of personal healing followed by an optional two days of leadership development. However, there were at least three members of our group who decided to stay for Leadership Development when this had not been their original intention, and at least one of these individuals also completed the entire six months, including webinars. Plus, there is value in offering a community based program which allows participants to attend only one or two days. Seeds are planted and may sprout later in unexpected and wonderful ways.

**2) Increase Incentive/Commitment to Community Leadership in Support of Community Renewal:**

**a) Internships:** Include an internship concurrent to the webinars where participants are expected to spend 25 hours a month training others and reporting results at each webinar.

**b) Case study/case review:** Encourage, or require, participants to present orally and/or to write up a training experience with a group or an individual and post at a yahoo group to share this experience with others. Such cases could also be presented during the webinars. This could be added into the reunion experience six months post-program, having each person share a personal story of someone or some group they trained, explaining how this experience impacted them. This might serve a dual purpose. First, it would offer a venue for participants to learn from each other based on their own personal experiences. Second, it would allow participants to take their learning to the



next level of articulation which would help to confirm personal competence as a leader and teacher of others.

**c) Certification:** Consider offering a Community Leadership Certificate of Completion at the reunion six months post-program for those who complete 150 hours of training and demonstrate competence through written or oral discussion/presentation, or through demonstration of facilitation skills at the reunion. A Community Leadership Certificate of Participation could be awarded to those who attend but have not completed 150 hours.

**d) Graduate facilitators:** Invite former graduates from the Roots 4 Peace program to co-facilitate future programs.

### **3) Improve technology user-interface:**

a) **Subsidize high speed internet fees** for at-risk populations or those who only have dial-up capability. Thirty-eight percent of program participants, all living on the reserve, did not have easy access to high speed internet.

b) **Use the xiosoft platform exclusively for the webinars** This was far superior to the SKYPE platform for the group webinars. The SKYPE platform was recommended by a participant because it is free of charge. Free service was especially attractive for this population and some of the members continue to use SKYPE to speak with one another. The Xiosoft costs were absorbed by the Canadian Institute for Transpersonal and Integrative Science. However, in the future, these costs need to be factored into the budget, including a fee for a regular staff person to run the virtual seminar room and problem solve all the technical difficulties that did, and are bound to, show up.

**4) Increase Number of at-risk youth participants:** We planned this program specifically for Roots 4 Peace and left the selection of Aboriginal youth and at-risk participants to our cultural liaison on the reserve. Also, at the time this program was first planned in 2007, Dr. Hedva spoke with John Fenn, then the Director of Streetlights Support Services in Toronto, a harm-reduction community-based program to help prostitutes and johns get off the street. Because Streetlights is a harm-reduction program, the clients and the nature of recovery for each individual vary greatly. Mr. Fenn suggested that he had several people in 2007 that would make good participants in our program because they seemed motivated to extend their own transition out of the sex-trade industry by helping others to do the same. In fact, Streetlights was founded by two former prostitutes for just this purpose, so the model made sense within the context of our Emotional Healing and Community Renewal program and the Streetlights program's founders. We anticipated a group of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth

to come from Streetlights to Roots 4 Peace. We agreed that all possible candidates for our program would need to be hand picked and personally invited by the Director. When we contacted Streetlights in August and September of 2008, however, we were told they did not have any clients who currently were, or would be by October 11<sup>th</sup> in a position to be able to attend the Roots 4 Peace program. Specifically, at the time we were registering workshop participants, all the clients in the Streetlights program were still turning tricks and many were still using narcotics. The clinical coordinator of the program also said that the cost of overnight accommodations near the conference site was prohibitive, even though the tuition subsidy was covered by a grant from the TELUS Corporation. We also contacted the Red Door Family Shelter and were told current clientele would be unsuitable because of the level of risk of violence to the current clientele.

**a) On-site customized programs:** Because the cost to transport and house youth and families from Toronto was prohibitive for at-risk populations and for us, the best way to increase participation from these groups would be to customize the program on-site within Toronto agencies, and perhaps seek a means of bringing Elders from the reserve and other helping professionals to them. Agencies that expressed interest in such a program included Por Amor in Toronto, Streetlights in Toronto; Red Door Family Shelter in Toronto, or Aspire Youth Services in Calgary.

By holding the program at the agency that exclusively serves disadvantaged or at-risk populations/youth, and bringing others to them as we did with Roots 4 Peace where the program was held on the Six Nations Reserve in Southern Ontario, the community at large has an opportunity to break down prejudicial barriers and discover the common thread that weaves us all together in greater humanity and compassion.

The program can then be customized to meet the needs of a specific population while still following the cross-cultural, multi-faith spiritual healing, psycho-educational model for personal healing and community wellness. However, there would still be a loss by not having the program on the reserve, because the reserve creates a more retreat-like setting.

**b) Full subsidy for at-risk populations:** Another option might be to increase funding to subsidize transportation, meals, and lodging for at-risk participants.

## 5) To Improve Evaluative Methods:

**a) Cross cultural sensitivity in evaluative reports:** Another variable to consider is the impact of systemic racism. Consider qualitative and culturally sensitive evaluative methods such as oral report and demonstration instead of written, forced-choice evaluations. Standard evaluation methods intrinsic to our North American educational system is the opposite of the indigenous way of life and is just one example of the challenges evident when creating cross-cultural and cross-community programs that aim to build bridges of respect and understanding between diverse cultures.

**b) Explore offering a 25% discount on registration for completing all evaluations** with the discount to be returned at the completion of the program after six months. However, it is important to note that material values are not necessarily a primary motivator for many cultures including indigenous cultures. Happiness, harmony and respectful relationships are more important to First Nations cultures than monetary remuneration. Therefore, opportunities for authentic, respectful relationships are a greater motivator. All this could, of course, also impact the accuracy of evaluative methods.

**c) Sensitivity to respectful/ethical standards in evaluations:** When exploring ethics, the Canadian Psychological Association recommends very distinct ethical criteria including:

- 1) Respecting the dignity of persons.
- 2) Responsible caring.
- 3) Integrity of relationships.
- 4) Responsibility to society.

We need to ask first, who does our evaluation of the program and the methods we use serve? And, how does this serve? Whose interests are dominant? Whose interests are secondary, and who are not considered? This is especially important in cross-cultural work, where both indigenous and immigrant cultures are often healing from a history of oppression and exploitation, or stress and trauma, or both.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **BUDGET REPORT**

When the author was first approached by Grandmother Sara to offer a program at Roots 4 Peace, Dr. Hedva proposed an Educational Fundraiser to support Roots 4 Peace Programs. As an Educational Fundraiser, all income generated from registrations went directly to Roots 4 Peace programs. We collected \$7,280.00 in registration fees including \$4,080.00 from general admission and \$2,400.00 from tuition subsidies, which was collected by Bob Watts, the current Executive Director of Roots 4 Peace.

All expenses for this program were subsidized by in-kind donations, grants, gifts, volunteer efforts and a small number of direct food donations.

As a grass-roots program, it was determined that no one would be turned away for lack of funds to pay for the program. A sliding-scale general admission was charged to the public, and volunteer opportunities for work/study and tuition subsidies for students and youth subsidized by the TELUS Foundation made this program the success that it was. A full budgetary report is available upon request