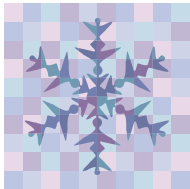


AHSI - DECEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Events:



Holiday Open House!

Hosted by Aboriginal Health Strategic Initiatives

Friday December 14th, 2pm – 5pm
550 – 601 West Broadway, Vancouver

This event has been organized for those who do not know about our department and what we do to come and visit us and learn a bit about our work, while celebrating the holiday season.

All First Nations and Aboriginal community members and VCH staff are welcome!

Please RSVP to Dara Friesen, 604-875-5600 Ext 63295
dara.friesen@vch.ca

Aboriginal Community Capacity Building Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

Hosted by the Aboriginal Health Initiative Program
Facilitated by the Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre of BC

Monday & Tuesday December 17th & 18th, 9am-5pm - Vancouver

Note: Registration is currently at capacity. Please contact AHIP if you would be interested in being added to a waitlist and/or notified of any additional sessions held in the future.

- ❖ Open to First Nations and Aboriginal community members within the VCH region, including urban community members
- ❖ You do not need to work directly within health to register
- ❖ 28 seats available – Communities are encouraged to select 1 to 2 people to attend
- ❖ Limited travel assistance is available
- ❖ Availability across the two full days is necessary
- ❖ Free registration

ASIST Training Description:

This training is aimed at building knowledge and skills meant to prevent suicide and respond to crisis. Workshop participants can include school professionals, social workers, health care practitioners, police, emergency services staff, youth workers, peer counselors, and elders.

ASIST is an internationally recognized suicide intervention training that builds skills and confidence to identify and support persons at risk for

suicide. It is a two-day, skills-building workshop that prepares caregivers of all kinds to provide suicide first aid interventions. As an ASIST-trained first aid intervention caregiver, you will be better able to:

- Identify people who have thoughts of suicide;
- Understand how your beliefs and attitudes can affect suicide interventions;
- Intervene with someone at risk for suicide;
- Review current risk and develop a plan to increase safety from suicidal behavior for an agreed amount of time;
- Follow up on all safety commitments, accessing further help as needed.

Registration required
Please contact: Dara Friesen
604-875-5600 Ext 63295
dara.friesen@vch.ca

Aboriginal Health Strategic Initiatives Recognizes Leah Karpan!



The AHSI team celebrated the contributions of Leah Karpan and her transition to a new role within VCH with a

farewell potluck on Friday November 9th. Leah has moved to a position with Vancouver Acute as an Administrative Assistant at VGH.

Leah worked with AHSI since 2009 as the Program Assistant to the Aboriginal Health Initiative Program (AHIP). She has been a huge support for the AHSI team providing assistance in organizing training sessions, conferences and gatherings and especially supporting the Aboriginal Health Initiative Program and the community funded projects.

The AHSI team shared wonderful food and kind words about Leah and her positive attitude and influence in the office. Co-workers commented on their admiration for her dedication to staying physically healthy – Leah is an avid runner who values the benefits of exercise and has inspired many co-workers to become more active themselves.

The Aboriginal Health Strategic Initiatives team thanks Leah Karpan for all of her great work over the years and would like to wish her the best in her future endeavors!

A Reflection on Sumac Place Blessing Ceremonies



As we are in the season reflecting on our blessings in life it is a good time to reflect on the Cleansing/Blessing Ceremonies that the Squamish Nation did at the Sumac Place (new 28 bed VCH Mental Health facility at Gibson's Landing) on October 18, 2012. The Squamish Nation delegation included: Audrey Rivers (Elder), Eugene Harry (Shaker Church Minister), Wendy Harry (Shaker Church Support), Alan Harry (Shaker Church Support), Natalie Fisher (Shaker Church Support), Dennis Joseph (Squamish Nation Council Member), Joanne Natrall (Squamish Nation Mental Health

Manager) and, Jason Nahanee (Elder). We had the chance to interview Squamish Nation Councillor Dennis Joseph about this historic event.

All responses are direct quotes from Dennis Joseph.

AHSI: "Can you briefly tell us about the history of the land that the Sumac Place is located on?"

DENNIS JOSEPH: "I just wanted to briefly tell the history of the land where Sumac Place is and its importance to the Squamish. It is a vital piece. It's a story of where our first man came from and later a brother comes; it is basically our Adam and Eve story where our first man came from and how it comes to be speaks well to where this building is because a brother later comes and he is acting of sorts and the brother asks him to stop dancing which he was doing and come down from the roof and come inside and he doesn't stop. So eventually from that evolves the story of our masks and songs. The brother that is out of sorts is so excited that he shares the message with his brother about the gifts that he brought and what they are going to mean to our people. So it is an important place for us that has been handed down through the generations of who we are and where we come from and rather fitting to where that Sumac Place is because it is in that same area."

AHSI: "Why is it important for the Squamish Nation to do blessing ceremonies for facilities such as Sumac Place?"

DENNIS JOSEPH: What is in buildings like Sumac Place is so important to Squamish because a lot

of our families and relatives were pretty certain that they were eventually going to end up there one way or the other as patients or may have been there as patients. I understand that Sumac Place was an Elder's care facility and even then the building has spirit, spirit of our ancestors and spirit of the ancestors of the people that were there before. It really goes back to the old teachings of humanity I believe that we all at one place or another come from a common denominator, we all have a common spirit.

Sometimes when people get lonely, tired or frustrated in their recovery their feelings get left behind, sometimes they get picked up by people who re-enter those buildings. So when we repurposed the building like we did in Sumac we need to take care of those people and for those who are ready to move on they move on and those that chose to stay and I am speaking about the spiritual world because they are going to stay and help and some of them did choose to stay at Sumac because they know what is coming young people and old. Maybe that is their purpose on the other side to help people. I don't know, but, that was the message that came through and indeed they were playing full to the caregivers that were there, that helped them while they were on this earth because they become their extended family and for some of them their only family. A strong message shared for us there is that we really didn't have places like that historically that looked after each other from birth until death and in today's day in age we need places like that apparently. We need not lose sight of the goal that we can some point in time keep our core families still together through birth and death, but, it is a choice that we have today, we need places like that. I think that the incredible thing about places like that there is always somebody who keeps your spirit light that were physically there and that is one of the people who I think chose to stay. For us as First Nations people I think what really kept us alive is our sense of humour and it is universal no matter where you go, with Residential School experience that I have been a part of directly and indirectly for the last, really my lifetime, really that is what kept us going is our sense of humour. And ceremonies like that we have fortunately hung onto at a very basic level has kept us strong. So I think what we as First Nations have to offer is something like that, I think a lot of non-natives are looking towards spirituality that is humanity based, human based that can be universal. So I think that was a good lesson, a lesson for me, at least to see people that have such open hearts that may have experienced this for the first time, because they heal I heal."



AHSI: "Can you briefly describe the cleansing and blessing ceremony the Squamish Nation did at Sumac Place?"

DENNIS JOSEPH: "We chose to use the Shaker faith through our Shaker Ministry Eugene Harry and some of the Shaker family. The ceremony was done through song and through candles and through going to room to room, really wall to wall to spiritually cleanse every part and every corner of every room that was in that place, so it took more than an hour. Staff and Shakers, we all worked together and their purpose is to really open the doors so the Holy Spirit can come and help us. All we are is the vehicles, all the Shaker people are the vehicles for that goodness to come, for that good spirit to come and help us. Through the Ministers and Shakers we share messages. Some of them were affirmed by construction workers. I remember one construction worker who talked about the trickster that was there. He would be there sometimes alone at night and he shared this later after the ceremony. He reaffirmed what the Minister was saying, he said there was one guy who liked to play tricks on the people and it made the construction worker laugh, he said the lights would go on, the alarm would go on by itself and go off, the fire department would show up and tell them there is nothing wrong with the system. There was no explanation why it went off. I think the construction worker knew, through his own faith, because he wasn't afraid, he said maybe was at first, but, after a while it became normal for him. Through the Minister that reaffirmation I think was really a blessing. So the Shakers through the Lord is the belief that faith that kind of crosses, native spirituality and

Christianity coming together. The Shaker faith began in Mud Bay in 1910 through a man by the name of John Slocam; he was thought dead and at his wake he came back to life and said the Lord sent him back and said his job here on earth wasn't done, he was to share the good Word of the Lord, to build a church in three days which he did and to begin the healing process for the people. Eventually the United States Congress heard about it and they sent a panel of ten investigating committee to talk about the Shaker faith and they called the community together and their challenge to the community was "who was this devil worshipper who claims to be connected to the Lord would you please come forward". John Slocam did and he showed himself. The first investigator, with the Holy Bible in front of him, he randomly flipped open the Bible and John Slocam was standing a ways back and the investigator challenged John Slocam and said "if you are who you say who you are what passage do I have my finger on in this Holy Bible?" He [John Slocam] went into prayer, he kneeled down, he began to sing and when he came out he read word for word what was on that passage that the investigator had his finger on and nine other times he did that, he invited other investigators and each time he read the passage correctly. At the end the Chairperson of the Committee said, "I guess you are who you say you are, you are now officially recognized of the United States constitution as a religion" and the United States government recognizes this and this [Shaker religion] has been spread throughout the Coast Salish territory and Squamish and including places spreading throughout the world because our Minister knows no boundaries when it comes to helping people in hospitals and homes, they help anybody."

ASHI: "Would you encourage other First Nations to do blessing ceremonies for facilities on their lands?"

DENNIS JOSEPH: "I would encourage other First Nations definitely to share blessing ceremonies because I think my experience, the Residential Schools has sent our ceremonies so far underground that sometimes to me the lines becomes either blurred or too stringent. I think First Nations become ready to share who they are and what they are about I believe it helps builds bridges of understanding. Without that bridge we are going to continue to be stuck and I know of no other people other than activists I guess who helped change the world. I really think, at least in my experience of what I've been told, at least for when the first ships came into these harbours they were welcomed with eagle down, with our canoes in front of the ships and to me that is a high blessing of the visionaries that saw that day coming, that day was finally here. The visionaries, the prophets of the day, knew that day was coming, they handed that message down for generations and when that day came they chose to use ceremony to welcome them. In a way I think that they knew that hard times were coming, it is human nature I think, from the high people who know that human beings have that urge to kind of dominate one another. I think through high teachings like that it has really kept us alive because if you continue to be too strong in one view or another it becomes harmful to the human family

and you become extinct. At least that is what I have seen so somebody has to build the bridge."



Thank you to Dennis Joseph for sharing his reflections.

The Aboriginal Health Strategic Initiative Team Wishes Everyone a Joyful Holiday Season Full of Spirit.

All the best in the New Year!



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