Career Counselling First Nations Youth:
Applying the First Nations Career-Life Planning Model

Harly Neumann
Rod M. McCormick
Norman E. Amundson
Holly B. McLean
University of British Columbia

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to field-test the First Nations Career-Life Planning Model, developed by McCormick and Amundson (1997), to determine, from participant feedback, if the model was viable, practical, and culturally appropriate. First Nations youth as well as family and community members participated in career counselling sessions and provided feedback on the model. The comments and feedback were categorised into five themes that support and suggest ways of improving the model further. Implications for practice and future research are included.

RÉSUMÉ

Le but de cette étude est de rechercher sur le terrain le modèle de la planification de vie et de carrière pour les gens des Premières Nations tel que développé par McCormick et Amundson (1997), afin de déterminer, à partir de l'information reçue des participants, si le modèle est viable, pratique et approprié au niveau culturel. Les jeunes gens des Premières Nations ainsi que des familles et des membres de la communauté ont participé à des séances de counseling de carrière et ont fourni leurs réactions à propos du modèle. Les commentaires et réactions ont ensuite été catégorisés en cinq thèmes qui soutiennent et suggèrent des manières d'améliorer le modèle. Des implications pour la pratique professionnelle et pour des recherches futures sont incluses.

More than half of First Nations people in Canada are under the age of 24, and due to their high birth rate, the proportion of First Nations youth will continue to rise (CMSS, 1996). As First Nations communities gain greater control and responsibility for their affairs, the need for qualified First Nations workers is becoming urgent. Unfortunately, most First Nations youth do not complete high school (CMSS, 1996; Charleston, 1988). Motivating youth to complete their education is of great importance to the economic future of First Nations communities. Having career goals and a career direction is probably the greatest motivation for First Nations youth to finish school.

Mainstream career counselling approaches have not been very effective in attempting to change this situation, in part due to cultural biases in mainstream counselling techniques (Herring, 1990). Dolan (1995) found that First Nations students' counselling needs were mismatched by available services and that most students felt that adequate access to culturally appropriate counselling was

"essential to help them stay motivated and remain in school" (p. 239). To best serve the needs of clients searching for career direction, it is ethically and morally necessary for counsellors to utilize culturally appropriate career counselling models. As stated by Ahia (1984), "Whenever alien psychologies are applied to different cultures without modification or contextualization — the result is professional discouragement and stagnation" (p. 340). This paper describes the initial use and evaluation of a culturally based career counselling model for First Nations youth.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Currently, there are very few career counselling models for First Nations people as well as a general lack of research on First Nations career development (Herring, 1990). Additional problems are the lack of career awareness of Native American youth, and the culturally encapsulated counselling techniques used by mainstream counsellors that work with First Nations youth (Herring, 1990). Most contemporary career development models are based on generalizations taken from white, middle-class, male populations (Axelson, 1993; Osipow & Little John, 1995) and it is the generally held opinion that these approaches reflect Western cultural values. As highlighted by McCormick and Amundson (1997), counselling services provided to First Nations people in the past have been based on adherence to these contemporary approaches despite a mismatch between mainstream career development models and First Nations worldview.

Intercultural Counselling

Intercultural counselling or cross cultural counselling was said to have been developed in response to the human rights movement and the attention given to the needs of women, ethnic minorities, and the disabled (Margolis, 1986). Counsellors and other mental health practitioners were concerned that the culturally bound approaches they were using were causing great harm to the culturally different (Ponterotto & Benesch, 1988; Ponterotto & Casas, 1991; Sue & Sue, 1990). Counselling is seen as being culturally bound because approaches and theories are composed of culturally bound philosophical assumptions regarding the nature of humanity (Sue, 1989).

To work effectively in a cross cultural capacity a counsellor must, according to Cormier & Hackney (1987), "choose approaches and strategies that pace or match both the personal and cultural background of the client and avoid relying on just their favourite or typical unimodal approach" (p.117).

This interest has been sparked by the realization that general psychology tends to be both culture blind and culture bound (Kim & Berry, 1993). It is promising to note that Western psychologists are slowly gaining a greater awareness of the culture-bound quality of the categories and models that drive Western psychological theory building (Schwartz, White, & Lutz, 1992).

Counselling First Nations

There are a number of differences between First Nations and Western Counselling approaches as described by McCormick (1996). One of the stated differences is that a major goal of counselling for First Nations people is interconnectedness rather than autonomy, which is a more common goal in Western counselling. On this theme, Ho (1987) described middle-class white American values as including mastery over the environment, future-orientation, individualism, and action-orientation. He pointed out how these values, which are the basis for the development of mainstream counselling models, are in conflict with the First Nations values of harmony with the environment, present time-orientation, collateral relationships, and being-in-becoming. For First Nations people, connecting with family, community, culture, and the natural environment all seem important for successful counselling.

In career counselling with First Nations clients McCormick and France (1995), and McCormick and Amundson (1997) argue that it is culturally appropriate and desirable for the client's family and community members to have input into the client's career decision-making process. Family and community members help the client to identify their interests, aptitudes, needs, values, and temperament. In contrast, Herr and Cramer (1984) commenting on the trait and factor model, state that the individual's interests, aptitudes, achievements, and personality characteristics are usually identified through objective means such as psychological tests. A reliance on such objective means of assessment in career counselling is likely to stunt the career exploration process, if not alienate the client altogether for two reasons. Failure to acknowledge the rich web of relationships between First Nations people and other aspects of creation may result in the imposition of mainstream values on First Nations people (Ross, 1992). Furthermore, the introduction of a counselling framework so out of line with First Nations worldview may result in the loss of clients' perhaps already tentative faith in the career exploration process (Dolan, 1995; McCormick, 1996).

The First Nations Career-Life Planning Model developed by McCormick and Amundson (1997) was designed to respect First Nations worldview and values. First Nations culture does not emphasise a philosophy of individualism, but instead reflects a collective orientation. Lee (1984) found that First Nations students' career choices were more influenced by parents than was so for white students. By involving family and community members in the career counselling process for young people, the First Nations Career-Life Planning Model focuses on individual potential in the context of family and community roles and responsibilities (Zunker, 1998). Utilizing the Pattern Identification Exercise (Amundson, 1995), young people generate knowledge about themselves and receive input from family and community members (Hawks & Muha, 1991). A Career-Life Planning Guide is used as a framework for reflection that includes traditional First Nations values such as balance, gifts, and spirit as well as education, interests, and labour market options. The emphasis remains, however, on the process of the career counselling sessions and flexibility in regards to incorporating whatever the participants in the session deem culturally appropriate.

The purpose of this research was to field-test the First Nations Career-Life Planning Model. The study was conducted to receive feedback from participants in career counselling sessions using this approach and thus gain a preliminary understanding of the potential benefits of the model and refinements needed for further practice.

METHOD

Participants. Thirteen First Nations young people along with their respective family and community members participated in the career counselling sessions. There were seven male and six female youths ranging from thirteen to twenty-six years of age who were recruited from First Nations communities in the Vancouver area. Contacts in the First Nations communities were initially approached for referrals to youth workers who knew community members. Following personal contact by the researchers, the youth workers recruited youth in the community who might be interested in participating in the sessions. There were eight sessions co-ordinated to include the youth participants and their family and community members. All participants individually indicated their willingness to volunteer for the research study by giving informed consent at the beginning of the sessions.

Procedure

The sessions were facilitated by the first author and one or more of the other researchers acted as co-facilitators. Initially, the sessions were held at the First Nations House of Learning and the Counselling Psychology Department at the University of British Columbia, but for the convenience of the participants, sessions were subsequently conducted within the participants' home communities. Except for one daytime session, all the sessions were held in the early evening, and, although there was no specified time limit for the sessions, most lasted approximately two hours. As well as one of the co-facilitators taking notes during the sessions, all the sessions were audio and videotaped.

For each of the sessions, chairs were arranged in a circle. The Career-Life Planning Guide or chart was drawn on a blackboard to be clearly visible to the participants and on several occasions was also given out as handouts. For all but two of the sessions, refreshments were offered to the participants. The sessions began with the facilitator offering to include in the session cultural practices that the participants felt were appropriate. The facilitator invited the participants to open the session with a prayer and a smudge ceremony and to make use of the talking stick or eagle feather. The participants' attention was directed to a table where the materials for the smudge ceremony, talking stick, and eagle feather were laid out.

Following a smudge and prayer if desired, and respecting the tradition of the talking stick or eagle feather if used in the session, the facilitator initiated the Pattern Identification Exercise (Amundson, 1995). The youth was asked to describe an activity that he or she enjoys, and then think about a time when that

activity was particularly enjoyable and a time when it was not so and describe those experiences. The facilitator sought input from the family members and/or community members present for additional perspectives on what the youth described. Then the facilitator invited the youth's input to see if what the family and/or community members said fit his or her experience. From this discussion, themes and patterns emerged that reflected aspects about the youth such as gifts, meaning, and spirit. Participants naturally referred to the chart when making these connections. The facilitator would then focus on the chart during the remaining discussion directing the participants' attention to different components that had not been mentioned and eliciting comments from the participants.

At the close of the session, feedback questions were asked by the facilitator to gain an understanding of the participants' experience. The participants were asked to describe their experience, what they liked and did not like about the session, if they thought the session was culturally appropriate and how it could be made more so. The youth was also specifically asked what impact (if any) the counselling would have on their career-life planning, how it was to have other peers, relatives, and community members present, and for any ways that they thought the model could be improved. The facilitator then informed the participants that individual follow-up interviews would be conducted by telephone at which time the feedback questions would again be asked of the participants.

Approximately two weeks following the session, each youth was mailed a copy of their Career-Life Planning Guide completed from the comments made in the session, along with a letter thanking them for participating in the research. The letter contained a reminder that the session was only the beginning of the youth's career-life planning process and closed with an invitation for the youth to contact the facilitator with any questions about the chart or general things regarding the sessions.

ANALYSIS

Two of the authors read all the transcripts independently, familiarizing themselves with the content of the discussions. Descriptive narratives were then drafted by one researcher to extract key elements of the process and to illustrate participant feedback. These descriptive narratives were then checked against the results drafted by the second researcher and this resulted in finalized narratives that were used for analysis. The descriptions of each case study were sub-divided into "pre-session," "session," and "post-session" to give an ethnographic conceptualization. "Pre-session" reports on how the researchers negotiated entry into the communities to recruit participants for the sessions (Mertens, 1998). "Session" describes the content of the career counselling sessions. "Post-session" focuses on participants' feedback and follow-up.

Once the narratives were complete and the transcripts re-read, four initial themes emerged. Increased self-awareness; usefulness of family, community, and peer input; openness to cultural practices; and recommendations for improving the Career-Life Planning Guide were the identified themes. These themes were

chosen on the basis that the same subject matter emerged in more than one case (Yin, 1994). Re-reading of the transcripts focused on the participants' feedback. Subsequently, feedback on the process arose as the fifth theme. Comments on the general environment of the sessions were categorized under this theme.

<div align="center">RESULTS</div>

The feedback given by the young people and their family and community members revealed that the First Nations Career-Life Planning Model was a positive experience for all those involved. The comments given by the participants related to five general themes. Each of these themes is elaborated below and exemplified by the comments made by the participants.

Increased Self Awareness. A culturally sensitive counselling framework for First Nations people must include the theme of the importance of personal and cultural identity (Anderson, 1993). This incorporation of self, or identity with traditional ideology, also provides First Nations people with strength for coping in the mainstream environment (Axelson, 1985). All the young people who participated in the sessions reported that they learned more about themselves. For example, one 17-year old participant made the following comments referring to the components of the Career-Life Planning Guide:

> I found it not so much a focus on my career, mind you it will have an impact on my career. But I find it more. I learned more about myself tonight, more about who I am and what sort of things that are inside of me make me do the things I do and think the way I think. I think I can take, I can literally take each one of these pieces and apply it to what I want to do, whether it be the decisions I make or the paths I take, I think I can use each one of these and just apply it to my goals. That's what I got out of tonight anyway.

Family and community members also commented on how they thought the sessions generally increased the participants' self-awareness. For example, one community member comments:

> It certainly is a learning experience for the individual and there was a lot of other things people see like values, potential and gifts that they have that maybe they're not aware of. I think it really means something to the person to hear that from other people.

This community member highlighted the value of the feedback from other participants in the session for increasing the participants' self awareness. Furthermore, for some of the people the session reminded them of specific strengths and motivated them to consider options that they had not previously considered. For example, a 17-year old male student had decided that his fields of interest were law and accounting, but he reported the session opened him up to other ideas. He comments, "I guess it helped me realize, like I want to go into law and accounting, and it just opens up more, more fields. I just now realised that I am pretty good at teamwork and I like working with other people." During the session this student mentioned considering police work because of the new awareness that he gained.

Other young people found that the insight that they experienced in the session helped them focus. Furthermore, they indicated a motivation to continue on a chosen career path. As one participant stated, "Now it seems more clear what I have to do." Another participant in her early twenties had already decided before the session that she was going to complete her high-school education and eventually go to law school. She described the session as topping up a process that she had previously begun and providing something for her to consider further, "I'm very motivated so tonight I'm going to go home and I'll look at all this." Another female participant commented, "I think we planted a seed today."

Input from Peers, Family and Community Members. The role of healing in traditional First Nations society has been not only to reaffirm cultural values but also to consider the individual in the context of the community (Lafromboise et al., 1990; Trimble & Hayes, 1984). Most of the insight that participants experienced was associated with the feedback that they received from the peers, family, and community members present. One adolescent participant said that his community member "helped fill in the pieces things I knew about but couldn't actually nail down." Another male participant commented: "What I liked was mostly what they were saying about me. I haven't really noticed it until they said it but then I just clicked in. I do see myself doing that, I don't notice at the time but now I realise that I do have the right stuff." A female participant also commented that having family members present was important to her "because I could hear their opinions, and as I said before I value their opinions very much. So like just talking one-on-one I don't think I would get as much out of it as I did." Lee (1984) found that parental influence has a greater impact on the career choice of Native American students than on that of white students. Although one participant commented that she preferred to just have family members present at the session, six of the other participants commented that they preferred to have either just peers or community members present. One of the younger adolescents said that he found it more comfortable "with someone in the community, not parents because parents make a big thing and pressure." Another older participant said that she preferred the session to have just community members present because "well, . . . I know . . . my mom . . . wants me to go back to school so I already know what she thinks." This participant felt her mother had already expressed her views to her and she was interested in her community members feedback: "I just found it very motivating because you're hearing feedback from people you know and feedback you wouldn't have heard."

Several participants also described the impact of having peers, family, and/or community members present at the session as showing them that they had support of other people. One older male participant commented, "I just know now I have support from more than just my parents. I like that support." Another male participant said, "I'm comfortable with having my auntie here and my cousin here, I can go to any of these guys any time and I know that now." Indeed, the session provided an opportunity for other people in the young person's life to express their caring and support for them. One participant's younger brother said

he appreciated "being able to you know, show him how I see him, let him know things, how I feel about him. It kind of seems unusual just doing it at home, sitting down and telling him just how I feel about him."

Cultural practices. The participants that chose to incorporate traditional practices such as the smudge ceremony, prayer, talking stick and eagle feather indicated liking those aspects of the session. The smudge ceremony, which involves the burning of sweet grass or sage is used as a method of cleansing or connecting with others present as well as with those who are not present, including the spiritual world and the Creator. The talking stick and eagle feather are culturally specific ways of facilitating communication in a group. The individual who is holding the talking stick or eagle feather has the authority to talk for an unspecified time without interruption from others. Traditional First Nations ceremonies such as the Vision Quest and Sweat Lodge reinforce adherence to cultural values and help to remind people of the importance of keeping family and community networks strong (Lafromboise et al., 1990). Traditional First Nations therapeutic approaches, unlike many Western approaches, usually involve more than just the therapist and client. Relatives and community members are often asked to be part of the healing process. Numerous researchers such as LaBarre (1964), Trimble (1976), Blue (1977), Redhorse, Lewis, Feit & Decker (1978), More (1985) , Guilmet & Whited (1987), and Herring (1989), found that First Nations people will inevitably turn to relatives and community members when they experience personal problems. Most participants welcomed the inclusion of these cultural practices. One community member described the offering of the traditional practices as unintrusive. One adolescent who chose to use the talking stick commented:

> Not only because I got my opinion and stuff. I found like, it wasn't so much focused on the cultural aspect of it but you focused, you sort of incorporated it very subtly so it wasn't, it wasn't so much like it was staring you in the face, but it was more. I'm not sure, you did it very well, I can't tell you how you did it.

Along with the smudge, prayer, talking stick, and eagle feather several other aspects of the session were described as appropriate cultural practices that the participants appreciated. Four participants mentioned sitting together in a circle. One young person said, "I think the circles the biggest thing" and a community member commented, "I was honoured to sit in the circle. See I always find something new every time we sit in a circle, it's never the same." Two young people also mentioned the Career-Life Planning Guide because it was a circle, while another participant commented that the chart reminded her of the medicine wheel. A community member commented that the fact that the session was open-ended was appropriate, and a male adolescent said, "well, just being together" was what he appreciated.

Several comments were made relating to how to make the session more culturally appropriate. At one session when there were no refreshments offered this was commented on. One family member said, "you're supposed to eat before you sit down and talk like this." It should be noted that food was provided at all other sessions as it was recognized that this is an important First Nations tradition.

One young person felt that there should be more people present at the session: "like gatherings; they usually have different people from different places — different age levels." Another young person said that she preferred using the expression "All My Relations . . . because then you know when the persons done speaking." As well, a family member also mentioned that he found the note taking and recording of the session inappropriate and commented that it was not necessary to have anything from the session in writing, saying "you shouldn't need this — if it's not worth learning you wouldn't keep it with you." Participants in one of the sessions, who chose not to incorporate any traditional cultural practices, stated:

> I think that our own society itself is confused about what is culturally appropriate. If we can put a foundation in place so that our kids will feel some self-esteem in the lower grades that will help them. By the time they get here to know exactly what their career is because they feel good about their community and who they are. I don't think they feel that good about their community and who they are. I mean by that we have to live in both worlds so is it really appropriate to always just worry about what's culturally appropriate because maybe some people are taking care of those things already and what they really need to do, what we are all looking for, is balance.

Recommendations for Improving the First Nations Career-life Planning Guide

Specific recommendations were made by some participants in regards to improving the Career-life Planning Guide or chart. Several young people mentioned not liking the wording of the component labour market options. It was recommended that simpler words for chart components and colours could be used for the chart. One participant suggested putting examples for the chart's components so that the youth would have a better understanding of what was meant by the terms used. Other suggestions included adding a component to reflect family history and a component for parental expectations. At one session, the participants discussed adding a component for challenges, which they saw as being community, personal, or cultural. A community member had these comments:

> The only community context it seems you got was from us. It might be helpful if you encouraged the participant to explain if there is a relationship between their community and other communities. I know we have one on the reserve, here it's a big change, a big shift, just flip-flop in your mind . . . some find it difficult just getting to school, the social shift and cultural shift . . . There's strength in community, so how does that affect balance, and then when you go outside the community, if you have to go outside the community? And some of them are really uncomfortable, there's people in my community who cannot leave the community, they just don't fit into a working environment outside, because they are very traditional people.

For First Nations people there exists a focus on family and community responsibility for the emotional , mental, physical, and spiritual health of one another (Ross, 1992). Guilmet and Whited (1987), also found that the extended family was of paramount importance to most First Nations clients in terms of emotional support. According to a traditional First Nation's view, a person's psychological welfare must be considered in the context of the community (Trimble & Hayes, 1984).

The researchers recognized the value of discussing challenges in the career-life planning session. However, it is felt that by adding a specific component of the

chart for challenges would detract from the spirit and focus on the youths strengths and opportunities. Although the researchers feel that challenges would detract from the goal of the First Nations Career-life Planing Guide, a discussion of challenges can still be incorporated into the session.

Participant Feedback Regarding the Process

Several participants gave feedback in terms of the process of the session. One adolescent, for example, said that she had been intimidated by the idea of a career counselling session and was nervous that she would have to take a test. Instead, she mentioned that she was relaxed in the session:

> I found it very comfortable. Like, it's so easy to talk to you about anything. I didn't feel pressured to answer any of the questions. I didn't feel like you were prying or anything. I felt like you were exploring who I was rather than trying to figure out the workings of my mind, which is very hard to figure out exactly.

No one mentioned discomfort with the process of the sessions. In fact, one community member commented on the trusting environment that was created that allowed the participants to share personal thoughts and feelings. One of the participants saw the session as a positive experience, particularly in comparison to her experience of a career program at school. She comments "[teachers] talk to us like were little kids, you guys use big words, and know we understand." Three young people mentioned that they appreciated the fact that other participants were present at the session rather than the session being one-on-one. For example, one participant said that "having other family members present, helped me more because I think if it was just me here I'd be a little bit uncomfortable." Another key factor in the facilitation of healing for First Nations people is the process of dealing with problems with the assistance of others and not by oneself (McCormick, 1995). A family member also commented that she appreciated having two facilitators present at the session, saying "I wouldn't want to see you alone, you know, either of you alone. I'd like to see . . . I like the two of you."

Two participants commented that it would be beneficial to have more than one session, one student mentioning that they would have preferred going around the First Nations Career-life Planning Guide several times in a lengthier session.

DISCUSSION

Several participants indicated that they were surprised that a career counselling session could take on the form it did using the First Nations Career-Life Planning Model. Students stated that this model was very different from career programs they had been exposed to at school. Comments indicated that they preferred the First Nations Career-Life Planning Model because it focused on who they were as people and not just on occupational options as was often the case with the mainstream counselling's outward focus and dependence on "objective" psychological measures, as noted by Herr and Cramer (1984). In putting forward this integrated model we have sought connectedness and wholeness and

have used as a foundation a centric model similar to that utilized in the career counselling model developed by Amundson (1987, 1989). Students learned more about themselves to the extent that many had commented that they were more motivated to continue future exploration and career pursuits. Feedback from family and community members had two effects. Firstly, it facilitated self-awareness for the youth by validating their perceptions of themselves. Secondly, students became aware of how others perceived them and therefore gained new insight. In addition, community and family members indicated that being given the opportunity to communicate their thoughts to the youth was a rewarding experience. Leading First Nations mental health researchers have continuously stressed the collective orientation of First Nations people (Lafromboise et al., 1990; Trimble & Hayes, 1984).

Although all the students indicated that they liked receiving feedback from others, they also stated preferences for who was invited to their sessions, as not all of them enjoyed having their parents present. Practitioners need to tailor sessions to student preferences. This finding supports the theory of interconnectedness as a goal of counselling for First Nations people, as stated in the introduction of this paper. This theme of interconnectedness is prevalent throughout most First Nations cultures and has been aptly described as a series of relationships, starting with the family, that reaches further and further out so that it encompasses the universe (Epes-Brown, 1989). The input of family and community members in the career planning process further strengthens the connectedness with greater sources of influence which play important roles in the guidance and well-being of First Nations people. It is important for career counsellors of First Nations youth to keep in mind that competition and "success" as conceptualized by mainstream society do not have roots in traditional First Nations values. A First Nations person once said, "He who runs fastest, runs alone," highlighting the value of community over domination.

Understanding one's language and worldview are necessary for communication, which is necessary for psychotherapy (Torrey, 1972) and counselling. Failure to do so results in the most minority clients terminating the counselling process after the first session (Sue & Sue, 1990). It was clear that the offering of traditional cultural practices was appreciated by all those involved in the sessions. Mental health professionals who have worked with First Nations people have found that ritual and ceremony allow First Nations people to give expression to personal experience while at the same time connecting people with their community (Hammerschlag, 1993). It is important to note that several aspects of the session were identified as culturally appropriate such as gathering in a circle, no time restrictions, the offering of food, and the inclusion of family and community members. For future considerations, modifications may be made to the Career-Life Planning Guide in light of the participants' suggestions. Additionally, participants found the process was respectful. Comments reflected the unobtrusiveness of the model and the supportive environment it created. Although the model provides a framework and incorporates cultural components, practitioners need to be aware that the facilitator is central to setting the tone of the session.

The above comments highlight the fact that existing career programs and models need to be re-evaluated and tailored to fit the needs of First Nations youth. Research using the First Nations Career-Life Planning Model has shown that it can be an important first step in students' career planning. This initial research does, however, have certain limitations. Rural First Nations youth were not within the scope of this particular study as the First Nations youth in the research were located within a large metropolitan area. Although part of the philosophy of the model is an openness and flexibility to cultural variations, input from rural First Nations youth on their experience of the model is needed before generalizations can be made about rural youth. Another limitation is that session facilitators asked the feedback questions and participants may not have felt they could be candid. It is also possible that because participants were recruited through contacts that they may have represented a motivated population of First Nations youth. As well, the students in the sessions could only report what they were able to articulate to the researchers, therefore, other cultural aspects or experiences of the model may not have been accessible.

SUMMARY

The trial of the First Nations Career-Life Planning Model was considered by all those involved to be a valuable first step in the First Nations youths' career-life planning. Culturally relevant considerations in collaborating with these First Nations youths included the acknowledgement of the values of connectedness, balance, roles and responsibilities, values and meaning, as well as gifts, aptitudes, and skills (McCormick & Amundson, 1997). Participants became more self-aware, related to the multidimensional model and the multiple personal perspectives. The integration of relevant cultural practices was appropriate and beneficial in this career exploration experience. Low educational achievement is one determinant of ill health for First Nations people (CMA, 1994), therefore, it is hoped that First Nations youth will benefit from this approach to career exploration, so that more will complete high school and pursue careers that are most satisfying and useful to them, their families, and their communities.

This study offers a number of implications for future practice and research. The researchers see the potential of this model in career exploration with people from other cultures that, like First Nations culture, are also collectively oriented. It is also hoped that this model can be utilised by First Nations schools and organizations to make this approach available to a larger population of young people. Longitudinal studies to document the effectiveness of this approach over time would be valuable. Current research is being undertaken by the authors to determine what facilitates career decision making for First Nations people as well as what facilitated the attainment of their career goals. This research also examines what First Nations career paths look like. With a better understanding of First Nations career-life planning and the continued development of an appropriate career counselling model it is hoped that First Nations clients will be better served in the future.

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About the Authors

Harly Neumann is a Masters student in counselling psychology at the University of British Columbia. He is Cree and a member of the Peguis Band, Manitoba.

Rod M. McCormick is an assistant professor in the Department of Counselling Psychology and the Director of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. He is a member of the Mohawk Nation.

Norman E. Amundson is a full professor in the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia.

Holly B. McLean is a Masters student in counselling psychology at the University of British Columbia.

Address correspondence to Dr. Rod M. McCormick, Department of Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education, 2125 Main Mall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6T 1Z4. Fax (604) 822-2328.