**IndigenEyez**

IndigenEYEZ is a First Nations-led initiative that aims to build the capacity of First Nations in BC to empower youth and build cultural connections.  Creative expression grounded in culture is key to unlocking our transformative capacity, supporting our healing journey, revitalizing our cultures, and returning to our traditional strengths. The program supports youth to see through “Indigenous eyes”, providing a powerful alternative to the lens of mainstream culture. This videoconference will give some creative activities combined with cross-cultural systems for teaching. Universally it is said there are five ways to heal, music, dancing, storytelling, prayer/meditation, and connection to the natural world.

IndigenEYEZ has emerged from a collaborative relationship with Partners for Youth Empowerment (PYE). For almost two decades the Creative Community Model has been successfully implemented through PYE partner organization, Power of Hope Canada, Power of Hope USA, and in six other countries around the world. This arts-based social practice helps youth develop key life skills such as empathy and creativity that enable them to respond to our rapidly changing world. PYE trains facilitators who work with young people, helping them to create safe and nurturing environments in which young people feel able to share their creativity without fear of judgment. IndigenEYEZ provides training and capacity building support to youth practitioners across the province. We work in partnership with First Nations communities, youth serving organizations, and schools in order to facilitate deep-level youth engagement through a proven arts-based methodology called the Creative Community Model (CCM). External evaluation shows that young people who participate in programs based on CCM are more self-confident, more motivated to learn, and more likely to take on leadership roles within their schools and communities. Our work is about achieving the following outcomes:

➤ Improve the capacity of communities, youth serving organizations, and schools to effectively engage young people to develop vital skills for success through two training programs called Creative Facilitation 1 and Creative Facilitation 2.

➤ Increase access to transformative learning experiences for youth and help support their successful transition into adulthood through camps and workshops.

➤ Direct the design of new programs or implement special assistance to existing workshops, programs, and camps for youth. For more information about the summer camp for

**THE BIG IDEAS**

**WE ARE ALL CREATIVE**

Creativity is one of our primary human capacities, and we use it everyday. And yet, too many of us don’t think we are creative. We suspect this is because creativity has been over identified with art making—at least in Western culture. Very early on, parents and teachers begin to identify the “artistic” children and point them in the “creative” direction. The rest of us grow up to join the great mass of adults who think we are not creative.

Creativity is simply the ability to think things up and make them happen. Cooking breakfast, planting a garden, or coming up with a budget for an organization are all creative acts. Most of us express our creativity in large and small ways throughout the day.

Creativity, of course, also has to do with artistic expression, and we believe that each of us has a birthright to express ourselves through the arts—without having to be good at it. In many traditional cultures dance, song, music, visual art, and drama are woven into the fabric of everyday life. Expressing ourselves creatively without trying to be perfect leads to a flow state. As psychologist Rollo May put it, “Self-expression is most often accompanied by a feeling of shimmering joy.”

**YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE AN ARTIST TO USE THE ARTS IN YOUR WORK**

You don’t have to be an experienced painter to use visual arts activities with youth or an experienced actor to lead theater games. You don’t have to be an experienced writer to engage young people in creative writing. All you need are some easy-to-lead activities and the courage to present them. As you become proficient in leading arts-based activities, the enthusiastic response from your participants will reinforce your desire to lead more. Before you know it, you will be searching for more and more activities to add to your toolbox.

You also don’t have to worry about taking opportunities away from professional teaching artists by working with the arts yourself. Quite the contrary, we’ve found that when teachers and youth workers use arts-based practices themselves, they are more inclined to partner with teaching artists. As one youth worker said, “After I started using the arts with my youth, I became less intimidated by artists. I had more confidence in my own creativity, and I could speak their language.”

**WE ALL HAVE A VALID DESIRE TO BE SEEN, HEARD AND CELEBRATED**

When we play with babies, what do we do? The baby smiles, we smile. The baby frowns, we frown. As we mirror the baby’s actions, the feeling of love literally explodes in us and the baby is bathed in love, connection, and validation. Studies show that babies who do not receive attention eventually fail to thrive. As we grow older, we need to be seen and validated as well. The unheard child or adult suffers and often either shuts down or acts out.

In arts-infused cultures people are seen and appreciated through their shared participation in the arts. Through drumming, dancing, singing, or storytelling, everyone gets to be part of the game. In Western cultures, however, performance is reserved for those who can play, sing, or dance well. Performance is all about mastery and with that comes the heavy hand of judgment. Certainly there is a place for fine art, but not at the exclusion of the participatory arts.

When you encourage a young person to take a creative risk by making something up and sharing it, you give them a chance to be seen and heard. The cycle of affirmation that develops through taking risks and “performing,” builds self-confidence and the courage to put one’s voice out in the world.

**THE ARTS ARE THE DOORWAY TO THE INNER LIFE**

“The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance,” wrote Aristotle. When we engage in creative expression we enter the inner world of imagination. It is in this inner realm that we make meaning of our lives. It is here that motivation takes root helping us to make core decisions about our lives.

Young people are capable of profound thought and deep compassion. Creative expression—in a judgment-free context—tills the soil. At arts/empowerment camps we often find that the most broken youth flock to the art barn where they have the chance to express themselves privately. As they make meaningful objects using paper and pastels, glue and magazine pictures, paints and sparkles, it’s as if you can see their scattered inner selves move into coherence.

**A RECIPE FOR ENGAGING**

We are often asked questions like: *“How do I get youth to participate?” “How do I deal with difficult participants?”* or *“How do I keep everyone engaged?”* Our first suggestion is to use activities that call on the imagination.

Here is a basic model of group formation that informs what to do at the start of a program and what to return to whenever the group energy falls flat.

IPC stands for:

**IMAGINATION**

When you engage participants in an activity that invokes their imaginations, you are letting them know that their whole selves are welcome—their personalities, their quirkiness, and their ideas. This leads to P:

**PARTICIPATION**

When people’s imaginations are activated, they are simply more inclined to participate. This in turn leads to C:

**COMMITMENT**

When people participate with their imaginations engaged, they tend to commit to the process or the program. Once participants are committed and fully involved, you are on well on your way to success.

Keep the IPC model in mind during the course of your camp, class, or program. Whenever the group energy falls flat, move to an activity that brings in the imagination. This will reengage the cycle of Imagination, Participation and Commitment.

We will introduce some ice-breakers and games for you to look at.



Kim Haxton,

(Faculty, Embodied Awareness Facilitator; Trainer, Educator and IndigenEYEz facilitator)

Kim Haxton is a Potowatomi, whose family is from Wasauksing First Nations. A skilled facilitator of indigenous spiritual healing practices and ceremony, Kim began her work as a First Nation's Facilitator working for 17 years with Native youth impacted by colonization, including substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, family violence and family disruption, as part of Rediscovery Culture Camps. Kim's community healing work emphasizes leadership development, embodied awareness and 'betrayal-to-trust' rites of passage, conflict resolution, de-escalation, de-colonization, diversity and anti-oppression training.