OPENING PASSAGEWAYS

FIRST NATIONS YOUTH CAREER DECISION MAKING

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming
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ABSTRACT

This study examined career decision making strategies that positively impact employment opportunities for First Nation youth. The opportunity was to qualitatively examine North Island Employment Foundation (NIEFS) decision making models, and research enhanced strategies for successful First Nation transition into employment. The study explored services and enhancements to current NIEFS decision making models. It was significant as local Aboriginal unemployment rates are three times higher than non Aboriginal peoples. Effective decision making models can provide relevant information for youth vocational planning, increase completion rates for training programs, and offer significant learning for NIEFS and local funding bodies providing Aboriginal training income support. Literature on career decision making models, labor market information, culture and community provided a framework for the study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: FOCUS AND FRAMING

Introduction

Western Canadian Aboriginals (described as First Nations, Metis and Inuit) are

underrepresented in the labour market. The publication *Achieving Potential Towards*

Improved Labour Market Outcomes for Aboriginal People (Brunnen, 2003) states that

participation rates for Western Canadian Aboriginals in the labour force are 93% that of

the general population, yet the unemployment rate of the Aboriginal population is 3.2

times greater than non-Aboriginal peoples. *Working Towards Parity: Recommendations*

of the Aboriginal Human Capital Strategies Initiative (Brunnen, 2004) concludes that

Western Canada is going to experience a labour market shortage over the coming years;

recommendations from the report include the recruitment and training of Aboriginal

peoples to meet this labour market demand. Ensuring Aboriginal Canadians possess the

education, training and skills necessary to fill the labour gap is a priority based on the

Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Indian and Northern Affairs

Canada [INAC], 1996) as well as research reports from the Canada West Foundation.

Provincial and federal initiatives for Aboriginal training and direct entry into the

workforce are currently being offered at large urban centers; however, rural Aboriginal

peoples have limited access to these services.

In the last five years there has been an increase in government funding toward

Aboriginal employment initiatives, such as Aboriginal Human Resource Development

funding and the Aboriginal Employment Partnership Agreement. This is a crucial time to

examine how service agencies are assisting Aboriginal clients to make informed career

choices and access appropriate training. As an employment counsellor of twelve years, I

have significant practical experience working with the Aboriginal population, including the Métis Provincial Council of BC and First Nations populations, both on and off reserve. My current position as an Employment Counsellor provided an excellent opportunity to carry out this research. I have worked with three local First Nations communities in the Campbell River area. As a result of my exposure, I was interested in exploring: *What career decision making strategies can positively impact employment opportunities for Homalco First Nations youth seeking assistance through North Island Employment Society?*

Sub Questions:

1. What impact do career making strategies have on training and employment knowledge?

2. How can current career decision making models being used by North Island Employment Foundation be enhanced to better meet the needs of Homalco youth?

3. How do career decision making strategies impact the perceptions and confidence of participants wanting to explore vocational options for entry into the workforce?

The Opportunity

North Island Employment Foundation (NIEFS) has been providing vocational services on the North Island of Vancouver Island for nineteen years. A variety of programs and services related to career decision making, training opportunities, funding, work experience, job search support and life skills programs have been offered. For the purpose of this research, I used the Campbell River region of our division. Three local First Nations communities are situated within ten miles of Campbell River, and NIEFS also provides employment counseling services to two remote First Nations communities,

approximately 110 kilometers from Campbell River. For the reporting period of January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2005, 307 clients identified themselves as Aboriginal according to NIEFS data base. This data base compiles all client statistical data for government reporting. The data is compiled from client registration forms when a person accesses NIEFS services. The 360 Aboriginal clients equates to 17.13% of the entire client base for this time frame. This is a significant number of Aboriginals accessing our services.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (INAC, 1996) report states that, of the Aboriginals fifteen years of age and older who looked for work in 1990-1991, 42.1% of Aboriginal respondents identified a mismatch of education/work experience, and 26.2% stated lack of job information as barriers to employment. The report further details, "members of the Aboriginal labour force often do not have interpersonal networks or connections with non-Aboriginal employers and vice versa, therefore, the connections need to be forged in a deliberate manner by employment service agencies" (Volume 2, Chap.5, p.39). NIEFS has the staffing, resources and commitment to work with the Aboriginal population and has developed working partnerships with local First Nations communities.

I believe that prior to accessing training or direct entry into the job market, there is value in Campbell River First Nations youth attending career decision making workshops. Career decision making workshops can address the mismatch of education/work experience, and lack of job information cited by Aboriginals as barriers to employment. Furthermore, effective career decision making can include a personal self assessment, career assessment, career research and goal setting. Jansen (2003), a respected employment counselor in vocational counseling succinctly states that "a

common mistake that many people make is completely overlooking the first and necessary step – self assessment" (p. 26). Jansen (2003) also emphasizes that "…self assessment is a foundation to help you identify or create the most suitable possible work opportunities for yourself" (p. 26). Effective career decision making is one of the first steps in addressing Aboriginal employment barriers. Program development recommendations to meet the needs of Homalco youth with pertinent labour market information, research strategies, and a holistic career decision making model were investigated during this project.

<center>Significance of the Opportunity</center>

The North Island Unemployment Profile of Aboriginal People (BC Statistics, 2001) reports that the unemployment rate for Aboriginals fifteen to sixty five years of age is 25.1% in comparison to 11.2% of the non-Aboriginal population. It also provides statistics showing that 33.3% of Aboriginals, who have less than high school education are unemployed, compared to 17.1% of the non Aboriginal population. High school diploma graduates who are Aboriginal have a 20.1% unemployment rate in comparison to 12.5% of non Aboriginal peoples. Local First Nations communities have requested NIEFS provide employment services for their members; therefore, implementing a career decision making workshop has the potential to have a community wide impact. A successful model, encompassing the needs of the local First Nations community could result in effective career choices and training options for Homalco members, as it will provide them with the tools to make informed choices in regard to skill demand, training and interest areas. NIEFS has the resources, expertise and dedication to explore and develop decision making models for Homalco youth clients.

Not only did NIEFS and Homalco benefit from this study, it also has further significance for federal and provincial funding bodies providing sponsorship for training. This research provides NIEFS with relevant information on the career decision making needs of Homalco youth, opening the opportunity to implement a service that will be First Nations needs driven, provide the necessary information to make informed career decisions, and make employment labour (re) entry more successful for Homalco youth. Local government and First Nations community funding bodies for Aboriginal training could see increased successful completion rates for training program sponsorship. A project focused on the first step of career decision making may have significant positive implications for First Nations funding service providers. This research project was an opportunity to evaluate Homalco youth career decision making needs and develop effective tools to support their transition into employment. Evaluation and sharing of this data may assist in a seamless and effective model for the Campbell River community service providers, provincial and federal funders, and Homalco community members to implement a local strategy that benefits Homalco First Nations youth. Without this research, our local area might continue to provide fragmented services to Homalco youth. This research project presented the opportunity for Homalco First Nations youth to have a voice in career decision making workshop development and share their needs with North Island Employment Foundations.

Systems Analysis of the Opportunity

Social Development Canada, Aboriginal Human Resource Development, Homalco Nation community administrators and NIEFS career counselors may be influenced by the results of this project.

NIEFS core funding comes from The Government of Canada: Social

Development Canada Employment Assistance Services Program. Social Development

Canada's website (2005) outlines the goal for this program:

> To assist unemployed individuals prepare for, obtain and
>
> maintain employment by providing them with services such as
>
> employment counseling, job search techniques, job placement
>
> and labour market information. [This] is available to all
>
> unemployed Canadians regardless of whether they have had an
>
> Employment Insurance claim (¶ 1).

Homalco youth are eligible to access NIEFS for vocational services as they meet the

unemployed Canadian status as outlined in Social Development Canada goal. Although

youth can access free vocational services from NIEFS, requesting government funding

for training falls under other policies and eligibility requirements. Homalco youth who

wish to access Social Development Canada funding for training must be attached to the

Employment Insurance (EI) fund (Social Development Canada, 2005). Many youth do

not meet eligibility requirements for this funding, and alternate sources of funding must

be accessed.

In addition to Social Development Canada, Aboriginal Human Resource

Development Agreements (AHRDA) funding is also available. According to the

Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy, "one of the Government of Canada's

top priorities is to ensure that all young people, including Aboriginal youth, have every

possible opportunity to gain access to jobs" (Government of Canada, Aboriginal Human

Resource Development Strategy, 2005, ¶ 2). To support this priority Aboriginal Human

Resource Development agreement (AHRDA) funding is available "to assist Aboriginal people to prepare for, find, and keep jobs" (Government of Canada, Aboriginal Human Resource Development, ¶ 3).

The educational coordinator for Homalco was a key stakeholder in this endeavor as local First Nations communities determine their community sponsorship criteria. Homalco funding policies and criteria were explored in this research project. Government and Homalco community funding eligibility criteria impacts on the ability for Homalco youth to access funding for training. Consideration and eligibility requirements were researched and are available to be incorporated into the Career Decision Making Model. There are fragmented funding sources for student training and each funding source has a different funding criteria. An area of resistance considered was accessing the appropriate and most beneficial funding source for the participants. Research was conducted and there is a need to share this with Homalco, as this information has the potential to determine cost sharing approaches between the Federal, Provincial and Homalco funding sources. *The Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples Report* (INAC, 1996) insists that "the challenge over the next 20 years will be to find adequate support for the larger numbers of youth who will require post-secondary education in order to become productive in the labour force" (Vol. 3, Chap. 5, p.20).

Another significant party impacted by this research opportunity was the NIEFS Career Counselors who operate under the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for career development practitioners. The standards and guidelines are based on core competency skills necessary to work in this field (National Steering Committee for Development of Canadian Standards and Guidelines, 1996). Ethical and professional practices were

adhered to throughout this research project. NIEFS supported this project by providing feedback, suggestions, encouragement and space for the research phase, which was necessary to conduct a thorough investigation of Homalco youth career decision making needs.

<div align="center">Organizational Context</div>

Founded in August, 1986, NIEFS is a registered charitable, not-for-profit society. NIEFS serves communities and individuals on Northern Vancouver Island as they adjust to the ongoing, permanent changes occurring in the local economies and labour markets. The society's goal is to provide support for people in need as they seek to build the self-sufficiency resulting from active and sustainable participation in the labour force. NIEFS's mission statement is "To assist those in need with the development of skills that will enable them to find and hold employment in an ever-changing world" (NIEFS Annual Report, 2003). NIEFS activities are driven by the Society's Mission, Purposes, Objectives and Values.

According to NIEFS Board Members Manual (2003), the organization has a regional presence through Employment Assistance Centres located in Campbell River and Port Hardy as well as Training Support Centres located in the communities of Powell River, Courtenay, Port Alberni, Campbell River and Port Hardy. Each facility is managed by an Operations Manager who supervises program and service delivery staff. The Operations Managers report to the Executive Director who reports to the society's seven member board. Through partnership and cooperation agreements, NIEFS has a presence in an additional nine communities across the North Island: Sayward, Gold River, Tahsis, Woss, Cortez Island, Sointula, Port McNeill, and Port Alice.

According to NIEFS' Executive Director (personal communication, February 18

2005), in the previous 19 years, 168 contracts for federal and provincial ministries, First

Nations communities, unions, corporations and small business, and not-for-profit

societies have been delivered. Excellent working relationships have been developed with

the local First Nations communities in the Campbell River area and past projects have

included:

1. Direct delivery of program services for First Nations communities

2. Mentorship and training initiatives to develop program facilitators

3. Delivery of employment readiness programs for First Nations members going to
   work in a community marina and shopping mall development

4. Significant Aboriginal participation (25% - 40% of NIEFS clients) in provincially
   and federally funded job readiness programs (NIEFS statistical data base, 2005).

The excellent working relationship NIEFS has developed with local First Nations

communities since its inception allowed me the opportunity to conduct the research

project with a well developed partnership matrix already in place. NIEFS continues to

ensure that services to local Aboriginal populations are a priority (Doug Preston, personal

communication, Feb. 18th, 2005).

Jenny Evans, NIEFS Employment Assistance Services Team Leader, identified

three EAS priorities for 2005-2006 in relation to the research project

1. EAS will assist youth to connect to industries, occupations and learning
   opportunities where there are anticipated skills shortages and a viable future.

2. NIEFS will be specializing its services for youth (ages 17-30).

3. NIEFS will be specializing its services to Aboriginal clients. (Jenny Evans, personal communication, Feb.21, 2005)

"NIEFS has the vision, capacity and commitment to building working communities through action research, community development, and service delivery. NIEFS is committed to contributing to a community that is sustainable economically, socially, culturally, and environmentally" (NIEFS Annual Report, 2003). Stringer's (1999) description of community based action research stresses the use of authenticity, relationship building, participation and inclusion practices between researcher and community. NIEFS appears committed to a community based model of service delivery encompassing these practices.

NIEFS has developed partnerships with River Corp, Campbell River Chamber of Commerce, the Municipality of Campbell River, and community economic development organizations to ensure NIEFS is aware of employment priorities contained within current Campbell River community development plans. Campbell River's major employers are primarily resource industries and the businesses and services that support them. In 2004, significant recovery in forestry and mining plus gains in construction and trades took place. According to the *Business in Vancouver Publication* (BIV) Publication, "local mining, forestry and construction companies dominate the top 10 spots in BIV's list of top public companies in this province" (Tjaden, 2004). The local labour market reflects a mixed economic picture where the community is stabilizing and has the potential to grow and diversify to take advantage of upswings in the marketplace. This appeared to be an opportune time to conduct the research project, and employment projections for the local area will provide relevant local information to Homalco youth.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focused on three topics to assist in addressing the action research question: What career "decision making" strategies can positively impact employment opportunities for Homalco First Nations youth seeking assistance through North Island Employment? These three topics included career decision making models, labour market information and identity, culture and community roles in career choices.

Career Decision Making Models

Within the vast array of career development theories and practices, there is a need to understand models which have proven effective working with the First Nations communities and youth. Researching career development models that have proven successful with First Nations and youth groups will provide a foundation for career decision making models for further exploration and provide the research framework and development for Homalco youth. This investigation of career development literature specifically focused on these models and their significance for First Nations youth.

1. Engaging and culturally diverse models and First Nations models

2. Youth models

3. Group training models

At the present time, there is ongoing discussion in the career development field regarding career development theories and their relevance for First Nations clients. Many traditional career counseling models have focused primarily on the individual, but there is widespread recognition that traditional models of career counseling may not be effectively meeting the needs of First Nations.

McCormick and Amundson (1997) believe that only focusing on the role of individual client responsibility in the career counseling framework may not be appropriate for First Nations clients. They argue that personal change occurs in the framework of the family and community. Peavy (1995) further elaborates on this point stressing "a counseling preoccupation with the self of native students as a step toward career development is all too often assimilative and contributes to the creation of transitional, dysfunctional lifestyles" (p.2). *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report* (INAC, 1996) and McCormick and Amundson (1997) state that prevailing society is strongly based on a culture of individualism while First Nations cultures do not reflect a philosophy of individualism. Instead, these cultures are orientated around family and community. Poonwassie (1995) concurs with Peavy (1995) and McCormick and Amundson (1997) stating "historically Canadian Aboriginal peoples have been denied the opportunity to develop need based culturally relevant programs" (p. 1). Poonwassie (1995) advocates that career development planners and instructors must recognize that most of the answers and solutions for successful programs rest within the Aboriginal communities themselves. The literature clearly supports the view that the "individualist" traditional models of career counseling are not meeting the needs of First Nations.

Cultural Career Decision Models

Kerka (2003) stresses traditional career development theories and models have been inadequate as many were created and tested on limited samples, usually white, middle-class and male. Peavy (1995) echoes that the "career counseling process must be revised based on native needs as traditional and formal self focused counseling approaches are not working and there is a need for appropriate counseling including

traditional native story telling and role modeling" (p. 3). In fact, throughout the literature, there appears to be consensus on the need for community and culturally sensitive models of career counseling. Much of the research supports the notion that traditional models focusing solely on the individual are not working (Kerka, 2003; McCormick & Amundson, 1997; Peavy, 1995; Poonwassie, 1995). Based on this information, new models of career counseling for diverse populations have recently been developed.

Kerka (2003) cites key elements for a more inclusive career development based on work by Fouad and Bingham's and enhanced by others (Flores, et al., 2003; Walsh, et al., 2001). These factors include:

1. Establishing a culturally appropriate relationship

2. Information gathering that is culturally encompassing

3. Identification of cognitive, social, emotional, environmental, behavioral, and external influences

4. Assessments of cultural spheres of influence on career choice

5. Assessments of cultural gender and efficacy variables

6. Traditional career assessments

7. Selection, administration, and interpretation of culturally appropriate instruments

8. Awareness of personal world views on the part of career practitioner, particularly in terms of identity, salience, values and attitudes (p. 5)

This culturally appropriate model is based on involving the community and the individual in career planning. Journey Inward- Journey Outward (Charter, Peraud, Poonwassie, Williams &Zinger, 2002), an Aboriginal youth model, encompasses similar elements to Kerka's (2003) model stressing the need to include stakeholders, community

members and participants in career planning. This model suggests that the process should

be both participatory and open to change. Kerka (2003) describes the gathering of career

information as a "communal process involving input from family and community

members as well as client self reflections" (p. 5). McCormick and Amundson (1997) also

developed an Aboriginal Career Life Planning model which includes a holistic view of

career planning. This model encourages a similar process of community decision making

and explores areas such as balance, gifts, roles and responsibilities, aptitudes and skills,

values and meaning in the decision making process. McCormick and Amundson's (1997)

model is an integrated model, and incorporates traditional counseling components such

as education and labour market information options as well as utilizing a centric model

(Amundson, 1997) focusing on a holistic view of the person and community.

Further development of McCormick and Amundson's (1997) model has resulted

in a participant work book named Guiding Circles, an Aboriginal guide to finding career

paths (McCormick, Amundson & Poehell, 2002). This work booklet addresses three

factors: the employment gap, self awareness gap and cultural gap that many traditional

career development models fail to recognize, and that may impede the full participation

of Aboriginal peoples (p. 3). It builds on key concepts from Aboriginal perspectives and

experiences and includes exercises in self awareness as well as community exploration

and participation. Exercises are designed around holistic view points and include the

spiritual world, natural world, culture, community, family and self exploration. The

context of this model is to look at whole life experiences and not solely on the work

connections that are the focus of many career development models. The Guiding Circles

model includes the traditional medicine wheel concept of physical, mental, spiritual and

emotional balance (p. 21). It also provides exercises designed to elicit community

feedback in the decision making process (p. 21). The model includes four key concepts:

Aboriginal perspective, active engagement between counselor and clients, career craft

(the use of metaphors and other effective career processes), and a holistic model of career

development.

The Kerka (2003), McCormick and Amundson (1997), Poonwassie (1995) and

McCormick, Amundson and Poehnell (2002) models all include similar elements

stressing cultural frameworks, balance, community, and the development of practitioners'

personal awareness. There is also agreement that the career development models proven

successful for First Nations clients stress the importance of self exploration and the need

to engage in outside community building, resources and supports. Peavy (1995) also

reminds practitioners to be cognizant of native communication patterns, non-

intrusiveness, listening, storytelling, patience and respect for family influence whenever

facilitating a First Nations workshop (p. 4).

Amundson (2003) asserts it is time to review the traditional career counseling

process and stresses revisions using a more active engagement counseling approach. An

Active Engagement approach suggests that "counseling conventions need to be

challenged and restructured for more imagination and creativity" (p. 64). Amundson

challenges career practitioners to use creativity in their counseling approaches as a tool

for problem solving, asserting that this creativity could include drawing, storytelling,

experiential learning, and the use of metaphors (p. 17-29). A more *Active Engagement*

approach using creativity and a variety of experiential learning activities appears to be a

good match for First Nations youth. Self and career exploration could take the form of

art, storytelling, and the use of metaphors. There is widespread agreement that effective

career counseling models must include self exploration components. Magnusson (1995)

states "traditional career counseling models may still play a role in career counseling, but

an additional emphasis must be placed on self concept, personal meaning and personal

independence" (p. 1). The literature also outlines the need for self awareness skills in

career decision making. Peavy (1995) argues that prior to effective career decision

making there is a pressing need for healing, identity, authentication and self esteem

building for some Native clients. According to this author, an effective career decision

making model must be part of an integrated approach which encounters the "whole

person" (p. 1). Poonwassie (1995) agrees and the program Journey Inward-Journey-

Outward includes, in its design, a focus on self esteem, healing past hurts, and modeling

Aboriginal values (p. 3). The McCormick, Amundson and Poehnell (2002) model uses

exercises to assist Aboriginal clients to explore self and community in relation to career

decision making. It must be noted that self exploration is a somewhat difficult task for

clients, especially youth. Literature from Poonwassie (1995) and Peavy (1995) stresses

that many clients may have to heal and that the process of self exploration may bring to

the forefront many unresolved hurts in participants' lives. They argue that a truly

effective career development model must take this into account.

Youth models

Working with youth in career planning has many challenges. Many traditional

models of career development assume youth will be self directed, motivated and eager to

seek new opportunities (Marshall and Wolsak, 2003). Unfortunately, in some cases, these

assumptions are incorrect. Design of a youth career decision making model should be

relevant for youth; therefore, all materials, workbooks and instruction must be designed specifically with youth as a focus. Marshall and Wolsak (2003) argue that if materials lack relevance to youth, the "potential for transfer of learning is limited" (p. 3). Robb (1997) stresses activities and design should incorporate career building activities and not career decision making. Instead of focusing on the big decision (what they want to do with their lives), youth are encouraged to look at the big picture of their lives (the holistic view). This specific focus allows for the recognition that career decision making is an ongoing process and the activities are not necessary designed to make one decision but to build skills set in interests, knowledge, self awareness, current values, and decision making. Peavy (1995) concurs with Marshal and Wolsak (2003), stressing that there is a need to assist youth in finding their own cultural voices in career exploration, and to use their own life experiences as building blocks for a hopeful future" (p. 2). This viewpoint is congruent with the McCormick, Amundson and Poehnell model (2002) which explores life roles rather than solely focusing on work connections and experiences. Career Planner (Government of Alberta, 2002) outlines five simple steps in career exploration for youth: "What am I doing right now? What do I need to know? What are my best choices? What do I need to do? And what action will I take" (p. 9). This youth focused workbook stresses and teaches definitions of career terms, provides case studies and encourages youth to dream. This simple first step workbook provides relevant examples which youth can easily identify with, encouraging relevance for youth which Marshall and Wolsak believe is crucial to a successful career decision making process. It is apparent, based on research that activities, assessments and career exploration used and designed for adults may not prove successful for youths. Designing a program using

youth focused and culturally congruent materials is essential in working with First

Nations youth.

Group Models

Career guidance often takes place in small workshops and group training. This

builds on a culture of connecting and support. In a group context, there are opportunities

for support and meaningful exchange with others (Borgen, 1995). This "connecting" is

one key factor in First Nations culture and lies at the core of community and support

structures stressed in First Nations career counseling models. Connecting with the

community is essential in Aboriginal career research and is just as significant as external

factors such as the labour market, educational institutions, and funding bodies.

Conducting a program for First Nations youth in a group environment would likely prove

beneficial.

At the core of such group training models is skill acquisition. The ability to gain

new skills and actively apply them throughout one's life is essential. Borgen (1995)

supports a model of structured learning activities and a social supports model based on

development of knowledge, skills and personal awareness.

Borgen outlines elements of a successful group model:

1. Group goals and activities define the purpose of the group

2. Members' needs and roles come from two sources

3. The group process influences the functioning of the group

4. The leader recognizes that the needs of groups are paramount

5. The design focuses on sequencing group activities to be congruent with the

   group's purpose and stage of group development (p. 4)

Magnusson (1995) concurs with Borgen and has developed a similar group structure outlining five processes including initiation, exploration, decision making, preparation, and implementation. Skill acquisition and self exploration are at the core of this model. Borgen's model (1995) and Magnusson's (1995) structure outline the importance of letting the group take ownership of learning, and build on new skills and flexible activities designed to foster new growth of the group. Borgen stresses one of the most effective ways to assist participants in managing successfully through career decision making is utilizing a group format, believing that "groups that are offered to assist people in developing or changing career directions are particularly important" (p. 4). Borgen claims that group models assist participants in developing communication skills for career research including labour market information and particular career interest areas as well as supporting participants in developing self confidence to move towards identified goals (p. 4).

The literature suggests key practices for successful First Nations youth career development should include culturally sensitive models and activities, including community inclusiveness, a holistic model of practice and self awareness components. The design of the curriculum should be youth focused, provide relevance for youth, and assist in skill acquisition while the group dynamics and process must recognize the needs of the group and provide flexibility based on the groups progress and stage.

<div align="center">Labour Market Information</div>

Labour market information (LMI) is an important part of career planning and career counseling. According to Herr (1988), "students/clients need to gain a broad understanding of occupational structure, job families and where to get labour market

information to aid in their career decision-making process" (p.2). LMI can enhance the

career building process by grounding exploration and choices in solid information.

Understanding Labour Market Information and potential occupational or general skills

shortages is essential for informed career choices. This section of the research explores

the relationship between the "new economy" and career decision making choices for

Aboriginal youth. Three areas of labour market research will be explored:

1. The changing world of work

2. New occupations and skills necessary to compete in today's economy

3. The impact of this information on career decision making for Aboriginal youth

New Economy

There is a need to understand what has changed in the labour market. Globally,

the world of work as we know it has changed. According to Imel and Kerka (1989),

"Labour Market Information is the interaction of individuals competing for jobs

(occupations) and employers (industries) competing for workers" (¶ 3). In the 21st

century, literature regarding the "new economy" has been widespread in relation to

Labour Market Information. O'Reily (2001) asserts the new economy consists of shifting

work roles, a need for workers to develop a rapid evolution of skill to perform multi-

tasks, and an increasing trend in business to contract out work. Bridges (1994) agrees and

stresses that "today's organizations are being transformed from a structure built out of

jobs to a field of work needing to be done" (p. 1). He goes on to state that the economy

has become a "market" and, as such, more organizations are replacing their support

functions (contracting out) in order to be competitive in today's supply and demand era.

Kirk (1996) supports Bridges and O'Reily's statements adding that "only a small

majority of Canadians - just over 50% of the total workforce – continues to work in traditional full time jobs" (p. 7). Consistent messages from Kirk (1996), Bridges (1994) and O'Reily (2001) demonstrate the need for workers to have higher skill levels and training to be competitive in today's labour market. The ability to multitask, to be adaptable and flexible are necessary to compete in the new economy. Kirk (1996), O'Reily (2001) and Bridges (1994) agree that the new economy is a shift from a resource/goods sector economy to a service/knowledge based economy. Kirk (1996) believes that "the world of work has changed, dramatically, and continues to change. Pick any field, explore it in some depth and you'll find it's more technical, competitive and complicated with each passing day" (p. 6). This supports the criteria used by the Youth & Labour Market Services, Ministry of Advanced Education (Government of British Columbia, 2001) in defining the new economy:

1. The new economy is knowledge–based and human capital is the critical success factor for employers

2. Knowledge and skills are the keys to positioning the economy in the global marketplace

3. Post-secondary education and training are key economic policy tools to ensure a sufficiently skilled labour supply (p. 2)

As a result of this dramatic shift in today's new economy, many job seekers are in shock, especially individuals who have previously worked in a job with some sense of security. Jobs, as we have known them, have changed, and many job seekers do not have the necessary skill requirements to compete in today's new economy. Contracting out, part time employment, and the shift from jobs to work needing to be done is now how the

majority of work is being conducted (Bridges, 1994). As a result, a shift in attitude, culture and skills is required to compete in today's changing labour market. According to Kirk (1996), "the new work requires that workers have to change their basic attitudes, values and beliefs" (p. 26). Historically, in the resource/goods sector, economy career/job information was passed on by family, role models and community. Jobs were created as people showed up at the same place every day and did the same work all day long; these routine, industrial jobs supported millions of families throughout North America for much of this century (Kirk, 1996).

The new and emerging economy requires access to relevant information regarding career choices, labour market demand, skills and training required. Jarvis (2002) is in agreement with Kirk (1996), Bridges (1994) and O'Reily (2001) when he sums up the research stating "prevailing wisdom in the twentieth century held that given reasonable access to good career information and guidance citizens will make good career decisions" (p. 1). However, Jarvis adds that recent analysis of school-to-work and work-to-work transition processes (Watts as cited in Jarvis, 2002) raises doubts about whether simply providing good information and guidance is sufficient in today's new economy for career planning success. A career decision making model that focuses on the global labour market changes and relevant occupational demand is needed, but the model must take a holistic view and consider shifts in attitude, thinking and change that many career seekers are experiencing.

The changing economy requires a transformation in how career practitioners conduct career decision making workshops. Effective career decision making workshops not only require access to knowledge and information regarding labour demand, but also

must address knowledge, skills and adaptability, the key ingredients for success in today's job market. A constantly shifting career landscape and labour market means career seekers must also adapt to constant change, transitions and skills, upgrading as the market demands it.

Skills Necessary in Today's Economy

A focus, not only on job specific skills, but on soft/transferable skills is being stressed in today's labour market. The Conference Board of Canada (2000) has developed *Employability Skills 2000+* which outlines the employability skills, attitudes and behaviors that are needed to participate and progress in today's dynamic world of work. The skill categories are divided into three subsections:

1. Fundamental Skills (skills needed as a base for further development)

2. Personal Management Skills (personals skills, attitude and behaviors that drive one's potential for growth)

3. Teamwork Skills (the skills and attributes needed to contribute productively)

The Conference Board of Canada (2000) employability skills echo Kirk (1996), Bridges (1994) and O'Reily's (2001) statements about the need for adaptability, continual learning and skill development necessary from employees and job seekers in today's new economy. O'Reily (2001) expands on this by pointing out that computer skills have become generic, transferable skills that are in demand in every occupation. She also states that, more multi- tasking is required; movement is constant and mobility plays a key factor in career development. Employers view employability skills as equally important as technological and educational skills in today's shifting economy. As such, these employability skills must be addressed in the career decision making workshop

A strong foundation of employability skills and technological skills are now mandatory and specific job requirement skills and training are needed. Job seekers are now expected to bring to the world of work a variety of skills, training and attitudes; this is a vast change from the previous learn-on-the job model in the goods sector.

Skills Shortages

The Government of BC, Ministry of Advanced Education (2002) defines skills shortages as the demand for workers exceeding the supply of those qualified, available and willing to do the job at existing market conditions. Similarly, the Business Council of British Columbia defines skills shortages as "employers unable to fill or having difficulty filling vacancies for an occupation at current levels of remuneration and conditions of employment" (Finlayson, 2004). A research report from Canadian Federation of Independent Business (Bruce, 2001) demonstrate that small businesses have "persistently high labour shortages, and throughout the past decade, labour shortages have, to varying degrees, been a persistent concern for small and medium-sized enterprises" (¶ 1). In addition the *Advisory Council on Science and Technology Report* (Government of Canada, 2000) concluded that "the pressures of economic, technological and scientific change, combined with an ageing work force, and intensifying global competition for skilled people, will soon strain our skills development system to the limit. Indeed, the signs are already present" (¶ 15). Research is consistent in the projection of a BC labour skills shortage. According to a report entitled *An Overview of Skills Shortages Issues in British Columbia,* (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2000) evidence from three research reports: *The Leadership Survey* (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2000), *The Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses Survey* (Bruce, 2001) and the *Stepping*

Up: Skills and Opportunities in the Knowledge Economy Survey (Government of Canada, Advisory Council on Science and Technology, 2000) conclude that there is a looming skills shortage. *The Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses Report* (CFIB) is based on member employer surveys and concludes that there is a widespread general shortage of skilled workers. One third of CFIB employers in BC were concerned over shortage of qualified labour in the second half of 2000 (Bruce, 2001). The Leadership Survey (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2000) noted that skill shortages continued to be a concern for the management respondents and a source of increasing concern for labour, and the Stepping Up Survey (2000) concluded that shortages of skilled workers exist in areas of information, technology, aerospace and health, and a high potential for shortages of trades in the next ten years due to retirement. These recent BC labour market research studies concluded there is evidence for a BC skills shortages and excellent employment opportunities for qualified, trained candidates.

A contrary message regarding skills shortages must be noted. According to Betty Notar (2004), Assistant Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Skills Development and Labour there are some skill shortages in particular sectors today (tourism, construction and energy), but the challenge of dealing with skill mismatches is a priority. Most of the occupational growth is located in large urban settings (Lower Mainland of BC). According to Cyr (2005) at a 2004 BC Labour Market in Review conference 70 % of job growth and demand are in the Lower mainland triangle, defined as Vancouver to Victoria and Nanaimo. Training is usually located in large urban settings as well. This poses an issue for those people who wish to stay in Campbell River. *The Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples* (INAC, 1996) found "obstacles continue to block

Aboriginal people from achieving higher levels of education. Many education programs

require them to relocate for educational programs: this may not be feasible if a person has

family responsibilities and financial obligations" (Vol. 3, Chap.6, ¶ 4). Although research

concludes a skills shortage is occurring, many of these occupations require enhanced

skills and training. Numerous Aboriginal youth have yet to gain the skills necessary to

compete. Giving participants an overview of demand and skills shortages is necessary for

a successful career decision making model. It must be noted that relevant regional

training and LMI should also be incorporated for those participants who cannot or do not

want to leave the local area for employment.

Kirk (1996), Bridges (1994) and O'Reily (2001) assert that a holistic model,

which encompasses the need for continual learning, training, skill development and the

opportunity to engage in dialogue regarding attitudinal change and managing career

choices through out transitions, is needed. Skills shortage projections in BC from

research reports must also be incorporated into the Career Decision Making workshop,

although local Campbell River and area labour market information must be included as

Aboriginal youth may not be able to attend training in other locations.

<div align="center">Culture, Identity and Community Roles</div>

A thorough examination of research regarding Aboriginal and youth identity,

transition and culture was investigated for this project. There is a need to understand First

Nations youth culture, motivational factors and learning styles in order to implement an

effective Career Decision Making workshop. Understanding the community role affecting

First Nations youth career decision making is essential. Focusing on the "whole picture",

the relationship between community, culture, self, and implications and supports available

to enhance success for First Nations youth is paramount. Three areas of culture and

community roles were explored:

1. Transition and Identity

2. Cultural Learning Styles

3. Cultural Support Factors

Transition and Identity

Many youth experience a transition of identity when career decision making

strategies are implemented and career choice is brought to the forefront. For many youth,

this period of time marks a major turning point in personal development. According to

Aboriginal Human Resource Development (2002) this transition can often be a

troublesome and frustrating time for young adults (p.2). Borgen and Amundson (1997)

also describe how "older adolescents and young adults enter transitions with the goal of

becoming independently functioning adults as they strive to meet evolving personal and

career related needs" (p. 1). They further state that depression, low self esteem and

anxiety are correlated with a range of perceived problems during this transition phase.

Bridges (2001) defines transition as "the process of letting go of the way things used to be

and then taking hold of the way they subsequently become (p. 2). Bridges and Mitchell

(2000) outline three separate processes of transition:

1. *Saying Goodbye*

This requires letting go of the way things were and the way the person used to

be.

2. *Shifting into Neutral*

An in-between phase of letting go of the past, but being unable to start anew,

this is an uncomfortable zone filled with uncertainness and confusion.

3. *Moving Forward*

This last phase requires people to begin behaving in a new way (p. 3).

The *Shifting into Neutral* process echoes Amundson's (1994) statements regarding

identity negotiation during times of unemployment and transition, particularly his

observation that "in periods of emotional turmoil, self confidence is lowered and there is a

rapid drain of energy" (¶ 5). Amundson further states that "in terms of negotiating

identity, it is obvious that for many people who are unemployed the end result of the

negotiation is very negative" (¶ 6). In their research, Borgen and Amundson (1997)

concluded that young people trying to meet personal and career related needs are often in

a state of flux and uncertainty (¶ 4). Bridges and Mitchell (2000) further assert that the

neutral zone is the period of time where energy and transformation can occur as it is

uncomfortable so people are driven to get out of it. These researchers also suggest that

some people never attain transformation because of their unwillingness to let go of fear

and explore new possibilities.

In addition to describing stages of change, Borgen and Amundson (1997) identify

numerous factors that hinder adolescents' successful transitions including relationship

problems, career confusion, financial difficulties, unemployment, lack of satisfying work,

lack of post secondary educational opportunities, and difficulty adjusting to educational

demands (¶ 3). Amundson (1994) further emphasizes that identity negotiation is an

ongoing process, one that becomes significant during times of transition and impacts "the

way we see ourselves" as "our identity, is strongly influenced by how others see us" (¶ 2).

McCall (as cited in Amundson, 1987) defines identity negotiation as "the process whereby the individual strikes two bargains, one with the world and one with him or herself" (¶ 2). This identity transition is echoed in *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report* (INAC, 1996):

> Aboriginal youth today straddle two worlds. The non Aboriginal world has become a fast- paced competitive, changing environment in which ever higher levels of education and new skills are required to survive. These are powerful cultural forces that necessitate a secure, solid identity to balance the conflicting messages and demands created where the Aboriginal and non Aboriginal worlds meet (Vol. 3, Chap. 5.4, ¶ 1).

Gilbert and Cooper assert "our self conceptions hinge upon others' conceptions of us. In jointly constructing social reality, people mutually determine each others identities – we become in a sense what others believe us to be (Gilbert and Cooper as cited in Amundson, 1994, ¶ 2).

Much of this literature suggests that youth striving to make career decisions are in a state of transition, and that merely presenting information on career choices is not sufficient (Borgen & Amundson, 1997; INAC, 1996). An understanding of youth transition, culture and external supports are necessary to assist youth in navigating the career decision making process successfully. It is paramount to consider external factors contributing to identify and self concept during this transition time. Role models, external supports and community influence youth, and each have a role to play for successful career choices.

Cultural Learning Styles

Swisher (1991) asserts that "cultural values and early socialization experiences influence the way American Indian and Alaskan Native children understand their world, learning by observation and learning through the manner in which the competence is demonstrated". (¶ 3). *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report* (INAC, 1996) confirms the importance of these learning and cultural practices, describing traditional education as a process that prepared youth to take up adult responsibility through apprenticeship and through teaching by parents, grandparents and extended family. As skills were practiced and shaped over time, lifelong learning from childhood to adulthood and beyond was as a traditional fact of life (Vol. 3, Chap. 4, ¶ 4). More (1989) also describes the process of "watch then do", which served as a "primary method whereby the child acquired skills within the family (p. 5). More (1989) cautions that this is not a uniquely Indian [sic] learning style, but there are enough similarities among Indian student learning styles to warrant attention by researchers and teachers (p. 8). Although the literature supports the idea that there is no one First Nations learning style, much of the research proposes a "hands on" approach and watching and observing tasks before performance and decision making. Providing role models, work site visits, a variety of "hands on" career research tools and support prior and during career planning may prove beneficial to First Nations youth. A "test it out" or "watch then do" approach in workshop development is highly recommended for First Nations youth decision makers.

In terms of establishing a personal foundation for effectively dealing with stresses associated with employment and transitions, Amundson (1994) believes that taking time

for self examination can be extremely beneficial. Borgen and Amundson (1997) outline

eight key areas for support:

1. Developing multiple plans

2. Self advocacy and marketing: communication skills, mentoring, role play practice and support

3. Managing changing relationships (relationship issues training)

4. Meeting basic needs (community needs, sense of meaning and purpose)

5. Coping with stress (stress management, relaxation, managing "self talk", and using support systems)

6. Coping with loss

7. Bridging programs (work experience and cooperative education programs to gain hands on experience)

8. Information and information access (¶ 6)

The Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council (2002) agrees with

Borgen and Amundson (1997) emphasizing the importance of role models, mentors,

career guidance counselors, teachers, parents and friends in assisting Aboriginal youth to

make successful career choices (p. 2). Furthermore, the Aboriginal Human Resource

Council stresses that providing information regarding potential career choices and

offering a vast array of career directions for Aboriginal youth is crucial, especially in

communities where limited economic development and chronic unemployment is a fact of

life (p. 3).

Cultural Support Factors

Bridges and Mitchell (2000), Borgen and Amundson (1997) and Amundson (1994) maintain that to move through transition successfully, self exploration, self knowledge, personal skills, and external support are necessary. Identity (knowing oneself) seems to be the key.

Aboriginal values and culture play a key role in Aboriginal youth managing transition successfully. *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report* (INAC, 1996) recognizes "cultural approaches start from the belief that if youth are solidly grounded in their Aboriginal identity and cultural knowledge, they will have strong personal resources to develop intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually (Vol. 3, Chap. 5.4.1, ¶ 7).

Although Aboriginal values and traditions are diverse, there are common elements that often conflict with conventional settings (INAC, *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report*, 1996, Vol. 3, Chap. 5.3.2, ¶ 3). These include co-operation, non–competitiveness, and a belief that intellectual and other gifts are meant to be shared for the benefit of others, rather than personal gain. Berger (1991) concurs with these points, stating "the culture of Native people…includes the tradition of decision making by consensus, a respect for the wisdom of the elders, a belief in the extended family, and a special relationship with the land" (p. 60). Key common Aboriginal values in North America include: family, service to others, spiritual awareness, challenge, meaningful roles, recognition, responsibility, natural and logical consequences, respect and dialogue. (INAC, *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report,* 1996, Vol. 4, Chap. 4.5.1, ¶ 11).

Community also plays an integral role in First Nations culture where the focus is on the importance of the individual within the community context. *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report* (INAC, 1996) states that there is a "fundamentally different world view that exists and struggles for expression whenever Aboriginal people come together" (Vol. 1, Part 3, Chap. 14, ¶ 27), noting that the most important cultural difference is the emphasis placed on collectivity in Aboriginal society. In Aboriginal communities, certain cultural realities must be acknowledged including the significance of family, clan, community and nation, the importance of the collective to an individual's sense of health and self worth, and the responsibility to care and protect for vulnerable members, collective rights and collective action. In the past, there has been an emphasis on policy and program design in career decision making which is usually geared toward the individual; however, recent literature suggests that the community is an integral component to successful Aboriginal decision making and choices.

The literature suggests that recognition of Aboriginal culture and an awareness of Aboriginal youth are essential in supporting Aboriginal youth in transition management and career exploration (Borgen & Amundson, 1997; Gilbert &Cooper, 1994; McCall, 1994; More, 1989; Swisher, 1991; INAC, 1996). Successful career decision making for Aboriginal youth involves the community and consensus decision making. As a result of these cultural factors, individualistic career counseling and program design could prove less successful than taking a community approach.

Aboriginal Human Resource Development Canada (2002) found that the greater the level of cultural identity in youth, the more likely the youth can determine what type of job or career he or she wants (p. 21). Providing Aboriginal role models is another

approach that could motivate youth building and strengthen Aboriginal youth identity

(INAC, *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report*, 1996, Vol. 3, Chap. 4, ¶ 11).

Assisting First Nations youth with successful career planning and career decision making involves the individual, the community, cultural sensitivity and an examination of curriculum development that builds on strengths, preferences, and experiences of First Nations youth.

CHAPTER 3: CONDUCT OF ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Research Approach

The intent of this research study was to gain information to enhance employability skills for Homalco youth by exploring their employment and career planning needs, and make recommendations from this research to North Island Employment Foundation for career planning purposes. Data indicating the career planning needs and experiences of Homalco youth was explored, as well as experiences and insights of professionals providing employment services for youth. This research has provided the foundation for the recommendations included in this research study.

The primary methodology employed in this study was action research using qualitative analysis. Action research is used as a way to improve or illicit change. Stringer (1999) defines action research as "a systematic and emergent process that focuses on methods and techniques of inquiry that take into account people's history, culture, interactional practices and emotional lives" (p. 17). Stringer further elaborates on community-based action research, which assists people to better understand their situation and then involves them in taking action to resolve issues. The research data, including youth insights and experiences with career decision as well as the experience and knowledge of professionals in the employment and training field, provided relevant information assisting North Island Employment and Homalco administrators' awareness of what Homalco youth identified as their employment needs, necessary supports, and program design recommendations.

A qualitative approach was utilized in this study. According to Palys (2003, "qualitative researchers argue that people's perceptions should be the focus of analysis"

(p. 29). Palys asserts that qualitative research seeks to understand people's perceptions "what people think about the world influences how they act in it" (p. 29). Qualitative research was chosen as it allows for the exploration of participants' ideas, their understanding and perceptions of career decision making and allowed participants' voices to be heard in the recommendations for development of a career model. This was achieved by direct interaction with Homalco youth in a focus group and one-to-one interviews with professionals in the career development field. Glesne (1999) poignantly states "practitioners who couple basic research theories and techniques with an action oriented mode can develop collaborative, reflective data-collecting and analysis teams for their own practices and thereby contribute to the socio-political context in which they dwell"(p. 14). Utilizing this method of qualitative research fostered collaboration between the various stakeholders, the youth for whom career decision making strategies will be developed, and the stakeholders who have the influence to implement the recommendations.

<div align="center">Project Participants</div>

The participants involved in this research study included (a) four Homalco youth, (b) two North Island Employment staff, and (c) one Homalco staff. Palys (2003) insists that "the questions of whom or what to sample is intricately tied into the researcher's objectives and perspective" (p. 128), and most importantly "what information the researcher wants to obtain and who has access to that information" (Gorden as cited in Palys, 2003).

My quest for this research study was to develop recommendations for NIEFS to design and implement a career decision making model relevant and meaningful to

Homalco youth. In order to achieve this, it was imperative to involve the "youth" and determine what was relevant and needed from their perspective. My objective was to hear their ideas, thoughts, stories and experiences with employment services and make recommendations from their voices. I utilized a purposive sampling of youth from the Homalco Nation. Palys (2003) asserts that "people or locations are intentionally sought because they meet some criterion for inclusion in the study" (p. 142). The aim of this research project was not to formalize a representation of First Nations youth or to generalize youth from other First Nations communities but rather to explore the employment experiences of the four youth participants.

The selection of participants was from one local First Nations community, Homalco. I chose to do this for two reasons: (1) Ethical considerations: if a cross section of participants from different First Nations communities were chosen, ethical reviews and considerations would take too long for the scope of this project, as each participant's community would need to be contacted and an ethical review completed. (2) This youth group was currently working in an employment program which I had been involved with, and a trusting and a collaborative working relationship had already been established.

Youth participants ages 18-25 were selected, although Human Resource Development Canada defines "youth" as ages from 15-30. This choice was because of the time frame required for ethical procedures involving children, and the scope of this research project.

Two North Island Employment staff were invited to participate in this study through interviews. These members were chosen as they have influence to incorporate recommendations from this research, and having them participate in the study increased

the likelihood that the recommendations would be implemented. A staff representative

from Homalco who worked in youth employment programming was also invited to

participate via an interview. Inviting representation from Homalco provided an

opportunity to enhance relationships between NIEFS and Homalco administration. Both

NIEFS and the Homalco staff had experience and knowledge of youth employment

program design and implementations and brought insights, experiences and another

perspective on the data collected. Involving representatives of the stakeholders in the

research process established Stringers' (1999) "community approach" and forged

relationships and ownership of this project, which enhanced the change process.

<div align="center">Research Methods and Tools</div>

I selected focus groups and interviews for this research project. These particular

tools were chosen after considering the participants in the research and the nature of the

research question. As I wanted to gain insights into participants' experiences and

perceptions, these two inquiry tools allowed for flexibility and interpretation in the data

collection.

The process utilized in my research was

1. A focus group with Homalco youth

2. One to one interviews with a Homalco representative and NIEFS staff

<div align="center">*Tools*</div>

A focus group format was chosen for the youth because this method gathers

substantial qualitative data when participants share their experiences, observations and

perspectives on a particular topic (Palys, 2003). This tool allowed for a variety of

opinions and for participants to build off each others' ideas. Focus groups were also a

time saving strategy as conducting one to one interviews with each Homalco youth

participants would have taken considerably more time. Kouzes and Posner (2002) state

that in "…focus groups or forum settings you benefit from the way people bounce ideas

off one another. …everyone learns in this process about what it takes to work together to

achieve common objectives" (p. 160). This group tool was utilized for this purpose as it

yielded rich data that one to one interviews may not have.

The youth focus group was conducted at North Island Employment. I had

originally anticipated conducting the group at the Homalco Band Office as the youth

were participating in a Homalco employment program, but the youth participants wanted

to conduct the focus group at North Island Employment office; therefore, the venue was

changed.

An interview format was chosen for the representative from Homalco and two

staff from NIEFS. I wanted to explore the staff's experiences working with Aboriginal

youth and tap into their vast knowledge base. I chose the interview inquiry tool to protect

organizational confidentiality; interviews allowed the opportunity to ensure

confidentiality in this regard. In a focus group environment, these participants may not

have been willing to share experiences and lessons learned in a group forum. As Palys

(2003) notes, "probably the biggest advantages [of interviews] are their versatility and the

opportunity they provide to hear from a respondent directly" (p. 159). Palys generalized

that participation rates for one to one interviews are often around 80-90 percent, and

since my interview participants are a small sampling, this research tool was chosen.

Interviews were conducted at the NIEFS office. The interviews lasted approximately one

hour in length. A consideration of this method was the time and cost of conducting one to one interviews; therefore, only three staff were interviewed.

Procedures

Questions for the focus group were developed using Krueger's (2005) framework for asking questions that yield powerful information. Suggestions included: using open-ended questions, avoiding the use of why, using think back questions (taking people back to an experience), introductory and transition questions, key questions and ending questions. Ending questions can be used to summarize the discussion and validate questions such as "Is this an adequate summary?" and "Have we missed anything?"

Focus group questions were test piloted with three coworkers, and a small sampling of youth to determine clarity. The test pilots resulted in minor adjustments and modifications prior to the research focus group.

An informal focus group model was utilized, using a Narrative Inquiry approach, incorporating some open ended questions to elicit youth stories and experiences. Clandinn and Connelly (2000) state Narrative Inquiry questioning is founded on the premise that we can gather information through storytelling of life. I believe hearing Homalco youth experiences and stories regarding employment services and experiences provided rich and informative data.

Two information sessions were conducted for potential youth participants. My rationale for providing information sessions to the youth was to begin a dialogue and "have a conversation" prior to work in the focus group. I held the assumption that using only a "letter to participate" via mail could be disregarded or misunderstood whereas a verbal conversation would make youth more comfortable in volunteering for the project.

Once the informational sessions were completed, I individually met with each potential

youth participant and reviewed the purpose of the research project, letters of consent and

answered questions. I shared the focus group questions at the individual sessions as I

wanted to give reflective thinkers the time to review the questions prior to the focus

group. Letters of consent were distributed to potential youth participants at the time, and

resulted in all six potential participants wanting to participate. Signed letters of consent

were given back to me in a period of two weeks after the informational sessions.

Four of the original six youth participants attended the focus group; two were

unable to attend. The focus group was audio recorded. I had originally planned to use

Dragon Naturally Speaking software to transcribe the data, but after test piloting the

software I decided against using this software and personally transcribed the data. I

recorded the information onto a flipchart while I moderated the group. Findings were

summarized on the flipchart prior to the end of the focus group, and the group was asked

to clarify and verify the information and theme the data prior to completing data analysis.

A semi-structured interview was utilized for NIEFS and Homalco staff, which

combined the quantifiable, limited answer question set with the flexibility to allow the

researcher to delve more deeply into some questions as desired (Brewerton and Millward,

2001). Question design was influenced by using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach.

AI is founded on the premise that change can be created by focusing on what we do well

and what we want more of, rather than paying attention to problems. AI is about the co-

evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world

around them (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). Questions were test piloted with two

coworkers and modifications and suggestions were incorporated.

I hand delivered the letter of invitation to NIEFS and Homalco staff and directly

discussed my project, answered questions and provided a rationale for their inclusion in

the study. Letters of consent were then distributed to the staff. The three potential staff

participants all agreed and submitted signed letters of consent throughout the following

week. Interview questions were distributed at the individual meetings, allowing

reflective thinkers time to formulate their thoughts.

The interviews were audio recorded and personally transcribed. Individual

transcripts were emailed to each participant to validate the research. Each participant

validated their transcripts with no changes requested.

Information Analysis

The interview and focus group data were initially analyzed separately, but then

was combined to identify similarities and difference. Detailed information on the analysis

process is outlined in the following section.

Study Conduct

The following is a detailed description of the steps completed during the action

research project. Homalco Nation, my faculty supervisor and project sponsor were all

informed of the progress of this study as each step built upon each other.

Research Question Development

The research question "What career "decision making" strategies can positively

impact employment opportunities for Homalco First Nations youth seeking assistance

through North Island Employment Society?" evolved from my work as an employment

counselor with local First Nations communities. I wanted to understand what factors and

employment needs this population identified as a means to provide a community based

model of delivery that had positive implications for First Nations members in our local community. My original question design was for First Nations, not specifically Homalco, but upon ethical reflection, I determined working with one local First Nations community, and a group I had established "trust" with would meet the criteria of my initial interest.

Literature Review

A literature review was conducted, prior to and during the research project gathering phases. An initial literature review of authors and other researchers work uncovered three factors that further research in the area of First Nations youth and career planning needs. These areas included: (a) Career Decision Making Models (b) Labour Market Information (c) Identity and Culture. As the project progressed, these three topic areas were researched in detail and reported in Chapter Two of this document.

Major Concept Proposal Approval

The Major Concept Proposal was submitted to my faculty advisor at RRU and my project supervisor for review. This included the project's introduction, focus and framing, a literature review of labour market information and a preliminary plan for conducting the research with drafts of tools to gather the research.

My project supervisor and project sponsor signed the letters of agreement outlining their support of my project. The letters were submitted electronically to the RRU ethics department.

Initial Presentation to Homalco Nation

An initial meeting outlining my project proposal with a Homalco representative was given to determine if Homalco was interested and would support this research

project. My concept proposal was offered for review, although Homalco requested an

executive summary of the project and my resume prior to internal approval.

Ethical Approval

Royal Roads Ethical approval documents were completed and forwarded to my

faculty supervisor, who reviewed them and submitted them on my behalf to the RRU

Research Ethics Board. The Ethic Board approved my project. Once RRU approved of

my project, I submitted all required documents requested to Homalco Nation and

received two letters of approval to proceed with the project. Proof of Homalco approval

was submitted to RRU's Research Ethics Board.

Presentation to Potential Homalco Youth Participants

Two oral presentations were given to Homalco youth participating in a Homalco

Nation work project. These presentations included: purpose of the research, the process

schedule and rationale for youth selection.

Participant Invitation

Homalco youth were invited personally after the group presentation, and provided

with letters of invitation (see Appendix A). Letters of consent (see Appendix B) were

distributed and reviewed with potential participants, outlining confidentiality, and data

collection methods. The focus groups were scheduled two weeks after the invitation.

Focus group questions were reviewed at this time. Signed letters of consent were given

back to me within one week of the invitation to participate.

Staff from Homalco and NIEFS were invited personally for interviews, and

provided with a letter of invitation (see Appendix C), a review of the project and letters

of consent (see Appendix D). Interview questions were distributed at these meetings.

Interviews were scheduled two weeks after the initial invitation and letters of consent were given to me one week after individual meetings.

<div align="center">Focus Group Conduct</div>

Two informal groups, one consisting of co-workers and another with "youth" to pilot the focus group questions and test the audio recorder, were conducted. Minor revisions to the questions were completed based on these two groups' input. Interview questions were test piloted with two coworkers and a fellow MALT cohort member prior to the interviews. Minor revisions to the questions were completed based on these individuals' feedback.

Four Homalco youth participated in a focus group. The session was conducted in a training room at North Island Employment Foundation. The session took place in the morning and lasted approximately two hours. I flip charted responses to questions. Signed consent forms were submitted prior to the session. At the end of the session, participants participated in theming the information from the flipchart.

<div align="center">Interview Conduct</div>

Interview questions were test piloted with two coworkers and a fellow MALT cohort student prior to the interviews. Minor revisions to the questions were completed based on feedback from coworkers and the MALT student.

Three individuals participated in one-to-one interviews. Each interview lasted approximately one hour in duration. Participants signed consent forms prior to proceeding. The interviews were audio recorded.

Data Analysis

Stringer (1999) states that research data produces large masses of information that have limited use in the raw data form. Data analysis enables researchers to "reduce, condense, or distil this mass of information so that significant features of people's experience become available in a readily accessible form" (p. 175). Glesne (1999) suggests that data analysis is done simultaneously with data collection to focus and shape the study as it proceeds. The researcher must reflect on the data, work to organize it, and try and discover what the data has to say. I also utilized a research log to focus and shape the research as it proceeded and Stringer's (1999) data analysis and recording structure.

Research Log

As an action researcher, an important part of my research was maintaining a research data log; this allowed me to reflect and to refer back on my ideas, learning and insights while conducting is project. Glesne maintains that "by keeping a reflective field log, you develop your thoughts; by getting your thoughts down as they occur, no matter how preliminary or in what form, you begin the analysis process" (Glesne, 1999, p. 131). The research reflection log assisted me to identify my researcher bias, allowed me to remain open to new perspectives, and provided an anchor in my research findings.

Data Analysis and Recording

Stringer (1999) provided the data analysis and recording structure implemented. He detailed procedures to reduce the amount of raw data by "selecting, categorizing, and labeling key information" (p. 176). This structure allowed me to establish categories and key elements of experience that provide the framework and context in the final report. Once individual transcripts were validated by the interview participants, I collated the

key responses and grouped responses into categories; after data was categorized I then identified the emerging themes. Key responses were color coded to participants and written on post it notes. This process allowed me to move key concepts, change and adjust categories and easily group categories into themes. As I am a tactile and visual learner, this process allowed me to fully experience, listening and touching to analyze the data. All identifying information that referred to participants' identities was removed. Focus group themes were validated by the participants themselves. The interviews and focus group data analysis were completed separately, but then compared and contrasted and used as the basis of recommendations in this project.

Numerous methods to maximize authenticity and trustworthiness were utilized during this project. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with participants. A trusting and open relationship was established with NIEFS staff, prior to the project, but during these six months, a trusting relationship developed with the youth, Homalco staff and Homalco administration. Participation validation and verification of data recorded was conducted at each research phase prior to moving forward.

Once the data was themed and the research results and recommendations were completed, I contacted each interviewee and distributed the findings for verification and permission to use the interviewee quotes. One participant requested a small change in one quote which I completed and permission was given from interviewees to use the findings and relevant quotes.

I have also attempted to use "thick detailed" descriptions in this report, that enable audiences to identify similarities of the research setting with other contexts, but not generalize findings (Stringer, 1999, p. 177).

All documentation was secure and only accessible to me. Data was stored on my home computer which has an access code. A locked filing cabinet held transcripts, letters of consent and other relevant hard copies of data, including audio recordings. Raw data will be destroyed one year after convocation. Research from youth, NIEFS and Homalco staff ensured multiple data sources were investigated.

The use of multiple research tools and multiple participant sources ensured triangulation. I have established the validity of the research findings by having participants verify the accuracy of the information gathered. Stringer (1999) suggests using a peer evaluator to aid in the validation process. For validation purposes I worked with my faculty supervisor at Royal Roads University who provided a review of the methodology and data analysis of this project. The data-gathering, collation and analysis approaches I utilized "maximize authenticity and trustworthiness" of qualitative data (MALT Major Project Handbook, 2005, p. 34).

Ethical Issues

Research ethics and the regulation of research ethics principles were fully adhered to in this research project. Palys (2003) refers to research ethics as the "principles that guide the way we interact with research participants and the commitment to safeguard their rights and interests" (p. 80). He further clarifies that the regulation of ethics is the "way that research ethics are interpreted and adjudicated- that is, the bureaucratization and institutionalization of research ethics" (p. 80). For this project, the requirements of Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy (2004) guided how I conducted my research, interacted with participants and gathered data, therefore meeting the requirements of research ethics and the regulation of ethics.

I collected information from participants via interviews and focus groups. My study was submitted to Royal Roads University for an ethics review (RRU, 2004, p. 1). I also submitted my study proposal to my sponsoring organization, North Island Employment Foundations for review and approval. A presentation was given to the Homalco Nation outlining my study, and an executive summary submitted, with my resume, for council approval. Homalco Nation approved my study and provided a letter outlining their support to work with Homalco youth. This letter was forwarded to Royal Roads Ethics Department prior to beginning this project.

Royal Roads University Research Policy (2004) includes the eight ethical principles of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2002) which were adhered to in this research project.

1. Respect for Human Dignity: All participants involved in this project were treated with dignity and respect. The interests of participants were forefront in my research and I ensured bodily, psychological and cultural integrity was paramount. Each participant's contribution and opinion was respected and reported accurately.

2. Respect for Free and Informed Consent: Consent forms for participation were developed which included the opportunity for voluntary withdrawal. An information sheet was also developed including an "invitation to participate in a study, an outline of the research purpose, the identity of the researcher, the research procedures, the length of the participation, and indication of how the research findings will be used and additional pertinent information where relevant" (RRU, 2004, p. 11), informing potential participants about the project

details. I then provided a written outline and offered informational sessions to potential participants. As Glesne (1999) notes that "ethical codes certainly guide your behavior, but the degree to which your research is ethical depends on your continual communication and interaction with research participants throughout the study" (p. 129). Keeping this in mind, I consistently provided information to my sponsor, Homalco Nation, and participants throughout the research project.

3. Respect for Vulnerable Persons: No children, institutionalized persons or others who are vulnerable were involved in this research project.

4. Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality: Confidentiality and privacy guidelines were incorporated into the participant consent forms outlining strict anonymity of the participants. Special care was taken prior to commencement of the focus group to outline confidentiality and privacy of the discussion within the group format.

5. Respect for Justice and Inclusiveness: Methods used in this research project were fair and equitable. Informational sessions on my project to potential participants facilitated inclusiveness. The outcomes of this research project will be available to all stakeholders, participants and other interested parties.

6. Balancing Harms and Benefits: There was a favorable harms-benefit balance in this study as "foreseeable harms should not outweigh anticipated benefits" (Tri-Council Policy Statement, 1998 (with 2000, 2002 updates p. i.6). The recommendations of this research project have the potential to create long lasting benefits to the organization, Homalco Nation and participants. Sensitive personal issues did not arise from my research questions.

7. Minimizing Harm: This study involved a small number of participants. No undue risk or harm was involved. Homalco provided an internal review of my research project to determine community "harm" implications, and approved my research study

8. Maximizing Benefit: This research project was an opportunity to evaluate Homalco youth career decision making needs, and make recommendations for development of effective tools to support their transition into employment. This project was a first step for community wide benefit, beginning the discussion for implementing a local strategy that benefits Homalco youth's success for employment.

Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy (2004) addresses research working involving Aboriginal peoples. This policy states that researchers should consider the interest of the Aboriginal group when the research describes or analyzes the group, when subjects speak on behalf of an Aboriginal group, when leaders of a group identify potential subject, and when information or property belonging to a group as whole is researched. This research study involved Homalco, was approved by Homalco and, at the forefront, respected and valued Homalco's support and guidance. This project adhered to the seven principles cited in the Integrity and Misconduct in Research and Scholarship Policy (RRU, 2000, p. 1) ensuring the integrity of the research.

Researcher Bias

It was important to be aware of my own bias during the research phase of this project. I believe in holistic models for effective career decisions, especially for First Nations youth. It was essential in the question development phase this bias did not come

through, and I also took steps in the focus group and interviews to be the facilitator but did not partake in discussions or share my views. I assumed that there could be enhancements to current career decision making models North Island Employment is utilizing. I also assumed that there could be "tailor" made short workshops that could be effective, but the research gathered demonstrated a much larger need, with a more detailed and longer program than I originally anticipated. I relied heavily on my research log, critical friends and my faculty advisor to gain clarity in the research findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this research project was to investigate what career "decision

making" strategies can positively impact employment opportunities for Homalco First

Nations youth seeking assistance through North Island Employment. This chapter

outlines the study's findings from data gathered from one focus group with Homalco

youth and three one to one interviews with professionals.

Data gathered from professionals is presented first and data gathered from the

Homalco youth is presented second. Data was gathered based on the questions asked

during the one to one interviews (see Appendix F) and focus group questions (see

Appendix G) with Homalco youth. This chapter also contains study conclusions which

are based on the one to one interview and focus group data as well as a summary of the

scope and limitations of the research.

Study Findings

One-to-One Interview Findings

Six clear themes emerged from the data collected. Interviewees all made the

comment that First Nations youth often require an innovative approach and additional

supports for successful career planning. The six themes which emerged from the one-to-

one interviews included: 1) Participant Considerations 2) Needs Assessment 3) Facilitator

Characteristics 4) Program Values and Beliefs 5) Recommended Program Components

and 6) Goal Setting. The aliases "Forest", "Sunflower", and "Dragonfly" were selected

by interviewees.

Participant Considerations

Each interviewee noted that three main factors needed to be considered in

designing and delivering a First Nations youth career decision making program. These

three participant considerations included: transportation, prior academic experiences and

life/essential skills.

Transportation

Each interviewee made mention of the lack of public transportation in the area

and its negative impact on youth's ability to follow through with career planning steps.

Interviewees noted that lack of transportation for youth to get to and from the program

and to conduct career research with schools, employers, and work experience was a

major consideration for this target population. Homalco is located ten kilometers from the

city of Campbell River and transit runs twice a day on the school day schedule. Forest

noted:

> Transportation is huge, especially living in a small community like ours, where
>
> you could get a job anywhere from the north end of Campbell River to Black
>
> Creek and we don't have a transit system that runs once an hour. These kids not
>
> only don't have their driver's license but the money that is required to get them,
>
> or adults to drive them everywhere. It makes work experience and getting a job
>
> tough.

Providing access to transportation or money for bus fare appeared to be an important

factor for youth success. When asked what was effective in the work program,

Sunflower, a coordinator, noted "I think one of the most important factors is being able to

go fetch them and get them where they need to go".

Prior Academic Experiences

Each interview made the point that the majority of First Nations youth accessing career planning programs or workshops have had primarily negative experiences associated with formal educational systems. Most youth participants didn't succeed in the standardized academic environment, and a career planning program designed on "classroom" work resembling school experiences would not be effective for this target population. Dragonfly noted:

> I do find a lot of the youth have very low literacy and low academics. Most of the reasons they were in the youth project is because they could not complete the regular school system. They could not match their personality or be slotted in with everyone else; they were not looked at as individual personalities.

Interviewees stressed that standardized learning, as in traditional classroom settings, actually set many youth participants backward in learning. They noted that innovative learning approaches must be incorporated and the program delivery should not resemble a standardized "classroom" or involve too much academic school work. Interviewees emphasized that regular school systems grouped people together, the same books are used, the same time lines are incorporated and all participants must act the same. As Dragonfly stated:

> Rebellion happens when youth are grouped together in classroom settings. This is the book, you are the people and it doesn't work for everyone. When they come to see us, they are in rebel mode; that's why we cannot be an authoritarian to their life.

Essential/Life Skills

Each interviewee stated many youth involved in career/job planning programs lack sufficient life skills. It was noted that a majority of youth accessing career planning programs first needed to learn and practice essential life skills prior to beginning career exploration. As Forest observed, "I think certainly there needs to be a focus on basic life skills, communication and other essential skills that encompass not just the world of work, but the whole lifestyle, because ultimately they go hand in hand".

Needs Assessment

Within the theme of Needs Assessment, two sub themes emerged from the research data: 1) participant identified needs and 2) program intake and assessment needs.

Participant Needs Identified

Each interviewee stressed that upon entry into a youth career program, youth on the whole did not identify or know what their immediate career or program needs were. Forest noted, "It's actually the rarity to meet a youth who comes to me knowing what they want to do or what they want". The point was made in all the interviews that as youth move through the career research and program process, they become more aware of their career and personal needs and develop plans of action. Dragonfly stated:

> As you go through the career development process and people start to become aware of what their options are, that [options] wasn't the intent when they got started, but as you start opening up the book to show them what is real the wages and skills… different kinds of jobs they can do, opening up possibilities, then they start recognizing their needs, then it becomes real.

Allowing the youth needs to emerge through the program process, allowing for program flexibility and letting participants discover their own needs appears paramount for program and youth success.

Program Intake and Assessment Needs

Interviewees further noted that it is necessary to complete a thorough and in depth intake and assessment at the onset of the program. The program must be designed around the participants' needs, and there must be flexibility in planning and curriculum development for each program component, activity and participant. This demands a very flexible timeline, requires an innovative program curriculum and consumes a considerable amount of time. However, all interviewees commented that the curriculum must be designed and adapted for participants; this flexibility in program delivery and design overcomes the past experience of "standardized academic" experiences noted previously. With regard to participant needs, Forest noted, "It is important to look and do as much assessment work as you can: learning styles, self assessments…are they [youth] mechanically inclined? And determine how they learn best, and figure out a way to teach the way they learn".

Dragonfly shared a successful experience of designing and teaching around individual needs, not group needs:

> We had a student, 15 years old who couldn't make it in the regular school system, very high strung, short attention span. We weren't sure he could stay in the program, but we figured a way to tap into his personality. We allowed him to do things so he could be busy, but he would be listening at the same time, and he mellowed out, calmed own and he actually started to absorb things and take things

very seriously. In a five week period, it was amazing the maturity level that this young man developed in a short time. He got respect, he knew he was valued, and he was taught how he learned best. He got a part time job after; it was amazing to see, and he got there, when everyone else including him had given up on him.

Facilitator Characteristics

Common core facilitator characteristics were also mentioned by each interviewee. Each interviewee mentioned that youth and Aboriginal participants responded positively to common facilitator skill sets and personality characteristics including: creation of a safe environment, development of a sense of trust by being non-judgmental and listening, being real and telling it like it is, and being relaxed and flexible in attitude and program delivery.

Creating a Safe Environment

All interviewees mentioned that, for program and youth to be successful it was essential to create a safe and secure learning environment; without this, self exploration was hindered. Each interviewee noted that establishing group ground rules, individual learning contracts, and developing agreed upon expectations where individual rights and responsibilities were respected developed a solid foundation for learning. Dragonfly shared an observation about the power of effective facilitation, explaining:

> It was the first time in their life someone cared about them. Even if they didn't want to be there, someone was there for them for the first time. They had a safe environment to explore who they really were as a person.

Developing Trust

Interviewees identified that trust with youth was established by example and that it was imperative to be an active listener, non judgmental and non authoritative in facilitating approaches. It was noted that interviewees had to "prove" themselves to youth and establish their credibility, as many youth did not trust teachers, facilitators, or people in positions of authority. Each interviewee shared that a majority of youth accessing career planning programs have experienced adults telling them what to do, and this was not necessarily a positive experience for youth, just another thing they were supposed to do. As Forest stated:

> If youth don't trust you, they aren't going to follow through. To build trust you have to be very non-judgmental, let them know you are there, to listen not shut down their ideas like everyone else has previously. It is not my job to say you can't do it; it is my job to give options and outline the steps for research and let them do the research and determine then if it is right for them.

Being Real

Interviewees noted that "being real" was an integral characteristic of facilitator success in establishing positive relationships with youth. Interviewees defined "being real" as telling it like it is, dealing with issues as they came up, being flexible and relaxed, being a coach, not a teacher and having fun and a sense of humor. Dragonfly remarked:

> Be funny, be real natural and let them do the work. Get them to be interactive, don't be a lecturer, be the coach, present the questions, and let them train each other at their level, instead of you being the authoritarian person up front. The

information gets dry. You need to be eclectic, be in tune with everyone, and catch things on the spot so nothing can get heated up too quickly. Your group can deteriorate very fast if you are not paying attention.

Dealing with conflict directly and supportively challenging self-limiting beliefs in youth as well as being open to surprises was also noted by two of the interviewees. Challenging self limiting beliefs and not blaming is key in working with youth. It was noted that instead of using a "Why do you do this? Why aren't you doing this" approach in dealing with youth, a more open-ended, supportive, challenging communication style is needed. Sunflower noted:

> I don't let them have an easy way out. They can't just put themselves down or think that they are stupid. There is always a reason why you don't understand something; there is always a reason why you are where you are; nothing just happens because you are a failure. It is because there is a reason, and I don't let them wuss out with that either. If you say you're no good in school, I'm afraid that isn't good enough... lets find out how you're good in school then. There has got to be a way...we've just got to find it.

Each interviewees mentioned that being open to all possibilities was needed; each stressed that laying judgments at the door, and believing in youth potential were also key components of a good facilitator. Sunflower insisted, "You may not know what greatness is in somebody, so don't push them aside or ignore them because you think they won't do well. You could be surprised and that is the best part".

Being Relaxed and Flexible

All three interviewees stated that a relaxed and flexible attitude from the facilitator was positive for the development of facilitator and youth relationship building. Being flexible and relaxed did not mean that expectations, guidelines or consequences were non existent. It only meant that the relationship and program design were flexible in nature, that the facilitator had an understanding of youth culture, and fun was incorporated into the program delivery. As Forest explained:

> I think being laid back and having a sense of understanding where youth are at is essential. We were all young once…they get drunk and they show up late for work…is it frustrating, Yeah. Did we do it? Probably. It is important to give them concrete steps, instead of being hard nosed with them, be more supportive and say, 'I put this in your hands'. What they give you, you give back double… my role is not to be an officer, but to give options. What they give, I give back, and they can depend on that. They know that; that is what works.

According to all of the interviewees, having fun, relating to youth, developing personal relationships, and getting to know the youth participants as individuals were all essential facilitator tasks. Sunflower remarked, "Your job should be socializing in a sense. If you really want to create change, you have to know people, especially working in an Aboriginal community".

Program Core Values and Beliefs

Each interviewee noted that a successful career planning program must encompass two foundational values and beliefs. These core values and beliefs included

participant accountability and flexibility in program design and delivery. These should be lived and role modeled throughout the duration of the program.

Participant Accountability

Each interviewee stressed the need for participant responsibility and accountability in the program. All interviewees outlined the need for clear and realistic expectations and stressed that it was imperative in the program design to develop curriculum that encouraged participants to take ownership of the work and learning, and to clearly implement the structure, boundaries, consequences and expectations at the beginning of the program, continually enforcing this throughout the program delivery. It was also noted by all interviewees, that in many cases, this is the first time youth participants have been expected to take responsibility for their learning and actions, and the ability to fully experience the rewards and consequences of their actions. As Dragonfly noted, "You have to have rules...you have to have the boundaries. They [the youth] need to know this; it is how they gain and get respect and it shows you do care, that someone actually does care when you [a youth] are late".

The process of developing clear structures, outlining expectations and communicating responsibilities can be enhanced by using experiential learning exercises that reinforce accountability. Dragonfly explained, "It is not about us [facilitators] anymore; it is strictly about them [youth]. You did this. What do you think of that? It's huge and there is no turning back from that. They [the youth] will never be the same people and it is very rewarding".

Forest eloquently stated, "You have to teach them ownership, self awareness, make them responsible for their own path, but be there should they need you". It became

clear that all three interviewees believed that teaching accountability, letting youth make decisions, and helping youth to make choices with support were factors paramount to youth success.

Program Flexibility

Although all interviewees stressed that structure, outlines and expectations were necessary, each reflected that a core value for success was also program flexibility. The program should be designed around participants' needs and the curriculum should be adaptable, changeable and flexible. Depending on the group and the needs at one given time, what was "scheduled" for that particular day did not necessarily happen and sometimes learning came from unexpected places. Although clarity and organization are important, program flexibility is a must, and a rigid style of program would be detrimental to this population. According to Dragonfly, "Sometimes you just have to stop everything and deal with what is happening. Then they know it is about them, not our agenda, not the calendar on the wall. It is about them and constantly making them [youth] look in the reflection of who they are as people".

Another area of agreement was that of program flexibility including the freedom to demonstrate individual learning and discovery in the way individuals learn best. Comparing, teaching the same to each individual and having only one "way" of teaching were approaches to be avoided at all costs. Sunflower noted it really is about "putting them in a place where they can build their self esteem instead of feeling they aren't doing well and comparing themselves to someone else. It is about paying attention to what their needs are".

Recommended Program Components

Each interviewee stated there were five main components to incorporate when developing a career planning workshop and assisting Aboriginal youth with career research. These five components included 1) Work Experience 2) Mentoring 3) Connection to Community 4) Essential Life Skills and 5) Experiential Learning Opportunities.

Work Experience

Each interviewee stressed the need for "hands on" experience to assist youth with career research. There was general consensus among the interviewees that book work and classroom settings did not provide the in-depth experience youth required to really to understand what was involved in certain careers. There was also stated, many times, the reality of a job or career is very different than the "idea" that youth have about the occupation. Career research should involve youth working in a job they are interested in. This experience is invaluable and provides real, relevant information that youth need to make good career choices. Dragonfly observed that "they [the youth] need to see things...they need to touch things...they need to hear it... they have to use their senses to know what it is really like". Interviewees stressed work experience is one of the best components for conducting career research. Forest noted that "there are huge misconceptions - a real lack of actual career exploration when doing career planning. It is really important to know what the whole job entails, instead of just the numbers that you see on a piece of paper; you know, the REAL stuff. You get that from the Industry".

Mentorship

Interviewees concurred that a career planning program needed to provide positive role models and provide mentorship, and that many youth who access job/career planning programs have not experienced many positive role models. There was a general consensus that guiding and providing mentoring role models enhanced youth success. It is imperative and vital to provide positive examples as many Aboriginal youth have been exposed to negativity and dysfunction in their home lives. Sunflower shared:

> It is like you have to fill in gaps for this generation and hope that the next
>
> generation will assume it and teach it. No one taught or showed so many of these
>
> kids how functional people live; all they have been exposed to is dysfunction.
>
> They need role models and people to teach them and show them the way

Interviewees voiced that it was especially important to provide Aboriginal role models and develop community partnership for mentorship. Therefore, the facilitator must provide role modeling and mentorship, but more mentors were also needed to enhance youth success. Forest noted that "one of [her] biggest disappointments with Aboriginal programming is the lack of mentors for artistic expression. It is a passion for many dancing, carving - and yet there are not mentorships available".

Connection to Community

Another key point of alignment was the reality that many youth are disconnected from their geographic community. First Nations youth are oftentimes connected to their First Nations community, but have limited or negative experiences with the non native community at large. It was stressed that a successful career planning program connected

First Nations youth to their home communities as well as the outside "community" in order to forge relationships and allow for discovery of options. As Sunflower observed:

> You can't stay isolated. Employers and schools just don't stay at Homalco. You need to take them [the youth] to different places, connect them with other people. You have to get off the reserve and meet new people and really stretch their horizons; it is really unlimited opportunities, but connecting to the community is essential.

Interviewees noted that the First Nations community itself has a large part to play in program and youth success. Connecting to the larger community and also the First Nations community was seen as a priority by the interviewees. Sunflower shared, "It is hard to describe the visiting, the sharing, the walk out the door, and to be talked to by your people". Building on First Nations community strengths and forging relationships with the community at large and the First Nations community was seen as a priority. Therefore, it is essential to provide both.

Essential/Life Skills

Each interviewee also stressed the need for essential life skills training. Areas such as self esteem, self concept, communication, decision making, teamwork, employee rights, handling conflicts, problem solving and job search skills were noted. Interviewees stated that these essential skills were necessary prior to work experience or effective career planning. Dragonfly mused, "You have to know yourself before you know what you want". There was consensus that effective career decision making and career research required these foundational skills, and it was paramount to assist youth to develop them for successful transition to employment. From Sunflower's perspective,

"When you look at the stuff we're dealing with, in terms of social issues, residential schools and our problems, people just don't understand how the hell to live in this world". Each interviewee shared that it is the facilitator's responsibility to demonstrate, teach, share and support youth learning these essential skills.

Experiential Learning Opportunities

"Hands on", experiential and visual learning tools and experiences were identified as crucial elements in enhancing youth's ability to learn and develop. This enabled youth to make real the lessons in the career programs. Each interviewee stated that lecturing and traditional teaching methods encompassing only lecturing and reading did not effectively work for youth accessing these programs. Role playing, visual illustrations, stories and relevant examples, hands on projects, and field trips were all recommended. Dragonfly stated, "I find that youth are visual learners: using a buddy system, role playing, experiential, hands on learning, visual aids are huge and I don't think they [youth] can get enough of that. That is what works with youth". Forest made a similar point, stating, "With youth I find you can preach and preach as much as you want, but I find that examples, stories as much visuals as you can get really helps learn, hard core examples, they can relate to those".

Goal Setting

The importance of developing realistic, obtainable and clear goals emerged several times from the interviewees. Development of youth goals with clear action steps for success with continual review throughout the program was recommended. It was suggested that youth participant goals should be individualized, and the goals established in the program by the participants and facilitator should be centered on the youth needs.

Three core factors in successful goal setting included: Action Planning, Incentives and

Celebration.

Action Planning

Each interviewee suggested that goal setting for youth required a very supportive,

realistic and step by step approach for success. It was noted that creating large lofty goals

were actually inhibitors for youth success. Interviewees described the need for a step-by-

step, supportive goal setting approach that fosters one step building off the next with

short term goals being achieved. Forest suggested, "Set up a plan where there are realistic

and small successes as opposed to a large goal. Set up small goals where they are going

to have little successes. This builds confidence and the ability to set more goals".

Interviewees gave examples stating a realistic goal could be to research one career idea,

not make a career decision. Each step or goal is then puzzled together to make a decision

at a later date.

Incentives

Each interview stated that monetary incentives also assisted youth in completing

programs. Each program that the interviewees facilitated for youth had monetary

incentives including pay cheques for work experiences and training allowances for

program attendance. Although it was noted this was not the only reason youth succeed in

career programs, it would be amiss not to mention how powerful this incentive appeared

for youth completion and success. From Forest's point of view:

> I think cash incentives are huge. Telling youth that if you do a really job you are
>
> going to get a good reference is like blowing smoke at them. Some may get that

but saying you participate, you do a good job, you get paid, you get a paycheque-
that is a huge motivation factor.

It was noted that as youth participated in the program, they became used to receiving a pay cheque, and this "real" incentive motivated them to continue to locate and find employment after the program ended to ensure they earned their income.

Celebration

Celebrating small successes and completion of steps was a common theme throughout the interviews. Community acknowledgement for individual completion of small goals was mentioned as necessary as well as ongoing components to assist youth to continue with their plans. It was noted that many youth had not been recognized for achievements and successes previously and that the celebration of their individual successes was essential and empowering. Sunflower explained:

I like the idea of having a community dinner every few months for youth to celebrate. They get acknowledged from their community. It is important and I think people like to feel proud and know they are making a positive difference. It also provides role models for our community, for the young children and the elders, and community presence shows the community supports youth achievement.

Focus Group Findings

Five themes were gathered from the data from the youth focus group. At the end of the focus group, the youth were asked to "theme" the focus group discussion and come to agreement on the "themes" for career planning for First Nations youth based on their experiences, and insights. These five themes included 1) Identified Barriers 2) Current

Career Knowledge 3) Facilitator Characteristics 4) Recommended Program Components

and 5) First Nations Community Factors. Aliases were identified by the youth. Their

chosen names, Water, Sky, Star and Hurricane will be used for referencing purposes.

Identified Barriers

The youth group identified three key barriers they faced in relation to career and

job planning. These included lack of stability, lack of transportation, and lack of life

skills.

Stability

Each participant agreed that an unstable home life negatively influenced their

ability to create plans, and to move forward with career planning and secure employment.

Participants shared that moving from place to place was common, and that alcoholism

and lack of safety in their home environments created barriers to self-sufficiency.

Planning for the future was last on the agenda when the immediate need was to survive.

Participants agreed that they carry over "survivor" mentality from their childhoods, and

plan very little for their future. Sky stated, "Stability would have really helped me. I

moved from place to place as a child, grew up in foster homes, and different families. If I

had sober parents, I think things would be a lot different for me today".

Transportation

Although the youngest participant in the group was 19, not one of the four

participants had a driver's license. Homalco is ten kilometers from the city of Campbell

River; public transit to Homalco is accessible two times per day, on a school schedule.

There was agreement that a large number of community members did not have drivers'

licenses and that limited access to transportation for work or school purposes negatively

affected career options. When asked what would assist participants, Water stated, "Being able to get to your work place, school or program. I can't get there if it is not on reserve". This focus group finding aligned with what interview participants had identified as a barrier for employment.

Life skills

There was agreement that life skills' training was also needed. Each participant stated that if life skills training were offered at Homalco they would attend. There was general agreement that essential life skills were not taught in their home environment and that they needed to learn how to successfully manage their lives prior to planning a career. As Sky said:

> I have to take care of myself first. I have to know that things in my house will be in order and are taken care of in a healthy way. That is the important thing. We have to see past our noses, instead of living in all this dysfunction, but we don't see it and we don't realize it.

Current Career Knowledge

The youth concurred that they had limited career knowledge. They stated that they learned about jobs from family members who may have been working, and two participants mentioned they took some career planning classes in High School (College and Career Preparation). When asked about what they learned in career planning classes or from family members a prevalent theme of "I can't remember anything" became apparent. Sky stressed:

Career exploration means nothing to me. If you grew up on reserve, that's all you

know and you just want a job in the band office. You don't realize there is a life

outside of the reserve. I am just starting to think about it now.

There was agreement from the two participants who participated in College and

Career Preparation (CAP) classes in High School that what they remember from these

classes was the work experience component. When asked about classroom work in career

planning and what was learned. Hurricane stated, "I can't remember anything. I don't

think I learned anything about jobs" and asked for what was taught Hurricane replied, "I

think it was mostly about equations and some projects. I don't remember". The youth

agreed that the career planning knowledge they retained from their high school

experiences came from the work experience component parts of CAP. There was

agreement that this was beneficial and positive for participants and provided some good

foundation skills. One participant said, "I worked in a clothing store, I liked talking to

people and I got clothes at a discount. It was good background for me".

It was apparent that the youth lacked foundational career research knowledge, but

positive experiences and learning had come from hands on "work experience"

components. There was also agreement that career planning and research was needed, as

each youth had limited knowledge about career opportunities, training opportunities and

trends for employment. Sky explained, "I think giving job descriptions, salary

information instead of just hearing about jobs, I wouldn't mind doing some career

research to find out real facts".

Facilitator Characteristics

There was concurrence from the youth participants that facilitators played an integral role in making learning relevant. There was also agreement that lecturing, book work and group classes did not meet their learning needs in previous experiences and certain core characteristics in a facilitator made learning enjoyable and relevant for youth. These core characteristics included: 1) Helping and Caring Attitude 2) Aboriginal Facilitators 3) Outside Facilitators for some components.

Helpful and Caring Attitude

Youth participants shared that they know when teachers, facilitators or professionals are simply going through the motions. Participants agreed that learning was enhanced for them when they had developed a relationship with the facilitators and they felt that the person did really care for them. Providing additional supports, attempting to get to know the youth as a person and developing a personal relationship with the facilitator was mentioned as key motivators for youth. Hurricane stated, "I really have worked hard in this program. I know someone cares how I do and I know they believe me. I don't want to let them down; she helps me a lot".

Aboriginal Facilitators

Three of the four youth participants agreed they would like to have more Aboriginal facilitators working with them. They noted that it was hard for non Aboriginals to understand what living on a reserve was like; they agreed that providing Aboriginal Facilitators would be beneficial and Aboriginal facilitators would understand their circumstances. Sky said:

There is this one lady in Sliammon. She explained we have to get a healthy

community, encouragement and positive thinking happening. She described

communities like a bucket of crabs; all the crabs are trying to get out but everyone

just keeps throwing them back in and that hits the nail right on the head.

It must be noted that one participant stated that having an Aboriginal or Non

Aboriginal facilitator was unimportant to them and this participant did not have a

preference either way.

Outside Facilitators

Although youth participants agreed that having community facilitators and

Aboriginal facilitators could be beneficial to their learning, they also established that

having a person outside their community work on life skills components was

recommended. Although community members and facilitators would be welcome, it was

noted for safety and confidentiality purposes this component would be more beneficial

for opening up without a community facilitator. Water stated, "I wouldn't feel

comfortable talking about life skills with someone from my community". Hurricane made

statements regarding the safety and confidentiality aspects of an outside resource such as,

"Everyone knows everybody's character defects. It is hard to respect someone; you never

know if someone is full of shit or something".

Program Curriculum Considerations

The youth participants agreed that five components were recommended for

program design and delivery; this was based on previous experiences and on the needs of

the focus group in relation to career planning. These five components included: 1)

Structure 2) Work Experience 3) Life skills 4) Mentors and Role Models and 5) Fun.

Structure

The need for clear guidelines, expectations and structure for programs were clear in the data. Agreement from participants on the importance of knowing what to expect, what was going to happen and the rationale and agreement of all participants and program staff was paramount. Many examples of experiences that turned negative because of lack of guidelines were shared. Sky expressed frustration when "staff and us didn't sit down and talk…as far as group structure, plans, layouts and timelines, we are so far behind and it looks bad on us, bad on our band and bad on the instructors". Forging ahead without these foundational pieces can result in participants feeling discouraged about progress and subsequently impacting self confidence. Sky further elaborated that "lack of progress and learning only about forty percent of what we can learn leaves me pretty depressed".

Work Experience

Work experience appeared as the main factor in helping the youth participants learn about different careers. It was noted that many participants did not have favorable experiences in the school settings and their most rewarding experiences in relation to learning were through work experience in high school, work experience in career planning programs and the ability to learn "hands on". There was agreement that learning in a classroom setting was not as effective as working in the field, and the majority of increased self confidence in the world of work came from experiencing and working in a variety of programs. Water shared a story of learning on the job, stating, "I learned a lot about the job and what is required. It makes me feel pretty damn good I'd say. It was working with my hands, doing stuff, not in a classroom".

Life Skills

Youth participants identified a lack of life skills to effectively manage themselves and make good decisions. There was agreement that lack of life skills impacted both their employability and schooling. There was conformity noting that employment was not strictly about work related matters, but also encompassed a variety of life skills. As Hurricane observed, "Dealing with people is hard. It wasn't the work that was hard; it was dealing with people". Participants also agreed that their lack of life skills had impacted on previous work and school experiences. Participants agreed that life skills' training was important for them as youth, but the community itself could benefit from this type of training. Sky said, "I think our little community definitely needs life skills, simple little daily things about living that we totally lack...things we weren't shown, parenting, assertiveness, you know it's a wide range of things". All four participants agreed that if this type of training were offered, they would attend. There was agreement from participants that life skills training should be first, then career planning and work experience. Star noted, "I need to know what I am, what I want... I feel I can't do anything...I've got to figure that out first, who I am, then maybe I can figure out what I want".

Mentors and Role Models

There appeared to be a lack of First Nations role models available for the youth participants. Participants agreed that it was difficult to recognize who the role models were in their lives. Participants stated that they had limited opportunities from role models or mentors in their previous experiences, or that many experiences were negative and demonstrated what not to do instead of demonstrating how to succeed. Only two of

the participants could recall a role model; both were family members, one an aunt and the other a grandfather who did provide examples of work ethic and taught them employment skills. Sky noted, "I got my work ethic from my grandfather. He was a really hard worker, I am thankful for that... it kind of molded me into who I am today and what I know today".

Make Learning Fun

The youth participants agreed that the most valuable learning opportunities they had experienced were fun in nature. Most of the examples given were work experience components where they were learning new skills, and where they enjoyed the work. Participants identified working as a team, joking around and experiencing something they were interested in as key components of having fun. The level of enjoyment and fun with the experience seemed to impact on the learning opportunity. The more fun, the more learning happened. Star stated, "The best learning experience I had was a diving experience. It was fun, fun, fun - seeing lots of stuff. Having fun is important. This is something I would like for a career".

Community Factors

The role of community was an integral theme of discussion, both positive factors and negative factors in career/employment programming. There was agreement that sometimes community members felt that the First Nations community should do more and solve the problems in the community, but participants agreed this was not healthy. Hurricane stated, "Everyone is sort of dependent on the band, but they don't have to be". There was agreement that the community had a large role to play in assisting youth with career planning, and Homalco was providing more programs and services to assist in

career and work planning. Sky noted, "I think it is good now with council and chief, they are very set on getting people back to school and taking up trades, and you never really heard that before". Participants agreed that with programming and discussions and priority on employment issues, more opportunities would be open and available to them.

<div align="center">Study Conclusions</div>

Study conclusions are a result of the review of literature on Labour Market Information, Career Decision Making Models and Cultural and Community Roles in Career Choices, combined with the research findings from the interviews and youth focus group. Four conclusions from the research study are outlined in the following pages. These conclusions include 1) The need for career planning for Aboriginal youth 2) Use of holistic career decision making models 3) A community career decision making approach and 4) Developing partnerships.

<div align="center">*Need for Career Planning*</div>

Research findings from the career practitioners and Homalco youth identified that a majority of Aboriginal youth do not have career planning knowledge. Occupational knowledge and the steps involved in making good career choices must be taught to youth. Although there appeared to be some prior career planning taught in High School, two of the four youth participants did not have access to this course. Of the two who did take college and career prep in High School, the only "learning" they recalled from this course is the work experience component of the program. The focus group findings also indicated that limited career knowledge was given from personal relationships or role models. Youth participants agreed that they did not have the information, or know where to access career information describing job profiles, wages, training opportunities, and

labour market information. The data from the youth participants indicated they were not aware of local service agencies that provided assistance with career planning and access to relevant information on occupational and career planning. Career practitioners who have experience with youth in career planning also reiterated that the majority of youth were not aware of their career needs, and had very little to no career knowledge, or the programs and services in the community that could provide assistance in developing these skills and researching the information needed to make informed career decisions.

These research findings are supported by the literature from the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report* (INAC, 1996) that stated a large percentage of Aboriginals over the age of fifteen identified lack of job information as a barrier to employment, and the Aboriginal Human Resource Development (2002*) Connecting the Dots* study that found:

> Young people do not seem to know how to "connect the dots"... they need to know how to progress from successful formative education, to informed career choice, to admission to academic programs or trade schools, to entry into the job market, to fulfilling, satisfying occupations and careers (¶ 11).

Research from the literature and from the interview and focus group findings concur that career decision making and career planning knowledge is minimal for Aboriginal youth, and that education is needed in this area for enhanced successful Aboriginal employment entry.

Holistic Career Planning

The literature, the youth focus group and interview findings indicated that a career decision making model could not stand alone. There were recommendations that for

enhanced successfulness, career decision making should be one component of an integrated program, which encompassed life skills and employment skills. This finding was echoed numerous times in the youth focus group; participants stated they needed to learn about themselves, they had to get their lives in order prior to making and researching possible career choices. There was also agreement that work life and home life impacted each other. As Water noted, "It's not just about work; it's about dealing with people too, and being able to get there [to work] everyday and be dependable and such".

One to one interviews also stressed the importance of a holistic and integrated model of program delivery. Professionals stated that a career program for youth needed to have essential life skills and that a supportive approach in teaching these skills was necessary. Forest eloquently stated, "There needs to be a focus on basic life skills... it is important when teaching essential skills to encompass the world of work, but the whole life style because, ultimately, they go hand in hand". Literature supports these research findings. Magnusson (1995), Peavy (1995) and Poonwassie (1995) all concurred that a successful career planning program must include key elements that involve life and essential skills including self esteem, self concept, personal healing and self exploration. The Conference Board of Canada (2000) Employability skills 2000+ echoes the need for communication, problem solving, positive attitudes and behaviors, adaptability, working with others, and science, technology and mathematics skills.

It is noted that a program specifically teaching steps in career planning and career decision making would not necessarily meet the full needs of local First Nations youth. It is only one component of a program for self discovery.

Community Approach

Research findings and the Literature Review concluded that an effective career

decision making program must involve the community. Community in this context does

not only indicate the Homalco community, but also encompasses the larger community to

include Campbell River. It was evident that youth found that Homalco's current

involvement and priority for jobs positively impacted youth's ability to access relevant

career supports, and also provided support and motivation to work towards enhanced

employment and career planning. This was indicated by the youth focus group stating

that the administration of Homalco was making employment a priority for the community

and that this was presenting opportunities for community members, especially youth.

Employment opportunities and career programs were being offered at Homalco and this

provided a foundational step for many of the participants involved in this study.

Literature from McCormick and Amundson (1997), Peavy (1995), Poonwaisse

(1995) and the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report* (INAC, 1996) also

identified the need for First Nations community involvement. Several themes emerged in

this research, specifically stressing personal change within the framework of

communities and the pressing need for community culturally relevant programs. Based

on participant responses it appears that youth believe Homalco is supporting employment

and training, and this stance is assisting youth to feel empowered to access community

programs for employment.

The youth also mentioned the need to connect to the larger community of

Campbell River, as did the interviewees, although many barriers were indicated

(transportation, lack of specific training necessary for local jobs to name a few). There

was agreement from both youth participants and professional participants that it was necessary to provide inclusiveness and access to all community resources and programs including Homalco and Campbell River resources. Sunflower stated:

> You can't stay isolated. Employers don't do all the hiring at Homalco. You have to take them [the youth] to places like NIEFS, to bring them out to do different things, to connect with other people and meet new people and really stretch your horizons.

Youth participants identified the desire to work with Homalco and outside resources in career planning. There was an indication that, especially for life skills training, outside resources would be preferred, and those accessing community employment agencies like NIEFS would be extremely beneficial.

Developing Partnerships/Sharing of Resources

It was noted that there appears to be fragmented resources in the Campbell River area for Aboriginal youth employment services, or, at minimum, a "perceived" fragmentation of services. Youth participants did not know where to access employment assistance services or what information they needed, this lack of necessary knowledge for successful career planning, or awareness of where to access these services were prevalent in the focus group findings. One participant said, "I wouldn't mind doing some career research".

NIEFS has access to relevant career information, including local labour market, training opportunities, local job postings and a vast array of career planning and job search support. Three of the four youth participating in this study had not been to NIEFS or been aware of the programs and services NIEFS offered. Once given a tour and told

about the services, each of the participants accessed NIEFS on their own accord at later

dates for further employment assistance. It must be noted that information available to

youth at Homalco appeared not to be easily accessible to them and at the same time

Homalco employment programs and sponsorship for training supports were not known

by NIEFS career counselors. Sharing of this information and enhancing partnerships

between NIEFS and Homalco could provide a seamless delivery of employment supports

to youth at Homalco and guided supportive steps for youth learning about career

planning. Literature from the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report* (INAC,

1996) supports this conclusion stressing that employment service agencies must forge

connections with Aboriginal and non Aboriginal networks and employers. Poonwassie

(1995) advocates that successful programming rests within Aboriginal communities. The

literature refers to the need to bring Aboriginal and non Aboriginal communities and

supports together to provide the most successful and relevant programming for youth

Scope and Limitations of the Research

A limited sample size of four First Nations youth participants participated in this

study. The youth were from one First Nations community (Homalco), and it is important

to note that, due to the small sample size and target sample from one community, this

study cannot make claim that the findings are indicative of all First Nations youth, or all

individuals living in Homalco.

Three local professionals were interviewed. Although the three staff had extensive

experience in youth career programming, including with First Nations youth, the

interviews were not specifically designed to elicit information solely about First Nations

participants, but youth in general. It also must be noted that two of the professionals

interviewed were from one organization (NIEFS). Therefore, many of the resources and program design for youth programming come from the common core values and beliefs for this organization. Involving another employment agency staff may have changed some of the data findings. All the professionals interviewed were women. In the career development field the majority of employees are women, but a male facilitator may have brought additional insights.

This study was designed to elicit prior experiences of both staff providing employment services to youth, including First Nations youth, and also the employment and career experience of Homalco youth participating in a current employment program sponsored by Homalco. Three of the four participants in the youth focus group were men, and the work program participants were involved in was trades related. A cross section of youth from Homalco could have changed some of the data findings.

The methodology was designed and delivered to gather information about what had worked for youth in career planning and what positive learnings youth experienced. Further research is needed to determine if these conclusions have further implications to additional Homalco youth or other local First Nations youth.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This chapter outlines recommendations for North Island Employment. Although

this research project's goal was to answer what career decision making strategies can

positively impact employment opportunities for Aboriginal youth seeking assistance

through NIEFS, I found the research and Literature Review indicated that career decision

making models cannot stand alone. Participants of the research study and literature

provided evidence that a community and integrated approach was recommended,

encompassing community, work experience, life skills and career decision making. The

participants and literature also supported the notion that, to make effective and relevant

career choices, a holistic approach to career decision making was necessary. The research

findings and recommendations concur with the assertion that community-based action

research is understood as "disciplined inquiry (research) which seeks focused efforts to

improve the quality of people's organizational, community and family lives" (Calhoun as

cited in Stringer, 1999). To meet the needs of Aboriginal youth a much more "systems

thinking" approach is necessary. Senge (1990) elaborates on systems thinking, stating,

"we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system and wonder why our

deepest problems never seem to get solved" (p. 7). This project findings and review of

the literature demonstrated that NIEFS is only one small component addressing

Aboriginal youth employment, and that the design and implementation of career decision

making models for Aboriginal youth is only one strategy. The "system" and stakeholders

must be part of the solution. The recommendations outlined are solely for NIEFS and

center around a systems perspective. The recommendations are drawn from the research

findings and a review of the literature. This chapter outlines recommendations, organizational implications and implications for future research.

Continue to Develop Collaborative Relationships

North Island Employment (NIEFS) has an excellent history of working successfully with local First Nations communities. One key finding from the research was that 75% percent (three of the four participants) had never accessed NIEFS services or been made aware of the programs available to them, specifically job search, career decision making and youth programs. Homalco has recently hired an employment and educational coordinator that works with community members.

Recommendations for Collaborative Relationship Building

1. NIEFS program and services be reviewed with the new employment and educational coordinator on a monthly basis. Program and Service reviews could include: monthly forums, workshops and new programs offered by NIEFS.

2. Identify one NIEFS staff to be a liaison person with Homalco.

3. NIEFS host an information session to employment and educational Coordinators of Campbell River local First Nations communities.

Rationale: Developing this collaborative relation would enable Homalco's employment and educational coordinator and NIEFS staff to share programs and services that are available to assist youth transitioning to educational or employment opportunities. This monthly meeting would also update NIEFS staff on programs and services Homalco is offering to youth in the community and how programs and services from NIEFS and Homalco may be bridged together to meet the needs of youth.

Identifying one liaison person at NIEFS that staff and youth could contact provides a solid connection to "outside" community resources that the findings noted as important.

Hosting an information session for all local First Nations community education and employment coordinators could provide the opportunity to share the available funding options, policies, procedures, referral processes and services that each First Nations community and NIEFS offer which may provide a more easily accessed integrated service delivery model for youth. Senge (1990) states that all events are all connected within the same pattern, and that each has influence on the rest, which may take years to fully play out their effects. Actively involving Homalco participation and sharing of information will intrinsically assist NIEFS to evolve, grow and assist First Nations youth in effectively accessing NIEFS services.

Marketing of Current Youth Programs to First Nations Communities

As of January, 2006, NIEFS is offering a youth program that specifically offers essential life skills training and paid work experience. Participants in the study clearly articulated that work experience and life skills were essential components of effective career decision making and provided relevant hands on learning. Marshall and Wolsak (2003) and Robb (1997) advocated the idea that unless youth find material and experiences relevant, learning is limited, and career decision making for youth should be on career building not career decision making. NIEFS' current marketing includes TV, radio, newspaper and pamphlets and is very effective. It was surprising that youth were not aware of NIEFS services, and it can be assumed that these marketing tools were not being viewed by the research participants.

Recommendations for Marketing

1. Offer an information session on relevant youth programming and services be offered at Homalco.

2. Distribute pamphlets and brochures outlining NIEFS services. These could also be distributed to Homalco for display.

3. Buy marketing space on public transportation systems.

Rationale: Homalco offices have a community bulletin board outlining community services and activities offered at Homalco. NIEFS has been invited to display relevant information on employment services. Pamphlets and brochures outlining NIEFS services could also be brought up to Homalco to display in the office area where most youth congregate throughout the week. An informational session conducted at Homalco may prove beneficial in outlining NIEFS services to Homalco youth. It may be advisable for NIEFS to further research what other marketing strategies NIEFS may incorporate to gain visibility with Homalco youth.

Cross Cultural Staff Training

NIEFS has been proactive in its pursuit of relevant and effective training models for Aboriginals. Employment counselors have been trained in Guiding Circles (McCormick, Amundson &Poehnell, 2002), an Aboriginal guide to finding career paths in 2005, and it is encouraged to continue this pro active approach to make new programs and training available.

Recommendations for Cross Cultural Training

1. Continue staff training and learning in Aboriginal career models to develop and keep NIEFS employment advisors skills current.

2. Incorporate a forum for sharing of NIEFS staff experience working with First

   Nations youth, and clarifying the NIEFS vision for First Nations youth.

   Rationale: Continued practice and training in Aboriginal employment

counseling models as well as actively utilizing them with Aboriginal clients is

encouraged in order to keep NIEFS employment counselors' skills up to date. The

literature supports the notion that community and culturally sensitive models of

career counseling are necessary for Aboriginal clients to fully maximize learning

(Kerka, 2003; McCormick & Amundson, 1997; Peavy, 1995; Poonwassie, 1995).

This recommendation does not imply additional costs or outside trainers to NIEFS;

instead, this can be in-house "training". As Senge (1990) states "…in learning

organizations…people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity,

clarify vision, and improve shared mental models – that is, they are responsible for

learning" (p. 340). Sharing of NIEFS staff experience working with First Nations

youth, and clarifying the vision the organization has working with First Nations youth

has the potential to enhance services.

Develop a Mentorship Service

Both the youth participants and the current literature supported the notion and

importance of a mentorship program. Participants indicated that role models and mentors

were lacking in their lives.

Recommendation for Mentorship Service

1. Conduct an initial inquiry of potential local mentors to determine interest.

2. Develop a list of local Campbell River "Mentors" First Nations youth could be

   paired with.

Rationale: NIEFS has an excellent working relationship with local employers and community members, and is in a position to network and develop a Mentorship Program. This approach may provide community support, and the mentorship could incorporate not only employment direction, but a supportive individual that shares experiences, on both a personal and professional level. Aboriginal youth could be linked with relevant mentors in their areas of interest to support youth exploration and provide guidance.

Develop an Organizational "Vision" of Working with Aboriginal Youth

NIEFS has a strong, dedicated, and proven ability in assisting community members to gain the skills necessary for employment. Programs and services are already designed around community needs. NIEFS also has clear goals, procedures and commitment to working with unemployed individuals in our community. Based on the research, youth and, in particular, "Aboriginal youth" may have differing needs than the majority of NIEFS clients.

Recommendation for Visioning with Aboriginal Youth

1. It is recommended that NIEFS employment assistance department develop an organizational vision for working with First Nations youth.

Rationale: Kouzes and Posner (2002) define a vision as "an ideal and unique image of the future" (p. 95). With a strong First Nations presence in our community and programs and services that are designed and meeting the needs of this target group, it is recommended that these services be expanded. Having a clear organizational vision may provide NIEFS expansion and growth of services to First Nations youth.

Support Other Initiatives in the Community

Homalco Nation is currently working on a variety of employment and training programs for their members. They are developing and applying for funding to create employment programs in house at Homalco and, with the addition of the new employment and educational coordinator in place, there appear to be a number of options for community members.

Recommendation for Supporting other Initiatives

1. NIEFS could offer specialized skills training such as career decision making, job search or additional employment supports that fall within the parameters of NIEFS objectives and services to Homalco.

    Rationale: Participants in the research study identified the importance of the Homalco community and also the Campbell River community. Stringer (1999) advocates that community based action research purpose is intended "to assist people in extending their understanding of their situation and, thus, in resolving problems that confront them" (p. 10). Homalco has and continues to take steps to action, and support from NIEFS could result in enhanced services to Homalco's youth.

Organizational Implications

Many of the recommendations outlined in this section incorporate the necessity of "community" information sharing and building partnerships. Developing an effective working partnership can hold many challenges. Firstly, each community organization has its own goals, agenda and mandate. These issues may not coincide between NIEFS and Homalco and there may be differing interests. It is necessary to clearly articulate what supports and services NIEFS is able to provide; it is equally important that Homalco also

shares this information about their own services. Clearly understanding what each organization can do to support Aboriginal youth will allow for the development of a framework for effective community support and a referral process that can be developed and implemented. Goleman (2002) stresses leaders "must be socially aware...attuned to how others feel... (p.30). Goleman further elaborates that a leader's "attunement also lets a leader sense the shared values and priorities that can guide the group" (p.10). Not only must information be shared between NIEFS and Homalco, a "shared" plan and values for action can be developed.

Prior to forming partnerships, NIEFS must internally address the question of vision and what support it can provide to Homalco and other First Nations communities. This must be clearly outlined. Visioning for services and supports for Aboriginal youth may not be an easy task. NIEFS visioning must encompass management and staff. An organizational vision for Aboriginal youth services cannot be made by management alone or mandated. Senge (1990) eloquently stresses, "when you look carefully, you find that most "visions" are one person's (or one group's) vision imposed on an organization...and at best command compliance" (p. 206).

Training and team learning is essential. If new models of career decision making and services are incorporated into NIEFS services, team learning and training will have to be completed. Senge (1990) states that for team learning to be effective one of the basic conditions necessary for effective dialogue is the suspension of assumptions. Although perhaps not recognized, staff at NIEFS may have assumptions regarding youth and Aboriginal counseling models that are most effective, or a variety of other assumptions. It is the organization's responsibility to bring to attention the need to suspend

assumptions. In this context, suspending assumptions does not imply giving up your

assumptions, but "holding them up for examination" (Senge, 1990, p. 243). A skilled

facilitator may be necessary to facilitate training and bring into the awareness some

individual and organizational assumptions.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) state looking outward for fresh ideas and innovation is

essential. They elaborate and stress that organizations "must stay sensitive to the external

realities, especially in the networked, global world, talk to constituents" (p. 192).

Incorporating ongoing dialogue with Homalco administration and consulting with First

Nations youth and government funding bodies will enhance NIEFS ability to the needs

and priorities of external realities.

Any significant change in an organization triggers two conflicting responses. The

first is to keep things as they were, to replay the past. The second is to ignore the loss and

rush busily into the future. (Bolman and Deal, 2003, p.380). Although these

recommendations are not a significant change in services, they could enhance services for

Aboriginal youth and, therefore, could require more guidance, consultation, sensitivity

training or changes in curriculum design. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge

that NIEFS staff may respond with these conflicting responses. Bolman and Deal (2003)

stress that "people have good reason to resist change. No one likes feeling anxious or

incompetent; changes in routine practice and procedures undermine existing knowledge

and skills and undercut people's ability to perform with confidence and success (p. 373).

It is important to utilize an appreciative inquiry approach to training, visioning and

changes to procedures if necessary. Building on the excellent work NIEFS is currently

doing, community consultation, building on the staff strengths and ideas will result in enhanced, innovative and relevant programming for Homalco youth.

Implications for Future Research

This research involved a small sampling of First Nations youth. A comparison study encompassing First Nations youth in our community could be undertaken. The literature review and research results brought out many unexpected findings including much broader issues that raise a number of questions for further exploration:

1. What is the impact of community decision making models versus individual decision making models? How do these differing models affect the lives of individuals operating under each?

2. What interventions for life skills training would be recommended to assist First Nations youth manage life successfully?

3. What are the perceptions and hiring practices for businesses considering hiring First Nations youth?

4. What strategies might be successful for supporting effective transitions to employment?

5. How do mentorship and role models for First Nations youth affect individual success?

6. What educational opportunities and training are relevant and successful for First Nations youth?

7. What marketing strategies can NIEFS develop to further reach First Nations youth in the Campbell River area?

CHAPTER SIX: LESSONS LEARNED

This project was akin to learning to walk, first taking a few deep breaths and summoning my courage, taking the first few tentative steps, stopping, assessing the lay of the land, stumbling around finding my feet, falling a few times and finding the strength to get back up and start a fresh. This project was about believing in myself, trusting the process, and letting things unfold as they did and as they should. Allowing myself to have a curious mind and being open to the many wondrous surprises that presented themselves was a learning and leadership opportunity for me. This project, ultimately, was about relationships, relationships between me and the participants, relationships between organizations and myself. My personal reflection log reflected this early in the research process:

> This whole project is about Relationships!!!! The band office has gone out of its way for me, the staff, participants, my coworkers. I couldn't get anywhere with out the relationship. It is about caring for others, sharing, showing your true self, and letting others know you as a person. When someone knows you care, knows who you are, and genuinely respect and like you, magic happens (P. Mojak, personal communication, 2005).

This process has taught me to be comfortable being vulnerable, asking for help, and allowing others to reach out, to share their stories, aspirations and hopes. The gifts of sharing stories, and the trust from all involved to let the truth of the voices ring through, and the resulting findings were possible because of my ability to let go of control and be vulnerable. Ultimately, this project was about learning to be vulnerable, learning to be curious, and being open to surprises.

Sharing My Passion

Although others may not have held the same passion as I did for this research

topic, it was important to share my passion with all involved, why I chose this topic,

what I hoped to learn, and what changes I hoped to illicit from the research. It is easy, as

a researcher, to get into the technical academic aspirations of a research project this size,

but the more I communicated my passion behind the research project and the reasons why

I chose to research First Nations youth and career decision making, the more others

jumped on board to assist me. I found semi-formal introductions and discussions elicited

a tremendous amount of support from Homalco, participants and my organization.

Although others may not have had the same level of commitment to the research, sharing

who I was, why I cared and my commitment to this process, allowed others to see why

this research was important to me as an individual. This project was not only an academic

pursuit and sharing my passion allowed others to share of themselves more openly.

Developing Relationships

Should I be the casual observer, as in quantitative research, although I chose

qualitative? Would developing a close relationship with the research participants affect

the outcome of the study positively or negatively? I struggled internally with this aspect

of the research at the beginning. How close could I become with my research

participants? As the project unfolded and the research began, I found myself developing

relationships with many of the participants. This, I think, was instrumental to the

authenticity and honesty of the research findings. Letting participants know who I was

and developing a trusting and caring relationship was essential in this qualitative research

project. It was especially important when dealing with cross cultural participants and

youth. I think developing the relationship with Homalco and the participants allowed a truthful view into the world of youth living there and the community itself. Without these relationships, I believe I would not have gotten the rich and honest stories of all involved.

Letting Myself be a Learner

Although this sounds obvious, in reality, it was difficult at times to let myself be vulnerable, to take off my professional employment counselor hat and just observe and listen to the stories. I struggled at times with not knowing what I was doing, letting myself be the deer in headlights, letting myself be confused, and allowing myself to not know. This was an important learning from me, especially when questioned by coworkers, management and my fellow cohort. The most poignant learning came from these moments of confusion and insecurity; learning to feel comfortable in this process provided the most valuable lessons about myself and the relationships I had formed.

Keeping Everyone Involved and Informed Throughout the Project

I scheduled monthly updates on my research project progress, timelines and activities to participants, my sponsor, my faculty advisor and Homalco Nation. It was important to provide an open avenue for suggestions and adopt an open door policy; this kept everyone involved and up to date. Giving updates and progress reports continually throughout the research project allowed me the time for scheduling revisions, and actively kept all parties involved in the project.

Pilot, Pilot and Pilot Again

Pilot questions were extremely beneficial and resulted in minor changes to the question format. I test piloted one to one questions, focus group questions, and conducted

a "mock" focus group. This testing demonstrated that one of the audio recorders did not work and allowed me the opportunity to find an alternative recording device

Putting Myself Out There

It was important to let others, my coworkers, fellow cohort, critical buddies, project supervisor and academic supervisor, see my work as I moved forward in the writing. I let numerous individuals read my chapters and provide feedback. With each comment and suggestion, the writing improved and I was able to include information in a much clearer, more eloquent fashion.

Following the Timeline

To tackle a project this large, it was important to take bite size pieces and stay as focused to my timelines as possible. Although flexibility was necessary, keeping to the gist of my original timeline kept me focused and on track. This was a stressful endeavor, and finding the time to complete this project among full time work, family responsibilities and personal responsibilities was challenging. Blocking out time chunks kept it manageable. This was especially important for me, as I developed a family schedule to let my children know in advance when "Mom" would be hunkered down in the basement with school work, allowing my children to see a visual of when family activities would happen. Although it was not followed diligently, it was important for my family to know that life was just not about school. This allowed me quiet study time when they knew we had fun family times scheduled as well.

Backing Up Data and Securing It

I used two audio recorders and, when one malfunctioned, I was thankful that I had back up for transcriptions. Three copies of the work in progress report were made: one

disk copy, one copy on my work computer (accessible by password) and one copy on my home computer (password protected). Hard copies of chapters, transcripts, letters of consent and invitations were stored in my home office in a locked file cabinet along with notes I had taken during the research data collections. A few glitches happened during the research process including my home computer crashing and an audio recorder malfunctioning. Having backed up the data saved me a tremendous amount of time as I did not need to redo any of my work.

<center>Carefully Considering Methodology Tools</center>

It was worth taking a considerable amount of time to select methodology tools to use. I believe my selection of focus groups and interviews were instrumental in providing the truthful data this study included. I had the opportunity to work with a youth group of participants who were familiar with one another and I had spent months building trust and connecting with this group prior to the focus group session. If I had not had the opportunity to build this trust and know they were comfortable in a group setting, I may not have chosen a focus group. Spending the time determining what methodology tool will work for the participants and providing the best tools to ensure participant safety and comfort levels is essential.

<center>Organizing</center>

As someone who admits to being not especially organized or detail orientated, I found some extremely helpful suggestions from my faculty supervisor and others which made the research process much more streamlined and helped keep me focused on the task at hand.

1. I set up a file folder on my computer for referencing for when I read an article or book I thought I may have wanted to use at a later date. I inputted the literature in APA format in alphabetical order on this file folder. This was extremely helpful and cut down on many hours of time attempting to find the relevant reference. I just needed to cut and paste from this file while completing my reference section.

2. When transcribing, use the line numbers. My faculty shared this with me, and once I began to theme, having the line number to refer to cut my time in half.

3. Appropriately use files and binders. I categorized each literature review topic into binders with the articles and books I used. I also set up filing systems with relevant topics including: focus group findings (this included my theming, transcripts, post it notes and references). When I needed to locate something, I could easily find the information in little time.

Change Happens

When I began this process, I questioned how much of a difference this research project could make. Although I believed change was possible and growth would happen, I was unsure of how much this project would influence the youth participants, NIEFS and Homalco. Opening up the channels of communication and posing these questions have resulted in a number of positive change factors already. Youth participants who were involved in this study are now accessing NIEFS services. As noted, the majority of these youth had never accessed NIEFS previously. The employment and educational officer from Homalco is now actively referring Homalco community members to NIEFS and has referred a total of 14 community members to a forum in the coming weeks at Homalco. Administrative staff at Homalco are also referring Homalco community members to

NIEFS. Homalco staff working in employment programs are communicating with NIEFS staff and a working partnership is beginning and growing from the onset of my beginning this research. There is a commonly held vision from both NIEFS and Homalco that "community" approaches and sharing of information will work. Change does not have to be big; little changes together make big changes happen. As Sunflower observed:

> It was our people's way to stay together and to work together and to pass things on in the family and it was a community mind. How do we make it work for us today that is the biggest question here... a large part of it is having work that makes us feel good about ourselves

> I believe the seeds have been planted. Homalco and NIEFS commitment and

vision and community partnerships have started the positive change. Opening up dialogue begins the change process.

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APPENDIX A
Draft Letter of Invitation
Focus Group

(Date)

My name is Paula Mojak, and I am an employment counselor at North Island Employment Foundations Society. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project titled Opening Passageways – First Nation Youth Career Decision Making, designed to benefit First Nation youth in employment programs. Your willingness to participate in this project will assist me complete the requirements for a Master's Degree in Leadership and Training at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by calling Paula Beltgens at XXX or the Royal Roads University MALT Major Project Office at XXX.

The objective of my research project is to examine career decision making strategies that positively impact employment opportunities for first nation youth. It is anticipated that recommendations from this research study will be incorporated into career decision making workshops designed by North Island Employment Foundations Society. In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University, I will also be sharing my research findings with North Island Employment Foundations Society and the First Nation community. I am also planning to offer an information session on the research findings to interested participants upon project completion.

My project will consist of one focus group activity. I have chosen you as a possible participant because of your participation in the community employment program. The focus group will be facilitated using a number of open-ended discussion questions and is anticipated to last between one and two hours. The questions will refer to employment and career decision making experiences and insights you may have for this service.

Information will be recorded in audio-taped and hand-written format and summarized. Direct quotes will use pseudonyms in the final report. Participants will have the opportunity to review any quotes used in the report and the use of pseudonyms. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. The final project will contain no names.

You are not compelled to take part in this research project. If you do elect to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time with no prejudice. If you choose to withdraw any and all personal data collected will be destroyed and not used in the final report. Similarly if you choose not to take part in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence. In the spirit of full disclosure, my Royal Roads project supervisor's company, EnCompass Consultants Inc., has worked with Homalco. Although my project supervisor, Paula Beltgens, has not worked directly with the community, David Scott, her business partner is currently working with Homalco on a land use project. Given the connection, the raw data collected and participant names will not be shared with my project supervisor.

The final report and its recommendations will be available to the First Nation community and North Island Employment Society. A copy of the final report will be a public document and housed at Royal Roads University.

Your insights and experiences will be greatly appreciated. If you would like to participate in my research project, please contact me at: XXX

Sincerely,

Paula Mojak

APPENDIX B
Letter of Consent for Participation in Focus Groups

My name is Paula Mojak, and I am an employment counselor at North Island Employment Foundations Society. I am conducting a research project called Opening Passageways – First Nation Youth Career Making. This research project is part of the requirement for a Masters Degree in Leadership and Training at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by calling Paula Beltgens at XXX or the Royal Roads University MALT Major Project Office at XXX.

This document constitutes an agreement to take part in a research program, the objective of which to examine career decision making strategies that positively impact employment opportunities for first nation youth.

The research will consist of one focus group lasting approximately two hours in length. The focus group will be facilitated using a number of open-ended questions that will refer to employment and career decision making experiences and insights you may have for this service.

Information will be recorded in hand-written format and will be audio taped, and, where appropriate, summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. You will have the opportunity to review any quotes used in the report and the use of pseudonyms. This research project will have no effect upon employment services you are receiving or are to receive if applicable. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. The final project will contain no names other than the pseudonyms. I request that all discussion and participant information in this focus group be kept confidential. In the spirit of full disclosure, my Royal Roads project supervisor's company, EnCompass Consultants Inc., has worked with Homalco. Although my project supervisor, Paula Beltgens, has not worked directly with the community, David Scott, her business partner is currently working with Homalco on a land use project. Given the connection, the raw data collected and participant names will not be shared with my project supervisor.

All documentation will be destroyed one year after the completion of this research project. A copy of the final report will be housed at Royal Roads University and will be publicly accessible.

You are not compelled to take part in this research project. If you elect to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time with no prejudice. Similarly if you elect not to take part in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

By signing this letter, you give free and informed consent to participating in this project.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C
Draft Letter of Invitation
Interviews

(Date)

As previously discussed I am formally inviting you to participate in a research project titled Opening Passageways – First Nation Youth Career Decision Making, designed to benefit First Nation youth in employment programs. Your willingness to participate in this project will assist me complete the requirements for a Master's Degree in Leadership and Training at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by calling Paula Beltgens at XXX or the Royal Roads University MALT Major Project Office at XXX.

The objective of my research project is to examine career decision making strategies that positively impact employment opportunities for first nation youth. It is anticipated that recommendations from this research study will be incorporated into career decision making workshops designed by North Island Employment Foundations Society. In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University, I will also be sharing my research findings with North Island Employment Foundations Society and the First Nation community. I am also planning to offer an information session on the research findings to interested participants upon project completion.

My project will consist of one interview approximately one hour in duration. I have chosen you as a possible participant because of your employment with the above mentioned organizations and your experience in the field of employment and youth programming. The interview will be facilitated using a number of open-ended discussion questions and is anticipated to last between 30 and 60 minutes. The questions will refer to employment and career decision making experiences and insights you may have for this service.

Information will be recorded in audio-taped and hand-written format and summarized. Direct quotes will use pseudonyms in the final report. Participants will have the opportunity to review any quotes used in the report and the use of pseudonyms. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential.

You are not compelled to take part in this research project. If you do elect to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time with no prejudice. If you choose to withdraw any and all personal data collected will be destroyed and not used in the final report. Similarly if you choose not to take part in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence. In the spirit of full disclosure, my Royal Roads project supervisor's company, EnCompass Consultants Inc., has worked with Homalco. Although my project supervisor, Paula Beltgens, has not worked directly with the community, David Scott, her business partner is currently working with Homalco on a land use project. Given the connection, the raw data collected and participant names will not be shared with my project supervisor.

The final report and its recommendations will be available to the First Nation community and North Island Employment Society. A copy of the final report will be a public document and housed at Royal Roads University.

Your insights and experiences will be greatly appreciated. If you would like to participate in my research project, please contact me at: XXX

Sincerely,

Paula Mojak

APPENDIX D
Letter of Consent for Interview

As per our discussion, I am conducting a research project called Opening Passageways – First Nation Youth Career Making. This research project is part of the requirement for a Masters Degree in Leadership and Training at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by calling Paula Beltgens at XXX or the Royal Roads University MALT Major Project Office at XXX.

This document constitutes an agreement to take part in a research program, the objective of which to examine career decision making strategies that positively impact employment opportunities for first nation youth.

The research will consist of a one to one interview lasting approximately one hour in length. The interview will consist of a number of open-ended questions that will refer to employment and career decision making experiences and insights you may have for this service.

Information will be recorded in hand-written format and will be audio taped, and, where appropriate, summarized in anonymous format in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. You will have the opportunity to review any quotes used in the report and the use of pseudonyms. You will have the opportunity to review and validate the transcript of your interview. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. The final project will contain no names other than pseudonyms. In the spirit of full disclosure, my Royal Roads project supervisor's company, EnCompass Consultants Inc., has worked with Homalco. Although my project supervisor, Paula Beltgens, has not worked directly with the community, David Scott, her business partner is currently working with Homalco on a land use project. Given the connection, the raw data collected and participant names will not be shared with my project supervisor.

All documentation will be destroyed one year after the completion of this research project. A copy of the final report will be housed at Royal Roads University and will be publicly accessible.

You are not compelled to take part in this research project. If you chose to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time with no prejudice. Participation in this research project will not impact on the professional relationship with the researcher, employment or advancement. Similarly if you elect not to take part in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

By signing this letter, you give free and informed consent to participating in this project.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Please describe your experience working with youth in employment programs?

Please describe the most rewarding youth career planning program you have been involved in.

What were the most important factors contributing to the success of a youth career planning program?

Building on your experiences, what ideally would you like to see involved in a youth career decision making model? Please be specific

What in your opinion and experiences have youth identified as their needs in relation to career choices, and how have you accommodated their needs?

What tools, resources or skills do you have that could contribute to youth career planning? How could you share this information if you are willing to do so?

APPENDIX F

YOUTH FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Note: These are guiding questions, and all may not be asked or asked in this order, these questions are meant to guide a discussion.

What do the terms "career exploration" and "career planning" mean to you?

Where have you learned about careers and career planning?

What would help you make a good career choice?

Have you ever been involved in any kind of career planning or career exploration?

If Yes
a) What was the experience like for you?
b) Was it useful or helpful? Why or why not?
c) What steps did you take after this experience?

If No
a) How do you think a career planning/exploration session would help you?

Please describe one of your most rewarding learning experiences, what made you feel good about this experience?