

FIRST CHOICES FIRST NATIONS

SUMMER/FALL 2020

Succession planning for Aboriginal youth

- Families
- Educators
- Community Leaders
- Professionals



LEADERS IN WAITING

There is a widespread, active commitment among thought-leaders in First Nations to groom their coming generation of community leaders. It's a goal shared by their leaders in business, government, associations and educational institutions. Families as well want those children who aspire to future leadership roles to access early training.

A sample of their inspirational thinking is captured in this publication. The publisher, FORED, is grateful for their contributions.

These thought-leaders understand that the complexities that will face future leaders are multiplying daily. They understand that the young Aboriginals of today who have dreams of being leaders in the future are eager to be groomed.

There are many elements to this leadership grooming process. Ironically, there are few models among other types of government for preparing youth to be political leaders that First Nations can emulate.

Perhaps those other forms of government will be inspired by the work in this challenge underway among First Nations. ✨

VICTOR GODIN
EDITOR



90 Years Plus of Helping Community Dialogue

This publication is produced by FORED, a non-profit association that has supported community dialogue in British Columbia since 1925.

That dialogue has always been built around the themes of sustainability and citizen development.

That means helping communities, including Aboriginal communities, achieve growth based on shared values.

As part of this effort, the association has a program called AHEAD, standing for Aboriginal Heritage, Education and Dialogue. AHEAD was created to bring communities together to talk about future opportunities that respect tradition and ways in which Aboriginal youth could be prepared for those opportunities.

THIS MAGAZINE IS PART OF
THE AHEAD PROGRAM.

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

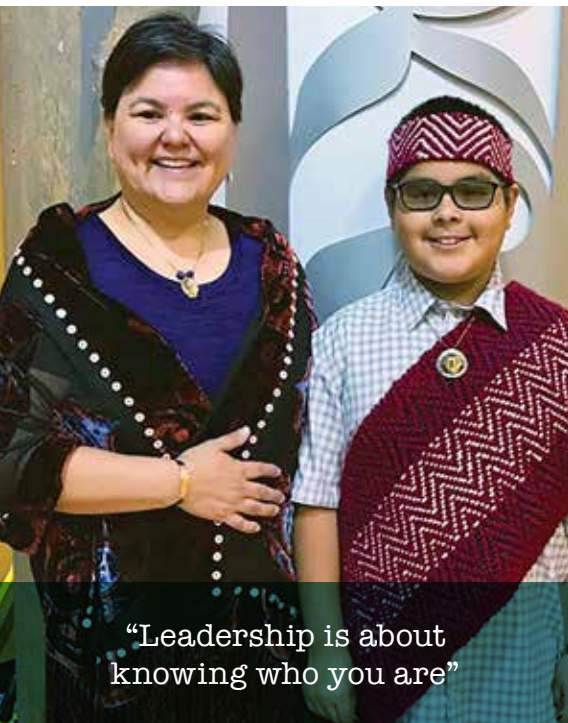


Supported by the
Province of British Columbia

Ideas for preparing Indigenous youth as future leaders are offered by highly accomplished Aboriginal professionals in the following pages. (3 to 7). These insights show that there are roles for families, education institutions and First Nations governments.

PERSPECTIVES ON Youth Leadership

Chief Leanne Joe is a Transformative Storyteller for Economic Reconciliation at Simon Fraser University. She has a Masters Degree in Community Economic Development. She is one of 16 Hereditary Chiefs of the Squamish Nation. www.sfu.ca



“Leadership is about knowing who you are”

Chief Leanne and son Skw'nuk

How can educational institutions contribute to Aboriginal succession planning?

This comes down to seriously contributing resources to incorporating a cultural framework into studies that have great implication on indigenous and non-indigenous students curriculum and learning at any educational institution. This is a large part of every subject. For example, a business program should be teaching all students

from within our epistemology, world view, cultural framework, lens, values, etc. Putting this at the foundation of knowing will support the shift in paradigm required for a new economy based in a child-centred approach supported by community, place, sustainability, etc. We have so much work to do in our communities that having to teach this after we hire anyone in our community is counter intuitive. Why not teach them right in school?

How can educational institutions contribute to leadership development among Aboriginal youth?

Leadership is about knowing who you are, from where you come, your purpose and the responsibilities that go with it, connect to place (land), language, spirituality, and so much more. This was taught to our children while rearing them and reinforced

and amplified in our youth during rights of passage or coming of age training. And mastered along the way through family, community, ceremony, protocols, practices on the land. The system is trying but in a global society way of thinking. We as indigenous people aren't global. We belong to the land in where our people come from. Our knowing is based on that. Without that, we cease to be who we truly are. We have to reconnect, relearn, and move into new spaces of this knowing. Through all of this comes leadership, because one will understand their purpose and role in their lifetime.

What role can parents play in helping youth build education ambitions and at what age can this start?

This starts from birth and is life long. It's everyday, all day. You have to be involved and proactive in what your child/youth is learning. Become a full participant in what that means for you as a family. That means with the school, outside of the school, in sports, activities, with Community, etc. You and your child have the ability to steer your journey with the outcomes in mind. ✨

“You have to be involved and proactive in what your child/youth is learning”

“having to teach this after we hire anyone in our community is counter intuitive”

Matt Wealick is a First Nations Strategic Advisor based in Chilliwack. He is a professional forester, CEO of Spa:th Strategies Limited and a member of the Tzeachten Band. wealick@outlook.com



“There should be opportunities developed for youth to participate on all aspects of the community decisions”

Matt Wealick, sons Bridger and Jairdan

How can engaging youth in Aboriginal community decisions contribute to succession planning?

I believe if there are youth interested in community decisions, their involvement and contribution

to community decisions is very important. Youth involvement provides a different perspective that should be considered. This approach would allow youth to build on their interest and develop experience and education. With this education, experience, and interest their input to the decision – making process as they grow into their leadership positions in the community is very important. We need our Youth to have a reason to want to be involved with their own futures. We have to find a way to make this happen in every community.

How can families engage and educate their children to participate in community decisions that will have an impact on their future?

Lead by example and include the children in family discussions about items that impact the community and their future.

Dinner table discussions with youth are an important part of this process: asking their opinions and listening to their answers, including them in the discussions as an equal. Participating in Community meetings as a family to allow the whole family to have a voice is another important part allowing children to have a voice.

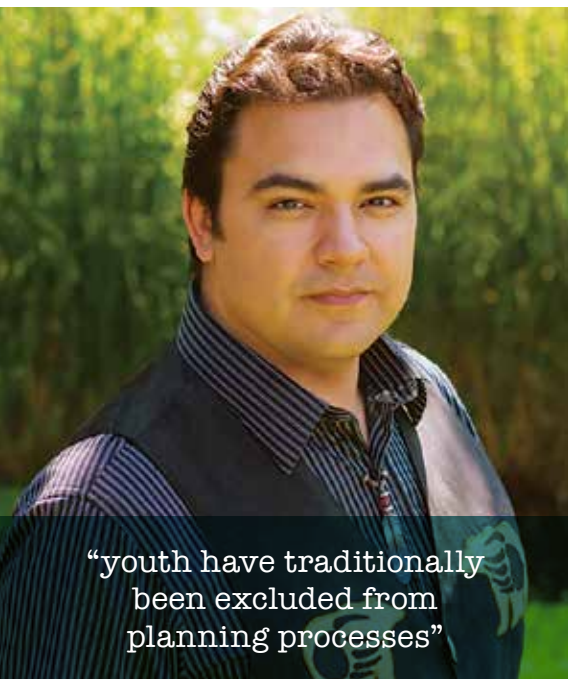
Should official community plans contain a “youth impact” component and if so, how can this be conveyed to youth in the community?

Future impacts are definitely something that should be included in any community plan. There should be opportunities developed for youth to participate on all aspects of the community decisions including community plans. Youth committees are one way of doing this. Schools including these types of discussions as well as methods of how someone respectfully provides their opinions into community discussions into their curriculum would also be a helpful step.



“their input to the decision – making process as they grow into their leadership positions in the community is very important”

Frank Busch is CEO of Nationfund, a majority Indigenous-owned finance enterprise. He is a Harvard business post-graduate, author and member of the Cree Nation. www.nationfund.ca



“youth have traditionally been excluded from planning processes”

Frank Busch

What are the types and categories of community decisions that must involve youth participation?

Youth need to be involved in land use planning, as they will ultimately inherit the land from current decision-makers. Many Indigenous Communities are recognizing the fact that they have to leave some lands and opportunities undeveloped for future generations to consider. The increase in technology, movements toward renewable energy sources and local food sovereignty demonstrate the need

“they have to leave some lands and opportunities undeveloped for future generations to consider”

to prepare for unforeseen changes in the future.

Some Indigenous Communities are negotiating partnerships with major companies who are looking for places to build data centres, something that would not have been considered only a few years ago. It is exciting to imagine what technological breakthroughs may happen in the coming decades and the youth of today will be on the frontlines of those changes.

Should official community plans contain a “youth impact” component and if so, how can this be conveyed to youth in the community?

It is important for youth to realize that community planners don't know what the youth need. The only way for decision-makers

to prepare the way for future generations is for youth to engage in the process. Current decision makers need to acknowledge that youth have traditionally been excluded from planning processes, so they are likely to be skeptical as to how much consideration their voices will be given. It is likewise important for decision makers to not try to re-invent youth in their own image, as there will always be a temptation to “stay the course”.

The idea of planning around youth impact should not attempt to socially engineer youth in a way that does not suit them. Beyond the need for employment opportunities, the new generation is also considerate living a chosen lifestyle and their identities are much less defined by occupation, as were previous generations.

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David Kirk B.S.W. & M. Ed Indigenous Faculty Advisor and Instructor Capilano University. Opinions expressed are personal.

How can educational institutions contribute to Aboriginal succession planning?

As my Elders have shared over the years it is how we connect and interact with people that is most important thing in this journey we are all on. This interaction and connection need to be done in a mutual and respectful manner. In this life we each bring different skill sets to the work we do. Our educational institutions, need to break down barriers for Indigenous learners. Research shows that the more Indigenous learners feel represented at the institutions, from having Indigenous Instructors, Indigenous content, and things such as Indigenous art, signage throughout our campuses. With these initiatives the more Indigenous students will feel part of the campus. “Systemic change means that the public post-secondary education system is relevant, responsive respectful and receptive to Aboriginal learners and communities” (Ministry of Advanced Education).

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“my grandfather instilled the importance of education for his children and grandchildren”
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At our campus the Kéxwusm-áyakn Student Centre is a place to celebrate Aboriginal learning and knowledge. The centre provides hope and opportunity, drawing people together people from all nations to put their minds and spirits together to see what future can be made for the First Peoples of this land and for all members of creation. It provides a place where individuals can learn in the context of Aboriginal traditions, language and values, enhancing their understanding of both themselves and others. Kéxwusm-áyakn or “A Place to Meet” is the Squamish Nation (Swxwú7mesh—Sko-ko-mish) name given to the University’s Aboriginal Student Centre, centrally located in the library building.

How can families engage and educate their children to participate in community decisions that will have an impact on their future?

I reflect on my family. Despite the challenges that have arisen stemming from residential schools, the impact of colonization, my grandfather instilled the importance of education for his children and grandchildren. But there was a cost to this approach, and that was a loss of passing on

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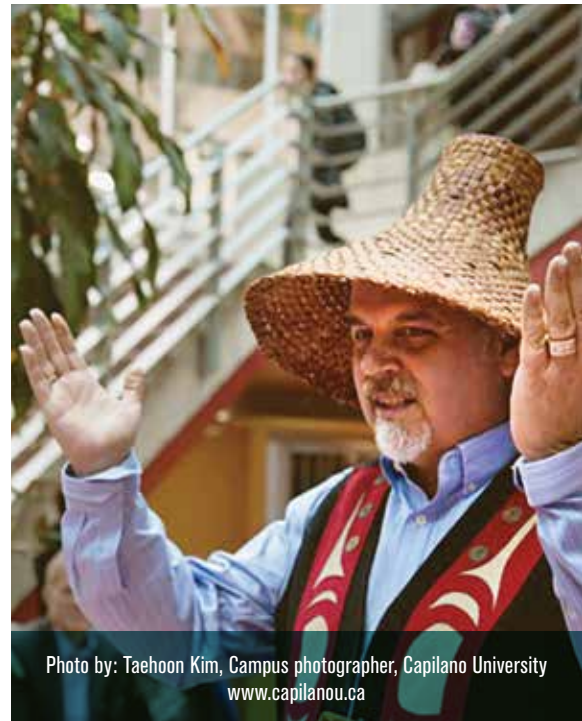


Photo by: Taehoon Kim, Campus photographer, Capilano University
www.capilanou.ca

Student feedback on what they think is successful or would contribute to their success:

- 1 Having dedicated student space such as the Kéxwusm-áyakn student centre
- 2 A sense of belonging, study area, printers, computers
- 3 Having First Nations staff/faculty
- 4 Financial support through more awards and bursaries
- 5 Healthy food and more food available
- 6 Elder, cultural teachings, drumming, singing, story telling
- 7 More courses with an Aboriginal focus



some of the Indigenous knowledge, teachings and language that my grandparents chose not to pass on. I have been on my own journey for the last 35 years learning about who I am as a Sto:lo man. I have been huge advocate for Indigenous youth to pursue education, but we need to ensure our schools are culturally safe places to attend which includes a place for their families to be involved and engaged in this educational journey.

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“education is a lifelong process that begins when an individual is born”

•••••
Our Elders have so much knowledge and teachings to share given the opportunity. One of Indigenous scholars, Jo-Anne Archibald says, “the Elders are waiting to be asked”. Our communities are on this healing journey, as we Indigenous people have faced such oppression, racism, and a great cultural genocide. Canada needs to be part of this healing and reconciliation. It is not up to us as Indigenous people to reconcile our past history with what has been done to us. We need to heal, which will lead to more of our young people to pursue and become the leaders for our people.

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“the Elders are waiting to be asked”
•••••

•••••
“many of our communities are still on a healing path”
•••••

Suggest how First Nations community leaders could play a role in fostering a “stay-in-school” commitment among Aboriginal youth?

In Indigenous communities, we hold a vision that education is a lifelong process that begins when an individual is born and continues through all stages of life. The university, then, is just one part of an individual’s education and we must recognize the role of Elders, family, and the community in teaching and learning. The concept of lifelong learning is essential in the progress of Indigenous education, and to the growth of awareness among all those involved in education. Our Indigenous leaders need to be role models for our Indigenous youth. I know many of our communities are still on a healing path from the atrocious history our people have faced. I know firsthand the impact residential schools have on our families; both of my grandparents attended Coqualeetza residential school. I am a firm believer in the notion that it takes a village to raise a child. This is the way our people supported each other and the young ones.



› CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

What factors should be assessed by a First Nation in projecting its long-range financial sustainability?

First Nations need to get serious about developing own source revenue and move as far as possible from dependence on government. Government grants, while relatively easier to access than dollars earned through business enterprise always come with strings attached. First Nations need to assert their sovereignty in order to leverage equity positions in major projects such as energy, transmission and transportation infrastructure. First Nations need to own their own power utilities and develop food sovereignty utilizing the latest technology.

Proper fiscal planning, investment knowledge and financial management are key components to re-building Indigenous wealth. First Nations governments should view themselves not as dispossessed, disenfranchised, impoverished communities but as wealthy inter-generational families who need to plan for successive generations of inheritors and beneficiaries.



There is an educational challenge facing First Nations that merits full support. That challenge can be expressed in the words:

PREPARING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

In any First Nation there is a 12 year old who may aspire to being a leader in the future. Members might ask what can be done to start her training and how soon?

Compared to politicians in other levels of government, First Nations leaders need expertise across multiple fields. A short list would include:

- › overseeing community initiatives in health, safety and education,
- › directing economic development,
- › negotiating business partnerships,
- › scrutinizing consultants,
- › steering intergovernmental relations,
- › guiding long-range planning and addressing complex social crises.

Given the complexity of the community leadership challenges that Aboriginal leaders are expected to address, a “learn – on – the – job” approach is misguided.

It is true that competent, dedicated staff serve their Aboriginal communities in these capacities. But these professionals often juggle several jobs. Furthermore, the politicians are also ultimately responsible for staff recruitment, direction and evaluation.

You can't manage what you can't understand.

First Nations leaders are sometimes given a portfolio but no guidance or resources to help them direct it.

Call it the empty laptop syndrome.

Some steps are being taken to address this leadership education gap. For example, some post secondary institutions in Canada offer on-campus leadership training programs. This is helpful, but realistically, it's a luxury for First Nations leaders who live in remote communities and lack the budgets for travel and tuition. As well, the idea of Aboriginal leadership education being directed by non-



“Sounder decisions on business development options that are economically viable and uphold traditional values”

Aboriginal entities often doesn't sit well with many Aboriginals, no matter how well intentioned.

There is a clear opportunity here for Aboriginal leaders to drive the demand for training programs needed by leaders of First Nations communities today. There is a good case to be made for outside professions to provide volunteer instructors. There is a compelling case for government to allocate the funding.


••••
"You can't manage
what you can't understand"
••••

Any such initiative should be under the exclusive direction of experienced First Nations leaders and managers.

The drive by First Nations to secure the right community development direction for the long-term benefit of their citizens, current and future, is a key factor. As First Nations community leaders gain a broader understanding of the multiple community development options, they will be better able to assess viable directions for their communities. As well, they will be more adept at evaluating the benefits and/or disadvantages of partnerships proposed by outside investors.

The result will be sounder decisions on business development options that are economically viable and uphold traditional values.

This is an education opportunity that deserves broad support.



"In any First Nation
there is a 12 year old who may
aspire to being a leader
in the future"

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AWARD

The British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) received the 2020 Indigenous Education Excellence Award presented by Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan). The silver award was presented to BCIT Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships.

The award was given in recognition of BCIT's demonstrated commitment to Indigenous education through innovative initiatives, dedicated resources and services and community partnerships.

The Executive Director of BCIT Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships, Kory Wilson, stated that the award recognized BCIT's commitment to fulfill the promise of a richer educational journey for our Indigenous learners and to advance Reconciliation.

Over 1700 Indigenous students are enrolled at BCIT. Indigenous 101 training has been delivered to nearly 600 employees at BCIT to support understanding and reciprocity among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the BCIT community.

An Indigenous Wellness Toolkit will roll-out in 2020.

“demonstrated commitment to Indigenous education through innovative initiatives”

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION VISIONARIES

Founded in 1992 by participants at a BC First Nations education conference, the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is focused on advancing the quality of education for all First Nations learners.

Working at the provincial level, it provides services in research, communications, information dissemination, advocacy, program administration and networking.

In 2019, in partnership with the First Nations School Association, it produced the BC First Nations Land, Title and Governance Teacher Resource Guide. The guide, designed for use in elementary and secondary

schools, is designed to help students learn about:

First Nations strong, unique and diverse systems of governance and nation-to-nation relationships before contact.

It also gives detailed insight into how contemporary First Nations government systems operate, the reasons, goals and challenges of First Nations self-government. As well; it describes the diverse



“the broad interest among First Nations in developing creative, knowledge-based succession planning”

perspectives of First Nations individuals and communities about treaties and their alternatives.

This teaching resource, available online, is a valuable contribution to the broad interest among First Nations in developing creative, knowledge-based Succession Planning programs.

www.fnesc.ca
www.fnsa.ca

INDIGENOUS CHANCELLOR

The University of British Columbia has appointed former Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, Stephen Lewis Point, as the university's 19th Chancellor. He is the first Indigenous person to hold that position.

Point is a member of the Skowkale First Nation.

He received his Bachelor of Laws at UBC and he served as director of First Nations Legal Studies at the university's law school.

He will act as the honorary head of the university and preside over all major ceremonies and convocations.



STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PLAN

The Westbank First Nation (WFN) approved a 3 year Strategic Plan in 2019 that was adopted by Council. It sets out Council's strategic priorities and what Council intends to accomplish during its term in office.

The following are excerpts from the plan that demonstrate a continuing commitment to leadership development.



This plan states that it “helps focus the work of Council and guide the future growth of WFN”. As well it “helps measure government success in implementing priorities”.

The Mission statement confirms, “WFN will work to promote a healthy and prosperous future to ensure its continued existence as a strong political, social and cultural community”.

The Vision statement commits Council to “govern in a spirit of sovereignty, independence, fairness and transparency”.

The statement also commits government to: “manage and honour the connection to the lands and resources within our traditional territory.



“Build innovative ideas to support and encourage the growth of the local economy”.

“Protect and promote the syilx language and culture, while adopting modern forms of traditional practices”.



In keeping with the format of high level strategic plans it sets out “Strategic Priorities” Among these are:

Traditional Laws and Self-Government

“Continue the implementation of self-government while working to revitalize our traditional laws to ensure a balanced approach to governance”.

“Provide educational opportunities for Members to become familiar with our Self-Government Agreement, Constitution, and traditional governance practices”.

Economic Development

“Focus on sustainable and socially responsible economic development that balances community, culture, and commerce”.

Good Governance

“Ensure a responsive, accountable, and transparent government that meets the needs of the growing WFN Community”.

“govern in a spirit of sovereignty, independence, fairness and transparency”.

“a continuing commitment to leadership development”.



www.wfn.ca

FORE D

Established in 1925, **FORE D BC Society** is a non-partisan educational organization offering sustainability tools, resources and consulting to communities throughout BC, including First Nations. FORE D has won seven education and communications awards, including three international awards, for its efforts.

For more information, please visit FORE D YouTube links below for complimentary, downloadable resources for First Nations Communities.

 Traditional Knowledge and Career Profiles

 Channel featuring Indigenous Mentors and Leaders providing Motivational Advice to youth.

FORE D

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