

Land-Based Healing Program

Field Report

This is an activities report of the Land-based Healing program that was held at LG4 camp on the Trainstaiga, April 15 to 26, 2013. Specifics of the Land-based Curriculum are outline in the named document, including detailed schedule of activities. Wherein are briefly described the daily activities, the comments gathered from the staff and Elder as well as recommendations for the future logistics related to running the program.

The program team included: 2 Elders (Eddie Pash and Noah Snowboy), the program Coordinator (William Bearskin, Justice Committee Member), 2 camp helpers (Linda Bearskin and her eldest daughter), and 5 participants (Johnny Bearskin, Gabriel Beraskin, Robbie , Wesley Weshipabano, and Martin Labbe). Film crew: Mike Wong and Abdul Butt. And Ioana Radu.

This is the 3rd Land-based program implemented by Chisasibi. The first was held in June 2012 which housed 4 participants (one was referred by his parents and three by the social services). Consent forms were not signed and therefore social services could not provide aftercare. The participants were not followed by any service in the community after the program was concluded. The second program was held in December 2012. Five (5) participants took part. Once again no consent forms were signed and it is not clear whether they had aftercare.

Abbreviated daily activities

The schedule described here is indicative of an average daily running of the program.

The group meets over breakfast in the main staff cabin to plan the activities. The program starts with the building of a waashaaukamikw which takes on average 3 days to be completed. During this time the Elder holds lectures of 90min, twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon. The group breaks for lunch and later attend the evening lecture. While the building is taking place the Elder explains the teachings associated with the waashaaukamikw. The evenings are usually free for the participants which, either spend time with the staff in the main cabin, or go out on the land.

After the waashaaukamikw is finished it becomes the main place for lectures. The days include an activity on the land for the duration of the program. These activities can either occupy the late morning through the early evening or just the afternoon (fishing, setting up a small camp, hunting, etc.). The lectures continue as scheduled throughout the program.

The Elder and the staff have a mid-program meeting in which issues and adjustments are discussed. The participants are assessed and specific interventions might be designed for respective participants. The participants are expected to actively contribute in the upkeep of the main cabin (water hauling, cleaning, cooking, etc.) in addition to their own to instill a sense of responsibility.

To note: because the film crew was present the building of the waashaaukamikw took longer than usual as the Elder spent more time explaining the goals and the teachings.

Impressions on the program from staff

- Once the program has progressed the participants became more comfortable and open up. Before they did not think they could be in the bush for so long. Once they keep coming back it gets easier to talk about their problems.
 - One participant explained that he feels comfortable to talk about his issues in the setting of the bush program and trust that the people running the program are skillful in explaining/teaching about how to deal with problems. He is happy that he is learning traditions so that he can pass it on to his children. Since he started the program he is keeping more fit and healthy and feels more confident about himself. He also sees that his family and personal relationships have improved.
- **The approach** is to make the youth think about their issues in a different way, to see positive things even in events, thoughts or actions that might at first seem difficult or hurtful. By accepting nature or creator as something that is always there to look after them, they can be confident that other's actions towards them might have nothing to do with them - personal histories are individual choices that are made.
- Sometime the program staff get criticised by other people in the community and if they see one of the participants is not behaving appropriately in the community. They expect a miracle to happen in 10 days, and do not understand that healing is a long process with no quick fixes.
 - More information should be circulated in the community about the program
- Explaining the teachings comes naturally to the Elder but a more detailed lesson plan for each activity should be developed for the participants.
- The Elder prefers to work in a team while on the land.
- **Case conferencing** with the available community entities is very important not only for identifying the participants needs prior to participation in the bush program but more so for establishing effective aftercare; framing aftercare in a way that the participant is empowered to make the choice for a better lifestyle. **It has been proposed that** the CMC director job description include his responsibility to work with the land-based team and fill out the paperwork. Ideally, a meeting after the program with the workers in the community, elders, people that go in the bush be held to ask for someone to advocate for a participant and help choose the services that the participant feel will help them. When in the bush participants are not really counselled in a clinical sense – they might have deeper issues that need to be addressed by a professional (whether a clinician or a traditional counsellor). Resources are available in the community but are not usually used, the clients are not used to asking for help. A list for the services that are available to include in the program package.

Challenges

- Program needs restructuring to allow more one-on-one meetings between the elder and the participants.
- Not much time for staff meetings. More frequent staff meetings are needed to assess the clients and evaluate how the program is going.
- Not enough available materials (axes, stoves, etc.) A basic package of bush materials is needed to better run the program. See list of materials below.
- Transportation was an issue. Not all clients left for the bush at the same time. One client was late as no transportation was available.
- Some issues with clients that have restricted access in the community for legal reasons. In some cases the individuals are sent to jail because no alternatives are available in the community. The program can be presented to the judge with assurances of effective intervention before individuals are allowed to opt-in to an alternative program.
- Pre-departure planning needs to be more effective. There were issues with camp supplies as well as pre-departure orientation with participants.

Recommendations

- Opportunity for economic development to reopen Nouchimi Camp under the land-based program.
- Have a counsellor who after the Elder's lectures does workshops by further discussing the themes and get a discussion going with the participants. Help them express themselves - idea of naming something gives it voice and is better understood.
 - One participant suggested AA meetings
- Design a program for women only as they might not be comfortable to participate in co-ed.
- Traditional counsellors would be a good idea since most of them have been through the same experiences as well as providing a culturally appropriate method even if it doesn't mean that they will go to sweats or ceremonies.
- Include sweats and ceremonies.
- Extend the stay in the bush. Two weeks is sometimes not enough for participants to effectively address the issues. Either extend the stay to at least 3 weeks or have more frequent trips in the bush. Eg.: Design program of 4 sessions in the bush for each client, with the possibility to extend if needed. Assess on a case-by-case basis.
- Develop local capacity by building a comprehensive program intervention team through Nechi Institute (<http://www.nechi.com/programs/community-addictions-training>).
- Secure traditional counsellors on a yearly basis.
- Develop lesson plans and aftercare workbook for participants.

List of materials

This list is not exhaustive and should be reviewed and adjusted according to the size of the group (this list is based on a group of 5 staff and 5 participants for a 2 week stay in the winter)

Camp Materials	Supplies
Canvas (5+door) - teepee in summer 2 camp stoves (for group of 5) - not the heavy ones 2 shovels 3 axes Propane (depending on the setup Coleman or cabin system) -100lb 4 Paddling canoes + paddles (or more if group bigger - 2 per canoe) Gas - Life jackets Truck for transportation + trailers + rack for canoes (van for transporting to activities) 2 generators Coleman coffee machine	2 packs of 150 paper plates 50 lb potatoes 50-100 coffee cups + lids Candles - 12 Coffee (1 kg at least) Water pales 5 gal. (X2) Garbage bags - 100 heavy duty (31x42 in) Dish washing liquid Margarine (4 lb) Sugar Milk Mr clean and other cleaning materials <u>(the total bill was \$1000 and all supplies where bough at the Northern in Chisasibi)</u>