

White Buffalo Road Healing Lodge
and the Provincial Centre of
Excellence for Children and Youth
Mental Health at CHEO

The “Native Pride” program:
Policy Development Project

White Buffalo Road Healing Lodge
(Waabibshkode Bzhiki Yaamyaaang):

- Established in 2005, White Buffalo Road Healing Lodge (WBRHL) is a Native led and community initiated non-profit organization dedicated to instilling pride and self-confidence in the Aboriginal community, by helping them reaffirm their cultural heritage as a basis for living to their potential.

The Native Pride Program

- The Native Pride Program is a participatory program, based on an experiential style of counseling.
- All of the counselors and social workers at WBRHL have had some form of professional training in trauma and addictions;
- all employees believe in the healing qualities of First Nations Healing Practices.

The use of the Medicine Wheel

- The medicine wheel is used to describe the life cycle and to represent the inter-connectedness as it occurs throughout a lifetime.
- The medicine wheel is divided into the four directions, representing the different races of people and the four aspects of humanity (physical, spiritual, emotional and mental).
- The interconnectedness explains the four stages of life (Newborn, Childhood, Adulthood and Elder); the four sacred medicines, the four elements (fire, water, wind, earth) and the four seasons.
- All is important and connected within the medicine wheel and the “medicine wheel theory”.

Does White Buffalo Road Healing Lodge “Native Pride” program have a target population?

Definitely, all Northern Ontario Aboriginal Youth deserve the opportunity to achieve optimal mental health, this policy framework applies to:

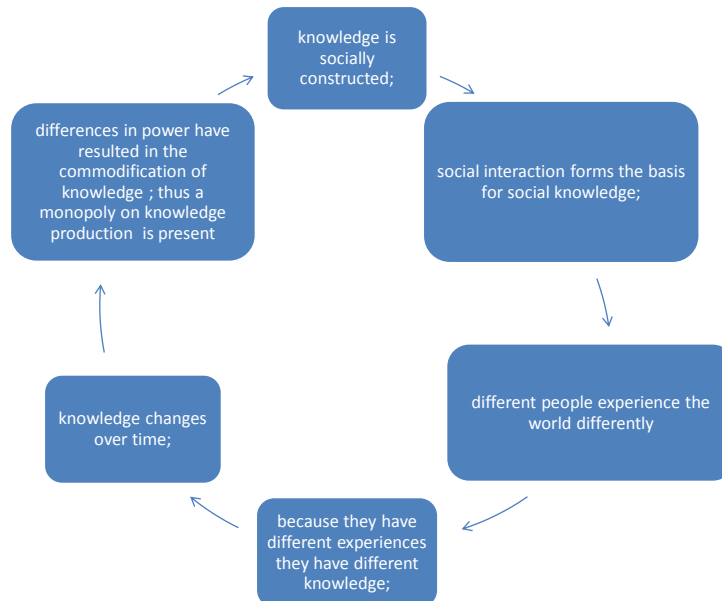
- All Aboriginal Youth from the ages of 12-18 up, and their families/caregivers
- Youth who are experiencing at-risk behavior or mental health problems/illnesses. (At-risk behaviors may include but are not limited to: substance abuse, self-harm, mental health concerns, grief and loss issues, running behavior and criminal activity).

Policy Development Project

- The objective of the “Policy Development Project” is to increase consistency in service provision, thereby adding structure to White Buffalo Road Healing Lodge (WBRHL) and the Native Pride Program. The Native Pride Program is a participatory program based on an experiential style of counseling.

What are the targets of this project?

- Development of a comprehensive Policy Framework document
- Development of policies for the Native Pride Program
- Financial Policies, Personnel Policies, Administrative Policies, Program Policies
- Knowledge Exchange
 - To prepare a delivery presentation for local First Nation Communities
 - To deliver six presentations with local First Nation Communities
 - To prepare for and host a meeting of local area organizations in Sudbury on the results of the structuring of the Native Pride Program.



Kirby and McKenna's (1989), list of Six Tenets for Research

Please refer to Appendix: A-1, A-2, A-3

**White Buffalo Road Healing Lodge,
Native Pride Program
Job Description**

**Job Title: Program Facilitator/
Traditional Councilor**

Appendix...A-1

White Buffalo Road Healing Lodge, Native Pride Program

Job Description -Job Title: Program Facilitator/ Traditional Councilor

Location: WBRHL Site- Shawanaga First Nation

“White Buffalo Road Healing Lodge, Native Pride Program is designed to provide culture based services that support and enhance the quality of life for Native families and youth within the Central Northern Region of Ontario. The program takes a holistic view of problems, builds on individual and family strengths, and engages clients as partners in identifying problems and their solutions.”

As a Program Facilitator/ Traditional Councilor, one will fully embrace the concept of the Healing Path as defined through traditional teachings from our Elders and Ancestors.

Position Summary

Under the direction of the Executive Director the Program Facilitator/ Traditional Councilor will:

1. Assessment of presenting issues of individual. (Family systems theory) questions are related around the structure of the family and the relationship to the community; these questions are asked throughout the week-end (the Native Pride program is always held during the W/E) Observe the behavior, presentation of self; inclusive of type of language being used, and the negative or positive connotation present.
2. Plan organize and carry out activities with youth, the plans are structured and designed to enhance client’s self awareness and self-esteem.
3. Create and Maintain Client files.
4. An important component of this job is to conduct Sweatlodge Ceremonies. To be a Sweatlodge conductor; one must be validated or recognized by other recognized ceremony conductors. Ojibway Teachings suggest; that recommendations must be from four gifted “Pipe carriers.”

A ceremony called the Sweatlodge Ceremony is prepared for and conducted.

- a) Along with a helper, known as the Fire Keeper, the preparation for the ceremony is a process and takes around four hours to complete.
- b) Supervise and participate in the picking of the sacred medicine (Cedar). This medicine is picked with the youth of the program. This is a teaching process. For this definition picking also means preparing the medicine for the ceremony.
- c) In preparing for a ceremony, the conductor of the ceremony will create the sacred space by inviting the “ones who have gone before us” to assist or help the youth. Smoke the sacred pipe in preparation for the ceremony.
- d) Conductor of the Sweatlodge ceremony works through a process with the participants of the Sweatlodge ceremony that takes three- four hours.

Please refer to the documents titled “The Firekeeper” and “The Sweatlodge” for further details and understanding of the process of the Sweatlodge ceremony.

5. To conduct a group counseling experience for the participants (all group counseling sessions are conducted in a circle.) A teaching or topic is presented by the facilitator. The participants then volunteer their thoughts and feelings regarding the teaching. An Eagle feather is usually passed throughout the circle.
6. To help with kitchen duties e.g. cooking/ cleaning.
7. To provide travel for the participants when needed.
8. Attend Case Management meetings when required.
9. Mediate when conflicts arise, conflict resolution and conflict diffusion.

Qualifications

Experienced in working with hard to serve youth

Trained through years of learning from other Elders and Medicine people

Acknowledged by the collective as being people of spiritual worth and knowledge

Committed to the belief that all people have the ability to change their lives in a positive manner through their personal commitment and belief in the Creator

Someone who through their own healing path acknowledges both the weaknesses and strengths within themselves and others

Someone who models positive behaviour through the integration of cultural teachings

Someone who is non judgmental and without prejudice of any kind regarding race, culture, language, gender, sexual orientation or religious/spiritual beliefs

Ability to analyze and resolve problems, makes quick decisions, and responds to critical incidences within time constraints

Must have Drug and Alcohol/Social Work experience working in the Social Work field

Must have knowledge and understanding of First Nations culture and community life

Must have an understanding of traditional Native healing practises

Must be able to demonstrate culturally competent/culturally safe practise

Must have some knowledge of Addiction & related issues, Recovery, & Relapse Prevention

Must have some experience working in group therapy

Must have good interpersonal skills

Must be able to work independently and as a team player

Must have CPR/First Aid/WHMIS

Must have current CPIC

Excellent written and verbal communication skills; organizational skills; ability to multitask and prioritize; initiative and respect for confidentiality

A valid Driver's Licence and access to a reliable vehicle are required for this position.

Appendix...A-2

The Sweat lodge

If you are on a healing journey the Sweat Lodge is a good place to begin because when you are sitting in a sweat lodge, you are at the centre of the Four Directions.

The sweat lodge ceremony forms part of the ceremonial life of many First Nations. Even within one territory, there may be differences in the way the ceremony is conducted.

Some Types of Sweats

The Sweat Lodge has been called "the most powerful structure in the world." It is a place specially constructed to conduct ceremony. Sweats vary from purification and cleansing to healing sweats. It is said that the Sweat Lodge during ceremony "responds" to what the participants need.

Other types of sweats include clan sweats, such as Bear clan sweats, sweats for fasters both before and after they fast, sweats for sun dancers and sweats when you seek your spirit name.

In some traditions, the women sweat together at one time and the men sweat at another. Specific sweats may be held for children or youth.

By offering tobacco, the Sweatlodge Ceremony can be held for any numbers of reasons, all one must do is ask the conductor to host a Sweatlodge.

Fire

As you approach the sweat lodge you come first to the edge of the sacred fire where the rocks are heating for the ceremony; these rocks are known as Grandmothers and Grandfathers. One of the teachings of the fire is that when we leave this earth, we have to go through fire to get to the spirit world. It takes only a second and all the impurities that we have gathered while on this earth are removed. The fire is in direct line with the door of the lodge. The door of the lodge always faces an eastern direction.

Before you enter the lodge, offerings are made at the sacred fire. The sacred medicine-Tobacco is always one of the offerings.

Doorway

The direction of the doorway that the people enter differs according to the teachings of the conductor. One conductor's teachings may specify that the doorway face east.

Another conductor's teachings will require that the doorway face south because his or her medicine and what they learned came from the south. The teachings of another lodge specify that the direction of the doorway change throughout the year. This four direction lodge would face each direction for three months of the year.

Frame

The frame of the sweat lodge or sweat house is made of a specific number of red willow, ash, birch, maple or jack pine saplings. Some teachings refer to the frame as the ribs of Mother Earth. Tobacco is placed at the base of the hole that each pole is set into.

In the past, the frame would be covered with buffalo or deer hides. Today, canvas tarps and blankets are used. The coverings keep the light out and the heat in. Once the lodge is constructed, a ceremony is held before the first sweat takes place. A sweat lodge is a dome-shaped structure. When people talk about the lodge they talk about entering the womb of Mother Earth. It is a sacred place.

Inside the Lodge

Inside the sweat lodge, the participants sit in a circle around a central pit. The sweat lodge conductor usually sits at one side of the door and may have other participants sit in the four directions of the lodge. The number of people attending the ceremony varies depending on the reason for the sweat. The Sweatlodge is a place where the participants sweat. The Ojibway translation is “the place of letting go”

This is a complete form of surrender for the participants. The lodge is hot, totally black and when water is added to the grandfathers the steam can seem unbearable. An individual puts their trust in the conductor and the spirits. The conductor sings a variety of songs throughout the ceremony; a “healing song” is always sung.

Four common events take place during the process of a Sweatlodge ceremony

1. The participants get answer to their personal questions
2. They release hurt or trauma from the past
3. Get direction regarding their life and life lessons
4. On few occasions an individual will receive teachings directly from the spirits

One must believe in the process of the Sweatlodge for healing to occur.

Sweat Lodge Conductors

Sweat lodge conductors are men or women who have trained for many years to earn the right to conduct sweats. They have received the teachings and have gone through ceremonies to develop the gift that is given to them.

The sweat lodge conductor knows the protocol and history of his or her lodge. They are able to explain it clearly and concisely when asked.

It is important that the sweat lodge conductor is aware of health issues you may have before you enter the lodge.

He or she is also able to assist you with your experiences in the sweat lodge.

Grandmothers and Grandfathers

A firekeeper tends the sacred fire outside the lodge. At the request of the conductor, the firekeeper brings the Grandmothers and Grandfathers to the lodge door. They are then placed in the pit at the centre of the lodge by the conductor's helper. Even though the firekeeper is not inside the sweat lodge, he is very much a part of this ceremony and may receive teachings, cleansing and healing.

In some teachings, the rocks are known as the bones of Mother Earth. Women call the rocks Grandmothers and men call them Grandfathers.

In one tradition, teachings describe four-lodges-in-one where the number of rocks is specified for each type of sweat. Seven rocks are used in the cleansing sweat, fourteen rocks are used in the healing sweat, twenty-one rocks are used in the hunting sweat and twenty-eight rocks are used in the truth sweat.

Drum

When you enter the sweat lodge you are seeking the help of the Creator and the spirits. The helping spirits are called into the sweat lodge by means of the prayers, songs, drums or shakers. A drum, either a little hand drum or the water drum, is an important item in the ceremony because the drum is made from all of Creation. The sound of the drum is like the heartbeat of Mother Earth.

Songs and prayers are offered during the ceremony. Sometimes a pipe is used. Each person has a chance to speak or pray within the lodge. Cedar water is poured on the Grandmothers and Grandfathers, creating a cleansing steam in the lodge.

At the end of the ceremony, the spirits are thanked and sent home.

When you come out of the sweat lodge your spirit feels new and alive. You can feel the healing energies and you are more aware of all Creation and the beauty that is there.

Preparations for a Sweat

When you request a sweat, an offering of tobacco is made to the sweat conductor.

Some sweat lodge conductors say you should abstain from alcohol or drugs for at least four days, others say seven days.

As our awareness and knowledge of our traditions and culture increases, so does our honour and respect for these ways. This has not always been the case in our communities. There are always those who present themselves as Healers, Elders or Medicine People who have not earned that title and may use the teachings and medicines in the wrong way. It is important for everyone, especially young people, to be aware of this and to exercise caution when they seek healing, teachings or advice. It is advisable to consult with people whom you trust to get referrals to respected and recognized Traditional Elders, Healers or Medicine People.