



DEAR FRIENDS -

Whether we are parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, or friends to young people, it is a privilege to pass on to them our knowledge, our wisdom, and the values we hold dear. We've all seen a child's eyes light up when they discover something new about the world or about themselves.

Through the Coming Home Society's 'Wisdom of Elders' program, First Nations Elders pass on their traditional knowledge, their culture and their spirituality to vulnerable Native youth, many of whom have never been given these things.

They help young people connect to their ancestors by teaching them what their people believed, and how they did things.

We all need to know where we have come from, before we can know where we are going.

Please help our youth discover their past, so they can claim their future! *Linda Adams,
President, Coming Home Society*



Your donations make a difference!

Your donations to the Coming Home Society make it possible for us to offer honorariums to Elders, and buy supplies, so that the Elders can add their teachings to the diverse programs offered by our partner, Urban Native Youth Association. First Nations youth have had wonderful learning experiences in the past year!



Elder Jeri Sparrow and youth with tea made from traditional plants

Young Bears Lodge (residential Healing Lodge)

Residents have had several sessions with an Elder at the UBC gardens, learning about traditional medicines and selecting which ones they'd like to grow in their own healing garden. Youth have completed the initial construction of the garden, and Elders will continue to work with them to teach them how to harvest, dry, and use the plants. Youth will pass on their knowledge to future residents.



Youth designing his paddle

School Support Program

Over the summer Elder Bob Baker took youth out paddling in a traditional canoe and taught them canoe culture, protocols, and about canoe journeys.

Aboriginal Youth First Sports & Rec program

Participants in the summer canoe journey are now engaged in weekly carving sessions to create their very own paddles under the guidance of traditional knowledge keeper, Wes Nahanee. Wes has worked with the group regularly, passing on knowledge and teachings about the canoe and local waterways. These youth will get a very special tangible token to remind them of their canoe journey this year.

An interview with Elder Bruce Robinson

Bruce Robinson (*pictured on cover*), a respected Nisga'a Elder, is based at Urban Native Youth Association's Health and Wellness Centre. Bruce is there to offer his gentle cultural and spiritual support for the healing of body, mind, and spirit.

Bruce is the child of Residential School survivors, and was himself sent away to go to school in the Lower Mainland. Alcohol was a big problem in his life, but he eventually found healing through Elders who taught him about his culture. Today he helps youth in the same way.

Bruce conducts many spiritual ceremonies. He offers a "Brushing-off Ceremony", using cedar boughs to brush away emotional pain, revealing the thing that is making a youth so sad. Then he can give support and guidance.

Bruce teaches that when we are born, our spirits are pure, and we must try to stay connected to that goodness. We are one with the same Spirit that is in everything, and the Spirit wants only for us to be happy. He advises youth that they have many choices toward happiness. They can choose to focus on the good in their lives instead of on the negative; they have the power to choose what they believe about themselves; they can choose to look to their culture for something that connects to their heart, and then make that a part of who they are.

Bruce empowers youth by treating them with great respect. He recently began a circle with young people by saying "I am honored to be in the presence of each and every one of you - to be sitting with great people." He reframed their negative view of their own culture by reminding them that their people were great engineers, in the building of great longhouses and the raising of tall totem poles, and the making of sea-going canoes. They were great doctors, in discovering and using medicines from the natural world. And they were great artists who created beautiful carvings and other art. Bruce opens up a world of possibilities within them.

I asked Bruce what he wanted us to know about Reconciliation. With a big smile and a chuckle he replied – "That it's not your fault!" He knows that we have all inherited the present circumstances from actions taken in the past. Today it is up to all of us to learn to understand one another, so we can move forward together in peace and harmony. "There is no hierarchy – we all came from the same Spirit and we are all going home to the same place."

Bruce is a great gift to the 'Wisdom of Elders' program and we are blessed that he is supporting the youth with his good spirit and peaceful heart.



You have also made the following possible....



Raven's Lodge (residential program) hosted Elder Jeri Sparrow who did a salve making workshop with the youth. She explained the uses of traditional medicines and helped youth prepare them and care for them, cook them, and create healing salves which they gifted to important people in their lives.

Native Youth Learning Center

Youth did medicine bag making and had a discussion with Elder Bruce Robinson about self-care with traditional medicines, and how they can incorporate them in their daily life at school and at home.



Cedar Walk School

Cedar Walk staff are really happy to be able to offer a drum making workshop led by cultural knowledge keeper Wes Nahanee. It's the first time in six years they've been able to do it. The students are very excited!



**YOU CAN HELP FUND
THE COMING HOME SOCIETY'S**

'WISDOM OF ELDERS' PROGRAM BY:



Mailing a cheque payable to the Coming Home Society
to 303 East Cordova Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1L4

All donations will receive a charitable tax receipt.

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