

**SAANICH COMMUNITIES YOUNG ADULT LEARNERS
LITERACY PROGRAM**

By

Shanne McCaffrey

A Community Governance Project Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS IN INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

University of Victoria

July 30, 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION	3
PROJECT OBJECTIVES	4
INITIAL PROJECT CHANGES	5
PROJECT OBJECTIVE RESULTS	5
PROJECT IMPACT	12
PROJECT INFORMATION, HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS	13
PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS	13
PROJECT REVISIONS	14
FINAL PROJECT ANALYSIS	16
YOUNG ADULTS PROGRAM GENDER RATIO	17
APPENDIX ONE -YOUNG ADULTS PROGRAM INFORMATION INTERVIEW	18
Barriers to Education - General discussion questions	18
Interview Summary	20

PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Saanich Nation has lived and occupied their area from time immemorial. They have hunted, fished and their families and clans have named the mountains, streams and ocean waters around them. They know this area intimately and the land is sympathetic to their touch. The Saanich people are a traditionally strong Coast Salish Nation with a deep cultural reverence that reverberates like the beat of the drum. They are dancers and singers; they are spiritual leaders and communicators with their cosmos. They observe the winter Longhouse season and continue the ceremonies, songs and oral traditions that have been earned individually, and are celebrated as a collective. The Saanich people are dedicated participants in their culture, tradition and spirituality.

The Saanich Nation's legends, ceremonies and oral history are deeply embedded in this land that cradles them. Their language *SENCOTEN* (pronounced: sen-chath-en) is a rare and unique language. Today, *SENCOTEN* is only spoken in three areas: Lummi Washington, White Rock British Columbia, and Saanich. Tragically, there are very few fluent speakers left amongst the four communities of Saanich. The present *SENCOTEN* Language Instructor, at the Saanich Adult Education Centre, Helen Jack estimates that there are less than a dozen fluent speakers in the Saanich area. Many of the speakers are elders. The language is an important linkage in traditional knowledge and culture and is deeply incorporated into the educational system of the Saanich people. Strong community commitment will ensure its continued usage in the schools. *SENCOTEN* is a melodious language with highs and lows, sashaying around each group of words. It is an integral part of the threads that keep the fabric of the communities enriched with culture, tradition and education.

One of the Tsartlip reserve Elders recalls a time before, when her mother retold her of the era when only Saanich people walked the land and fished the swollen bays in this area. She talked about boats on the verge of sinking when they returned home, because they were so laden down by the weight of ocean clams.¹ The Saanich peoples were extremely efficient in exploiting the seasonal resources in their area. They were also equally committed to respecting and culturally acknowledging the families that owned that resource. The Saanich people have been generous with the land and their resources with new people that came to this area. The Saanich people have also recognized and valued an introduced educational system into their Salish homeland.

After the first emergence of settlers into the Saanich area also came Christian orders whose one determination was in providing a school for the Saanich people. In the early part of 1900, the Tsartlip Day School was established and staffed by secular, non-denomination teachers. In the period of 1940 to 1950, Indian Day Schools were operated by the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart; a religious order from California.² The old Tsartlip School house still sits on the Saanich grounds of Tsartlip and is still in use today, providing storage and document space where it once held children from the four Saanich communities and the Malahat.

In 1968, the federal mandate of the day was to close all Indian Day Schools. As a result, an opportunity to take control of education now sat in the lap of the communities. The communities felt that like tradition and culture, education was also an assured conduit in the success of the people and ultimately their communities.

In 1972, the communities pulled together and incorporated the Saanich Indian School Board. Later in 1988, a new Tribal School was built for grades one through seven. Many of the workers that participated

¹ Teresa Smith, personal communication, Tsartlip Reservation, May 09th, 2001.

² Remi Paul, personal communication, Saanich Adult Education Centre, June 15th, 2001.

in this project were First Nations people, many of them being Saanich. In September of this same year, the communities took over full control of their own education.

The 1990's were an era that marked a new start for adult learners in the communities. In this period, daycare facilities and child care nests were a priority for returning adult learners. The Saanich Adult Education Centre would be the home for adult learners to come back to school in a safe and comfortable environment and would also be able to provide childcare for students. The Saanich Adult Education Centre sits in line with the Tribal School. Parents can easily manage to bring their children to daycare or the Tribal School and then attend classes at the Adult Centre. These Saanich grounds host the largest First Nations childcare centre in the Province.

Each year, the Saanich Adult Education Centre has experienced an increase in people committed to progressing in their own educational development. A STEP program is housed at the Adult Education Centre as well as two college programs. Malaspina University is also aboard with a Trade Links program and a newly launched Horticulture program. The Young Adults program has been the last needed addition to complete our circle of the Saanich Nation.

Through the years four communities evolved from the Saanich Nation. Presently, there are approximately 2,000 collectively from the four areas. Tsartlip remains the home base of the Adult Basic Education Centre. It is situated on the eastside of Central Saanich at the mouth of the Brentwood Bay. It is called South Saanich Indian Reserve in the map books. Tsartlip has the largest population. Its sister reserve Tsawout, sits across the way on the east side. It extends across the land larger than any of the three other communities. Pauquachin is the next reserve up the road and sits on the lip of Coles Bay. Still further north up the road is Tseycum. Tseycum is the smallest of the communities in land area and is the furthest north. It lays on the edge of the Patricia Bay. All of these communities are nestled close into the hills and edge close to the ocean water. The people's connection to the land and their strong connection to the water are evident by the situation of their communities.

The communities' cooperative nature, group approach and strong determination have provided a strong foundation of support and encouragement for all Saanich members. Every one has a role and important place of belonging.

There is no local transit service into these areas. The community has again come together over this challenge to provide bus service for students from the four areas.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. To conduct a research project to determine the needs of young adult learners who have left school systems without a Dogwood diploma and who have applied to attend the Saanich Adult Education Centre.
2. To provide fundamental literacy programming, specifically for the young adults from the four communities, Tseycum, Pauquachin, Tsawout and Tsartlip, under the aegis of the Saanich Indian School Board.
3. To identify and determine the needs of young adults who have had early school exits, specifically those people in the age group of 16 to 19 who have been unsuccessful in mainstream and alternative school systems.
4. To identify some of the previous barriers to education and success in previous school experiences.

INITIAL PROJECT CHANGES

Our original intent was to combine this research project with the Tsawout Band in their community, however, the registration of students for the satellite project in Tsawout included a good number of adult learners out of the proposed target ages. Young adults from this community that wanted to register in the young adults program were then welcomed into the Saanich Adult Education Centre with other young people from the other three involved communities of Tsartlip, Tseycum and Pauquachin. Tsawout was given funds to prepare a literacy program complete with a coordinator for their interested group of learners.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE RESULTS

To conduct a research project to determine the needs of young adult learners who have left school systems without a Dogwood diploma and who have applied to attend the Saanich Adult Education Centre.

Our first objective was to contact and communicate with all persons living in the four communities in Saanich and who had applied to the Tsawout satellite program and to the Saanich Adult Education Centre. The centre staff was successful in identifying and talking with over thirty interested young adults from the communities. Students were contacted by phone and as a result, several dropped in to the Saanich Adult Education Centre to talk to the coordinator about the upcoming program. Follow up calls were also made to parents, as many of the young adults are still living at home and it was seen as important to bring the parents onboard as quickly as possible. Many of the parents expressed strong wishes of support and encouragement on the launch of the new program. They in turn became catalysts in supporting and encouraging their young adult children to enroll in the new program. The approach of involving both prospective students and their families was an approach that was pro-active in involving the entire communities and quickly spreading the news of the young adults program.

Student interviews and academic assessments were the next phase in this component of the intake. Student levels generally came in at about a grade four to grade nine level on the assessments given to the young adults even though 30% of those assessed had left high school with a High School Completion Diploma.

The Tsawout Band, in turn, coordinated their own literacy program and intake and this was done on the basis of community need and demand. When the new literacy program was announced to the Tsawout community, a number of adult learners stepped forward to immediately enroll in the program. Their ages ranged from early twenties to a young grandmother's age. Tsawout is a community that is located approximately 8 kilometres east from the Saanich Adult Education Centre. Generally, most of the education programs are delivered from the Centre, which is located in the Tsartlip community. The Tsawout program was able to shape and evolve a community - based program that could administer literacy to an age group that was eager to commit themselves to upgrading in math, computer skills and English. An academic coordinator was quickly dispensed to Tsawout to begin the task of shaping and coordinating a meaningful learning program for Tsawout learners in their area.

Currently, learners at the Tsawout program are working at a basic literacy level. They enjoy the flexibility of the program and particularly the one-on-one tutorial support that they receive in this program. They have and are continuing to develop strong math skills, which was the first initiative that they identified as being of paramount importance to the group. In the next term, students decided to place more of an emphasis on both English grammar and literature. Their first assignment, First Nations

history and family stories; an exploration through collages, was an astounding visual and poetic journey that students shared with each other and their extended families. This program has been invaluable on a social, educational and community level to many of the learners who could not travel the distance to the Saanich Adult Education Centre in the Tsartlip community.

The communities and the Saanich Indian School Board have long grappled with the issue of how to appropriately accommodate the young adults in the educational system offered here. Previously these students were in a static mode, where they did not do well in the mainstream or alternative systems offered to them. They had no purpose or motivation to connect with the Saanich Adult Education Centre because it offered no youth programming that was inclusive of their peers. The new young adult literacy program was an opportunity to connect daily with friends and relatives in an educational setting that was meaningful and comfortable for them. Like many other people, the young adults find great dignity and value in being students and continuing their journey of life-long learning.

The communities' adjustment to the inclusion of the young adults program at the Saanich Adult Centre was a growing and learning experience. We all adjusted and even benefited from the high energy and enthusiasm they brought to the Adult Centre, not to mention a very eclectic taste of hip hop culture and music.

The communities' circle was now complete. At the Saanich Adult Centre, we had the honour of having the very young in daycare up to great grandmothers in the STEP programs and Adult Basic Education. The demographic component that was always missing was the youth. They had been dispersed out of their home communities for years to the school district, where they experienced for the first time education and socialization out of their own comfortable communities. It was time for them to come home.

To provide fundamental literacy programming specifically for the young adults from the four communities, Tseycum, Pauquachin, Tsawout and Tsartlip, under the aegis of the Saanich Indian School Board.

Under the direction of the Saanich Indian School Board and in conjunction with community partners and literacy associations, a tentative curriculum was put into place for the young adults. They were assessed and then each individual was given modified and tailored literacy work in the main subject areas to begin working on. They also had group assignments and instruction from certified teachers and tutors. They eagerly participated in teamwork projects and were able to develop cooperative and social skills in the process.

Students are now actively involved in English, Math, Social Studies, Science, Physical Education, Computer skills, SENCOTEN language class and culturally-based Art. Curriculum comes completely laid out from a learning partner association and can be delivered by accredited teachers. Staff has learned that this prepared curriculum needed to be supplemented with local history and culture. Students have also taken advantage of a comprehensive computer lab and Internet access to research a variety of topics. Teachers are taking a more organic approach to learning by trying to create a safe and supportive environment that is stimulating and interesting to the student. There are many different levels of learning that each student operates at. Group instruction classes, followed by individual learning plans, and one-on-one tutorials have been helpful in student success.

Specific learning modules have been added to the program to accommodate some job readiness skills and a reflective dialogue journal between the instructor and each student. Students are free to write in their journals about any topic they choose or can write a focussed writing on a particular situation. This has been found to be very effective in learning and understanding some of the struggles and challenges that face young people today.

Many of the students have said their favorite class is the *SENCOTEN* language class. They welcome in a local elder and language instructor every Thursday to learn the language of the people. In this term they are learning how to write *SENCOTEN*, which has a good deal of symbol exchange and accent but uses the Roman alphabet. It is an activity that they are motivated for and enjoy with great enthusiasm.

Our third objective included identifying and determining the needs of young adults who had early school exits for a variety of reasons and were in the age group of 16 to 19 and who had been unsuccessful in mainstream and alternative school systems.

These young adults were identified through the community liaison worker and social development workers in each community and community members themselves came forward. Next, young adult focus groups were organized to interpret why their previous schooling experiences had not resulted in a successful continuance or completion. A variety of methods were used in facilitating a dialogue that ensured confidentiality and one that nurtured trust. A community member familiar with all four communities embarked on her task to find young adults that were currently not attending school in the specified age groups. Her initial contacts identified a number of thirty young adults separated from any school system.

Young adults and their families were then contacted to inquire as to if they would like to become a student in a new program being offered at the Saanich Adult Education Centre. Contact was made in an earlier time frame than when the program started.

The program started with twenty young adults. This number has significantly pared down to ten determined students. Some of the students hang on the fringes with sporadic attendance. These students typically tend to be male students. The young men in the class seem to display “restlessness” for lack of a better way to describe their behavior. They often need a break from concentrated study and will abruptly get up and wander the halls. From the information currently on file, no mental health assessments have not been done on any individuals in this group. When one student leaves, he is usually joined in company by at least one other. Amongst the group themselves they seem to care for each other and there is no animosity or ill will between individuals.

To identify some of the previous barriers to education and success in previous school experiences.

The young adults and Tsawout adult learners were asked to identify what were the barriers that impeded their success in previous schooling systems. The data was compiled and sorted and interpreted. Individual surveys were issued in conjunction with a personal interview. Students were asked to rate 30 questions in order of importance using a scale from 1 – 5. One recorder administered the survey and conducted the interview with all the respondents. (Appendix A)

68% of the respondents replied that school was boring and meaningless to them.

Generally speaking, one of the most important points that comes from the data and voices of young adult learners is this:

Schooling to the Indigenous learner is not just an academic exercise; it is embedded in meaningful social interaction and ritual.

The Saanich Adult Education Centre is located on Tsartlip territory along with other service and educational programs. The Tribal School, an intermediate school and daycare are close by. Young adults use this opportunity to make contacts with friends and relatives at this common meeting place. Every

Wednesday a hot lunch is provided to the Saanich grounds students from a designated class. They use this hot lunch as an opportunity to fund raise for their graduation at the end of the year. Each Wednesday offers a valued venue for the young adults to socialize with the larger school group. During class, they will frequently check out of the classroom windows to see if relatives or friends are outside or enjoying some fresh air. If there is a group, the young adults will quickly go and join them. One staff, from another school on the Saanich grounds, had a different perspective on this liberal socialization. One of the young adult males did have an altercation with the teacher because he was fraternizing with other students from the intermediate school. The students were his relatives and he was compelled to join them outside and during their recess time. This resulted in one of the staff feeling that this was inappropriate. Staff from the young adults program and his staff communicated and decided that this was an important part of his school experience and was one of the reasons why this young adult came to school. It is this idea of social interaction and schooling that is important to young adults. If socialization were stopped it would surely echo back to the days of residential schools.

For this first barrier, students were asked to indicate what their interests were and what they would enjoy learning about. Curriculum was redesigned to accommodate student interests and field trips were organized for the next term. Contemporary magazines, newspapers and digests were donated or purchased for a "Start Me Up" read in the morning. A much needed and appreciated physical education program was incorporated in the second term. Students can earn credits by participating at home, in class or outings in the community. The second term also saw the addition of a cultural art component. Students can now explore their culture and other Indigenous cultures by creating works and learning cultural arts. Students are very keen to participate and often achieve beautiful creations that are a testament to their creativity and innovation. Students have made applique scarves, painted oyster shells, beaded blue heron feathers and hand made rawhide rattles.

Adults at Tsawout were instrumental in designing their own structured day, which includes a group coffee in the early morning followed by an e-mail computer message time. A journaling time was also instituted to open a channel of dialogue between students and instructors in a more private setting for those students who had trouble expressing themselves in front of others. The demand for one-on-one student/tutor time is an absolute necessity for the students in both learning groups.

This was the highest response indicated by more than half of the young adult program. They relayed stories of their past academic lives as being "dead" often "stupid" and void of any meaning for them. Curriculum can be a dynamic catalyst for learning or it can be a veil to a connected learning experience that occurs through genuine interest and enthusiasm. Our best results came when we were able to integrate local culture, traditional knowledge and community into our curriculum. Students were able to make sense of information in a way that was personal to them. They were also able to contribute and validate their own past experiences and ideals. The lessons that incorporated these factors enjoyed better learning outcomes for students. When the young adults were asked what makes their learning meaningful they indicated that group activities, social gatherings and the whole group dynamic was most important to them. They also see learning as a social interaction with their peers and not just an academic exercise. Though young adults bear incredible social and family responsibilities they are often given minimal chance of choice in a step-by-step learning environment of the school system.

Schooling itself has changed little in fifty years, in terms of curriculum, scheduling, physical environment and instruction. This old school approach to contemporary young adult learning is a familiar enemy to the student. They are really quite wary of any situation in their physical environment or in the education curriculum that smacks of old school tradition. They sit at large tables in a "U" shape. They have a sofa, microwave, coffee maker and large cabinet in their room. Four full size windows peek out at the Saanich Inlet and the Malahat hills nicely frame the view. This physical environment seems to agree with them

and facilitates easy conversation and dialogue with the entire group. The curriculum has been much more of a challenge to make meaningful and valued by the group.

Young adults are “in charge” in really significant ways in their own personal and social lives. Three of the young adults interviewed were parents, with one of them pregnant with her second child. All of the young adults were impacted by the death of an immediate family member. Some of those members were affected by the death of siblings, or by the death of a parent or parents and grandparents. One of the young adults with poor attendance was dealing with the illness of a mother who required an organ transplant. Most of the young adults interviewed lived with relatives or community members that were not their own parents. These young people bear a tremendous amount of responsibility and choice in their lives outside school hours. They very often live in congested households that require team effort to get the household ready for the night and the younger children fed and cleaned. Some young adults find themselves *couch surfing* (staying at any available place that they can).

Given all these factors, it is important that school be a meaningful and worthy experience for a young adult. Their personal, social and spiritual lives are full and rich and so should their school experience be.

66% of the respondents said that they had trouble completing work for a deadline. The majority indicated that this was a concentration issue.

The calendar holds no place of importance in a young adult’s life. They operate on a more basic week-to-week schedule, Monday to Sunday. They do not carry agenda books or personal organizers, though a few of them carry a pager and a phone. They are aware of gatherings with their peers in the community and have various social meeting places, where they will spontaneously congregate. They are in constant contact with their age group that is in and out of the school. They have a detailed awareness of each other’s personal and social lives outside of the classroom as well. When a young adult had been absent from school, information on that student most frequently came from other classmates. Many of the students are also relations through a matrix of Indigenous clan and family memberships that exist amongst the Saanich people.

The young adults felt that deadlines were too rigid and often punitive in nature. There seemed to be no positive reward for achieving a deadline other than to have it marked and tallied up along the way. This is not a concrete incentive for young people. As a group, they really don’t worry too much about deadlines and completion dates. They do not feel that it is important or necessary to get the work done. One young adult called it “jumping through hoops”.

When the incentive is positive, they tend to perform much better and some students see this as validation for their work. The young adults felt that lack of concentration was an issue in not completing a deadline. They do have a difficult time even sitting through a video movie of their own choosing. Class subject times had to be reduced to deal with the issue of long class times for the young adults. They found it unbearable to sit through a class of the same subject for a period of three hours.

64% of the respondents stated that they had difficulty doing homework at home.

This figure was due largely to the amount of people that occupy a single house in each case and responsibilities within the home. Almost all of the young adults live in congested households that hold many different relatives of many different ages. One young adult from the Cowichan area lives with his girlfriend, their child and her family in a house. Some of the young adults live with other relatives, other than their parents. These relatives may also be caring for and attending to a myriad of other younger relatives that come and go from the household.

Many of the young adults have significant responsibilities once they go home for the day. Two of the young adults live with older relatives and will attend to those relatives and the chores that have accumulated in their absence. It is a strong cultural observance to ensure that the elderly and the young are well attended to. Two other young adults have children to care for and are active and loving parents to children under the age of five years. One young adult lives on her own with her son in a neighbouring town. Many of the young adults frequently baby-sit and care for younger siblings and their relatives. One of the young adults cared for an ill mother and his sibling when she had an extensive illness that required intensive surgery and recovery time. Young adults are also expected to help with Longhouse preparations that occur sometimes long into the evening and into the morning hours. Their Longhouse participation could start at noontime on some days and finish at 3:00 am in the morning. This leaves no time for homework. It was helpful to set up visual work completion schedules for the young adult learners. They had their own individual educational road maps to indicate where they had been and where they were going.

All of the young adults and adult learners come from large families with many relations living in the surrounding communities. Home life is very hectic and there are dense living arrangements with many people and responsibilities that come with running large cooperative households. It was decided to dedicate time in school to doing homework. An environment was created in the classroom where one-on-one tutor/study class could be available for students on Wednesday and Thursday mornings. A community member also volunteered to assist with one-on-one tutoring for Tuesday afternoons. This resulted in a higher number of students completing deadline work and various homework assignments. This also dealt with the barrier to previous education where students stated that they had difficulty completing homework at home.

60% indicated that they had personal difficulty with previous school staff.

This was identified as a huge and painful problem for the young adults that were interviewed. They felt not only the discomfort of being in a school system that they found not meaningful, but were also engaged in personal difficulties with previous school staff. The most damaging experiences that they recounted were those experiences in which the young adults had been humiliated in front of their school peers. One young person recounted that a school teacher informed her that her previous Tribal School was not a proper educational facility and she had learned nothing from the school and could contribute nothing in the discussion that she was facilitating with her class. This articulate and bright young woman was still pained by this experience and had difficulty repeating it.

Other students talked about teachers who would send them to First Nations teachers aids and Resource rooms when the student needed the teacher to clarify an assignment. They felt like this was an easy way to deal with questions from the First Nations students. The young adults also explained that the First Nations teaching assistants were not always prepared to answer questions or clarify assignments that originated with classroom teachers.

Students talked about the First Nations students banding together at break times and lunch and visiting with each other. The students spare time was often disrupted by teachers or other authority figures that would patrol the grounds during break time. Those on duty often demeaned their group cohesiveness and derided them for sticking together.

In general, the young adults felt that teachers would “power trip” and would try to control them. In return, young adults felt the need to be absent from class or to challenge the teacher in class or on patrol. They felt that some of the teachers were outright confrontational to them, and others were indifferent and did not care about them or their academic progress. Young adults did identify that a caring supportive teacher was important to their schooling needs. They also were quick to talk about those teachers who they did find caring and attentive to them as human beings.

The Young adults did encounter difficulty with one staff member at the Saanich Adult Education Centre. This teacher was non-Indigenous although had had experience working in Indigenous communities. They indicated that this teacher did humiliate them and made them feel “stupid”. They also stated that she indicated that she was better than them. The teacher also inappropriately took one of the students into her confidence, temporarily alienating this young adult from her peers.

Students often found themselves being kicked out of class by the instructor. This really acted as a trigger for many of the students who were expelled from class and or school previously. This presented an immediate problem, because if one student were kicked out of class, many would follow to support that student. Consequently, they totally resisted as a group. The teacher lost the opportunity to make a connection with individuals and their group. They continued to vigorously resist until this teacher was removed out of their class and from the Adult Centre as a whole.

Today, they still harbour animosity and anger towards the teacher. Significant damage was done to some individuals who believed that the Saanich Adult Education Centre and teachers were no different than their other previous schools. They felt they had been let down and treated badly by a stranger in their own communities. The highest drop out rate of the young adult students occurred in the first term while this teacher was still on staff. Many of the present young adults indicated that it was really difficult for them to remain in the program due to this experience.

Many students spoke of disastrous past relationships with teachers and staff. Two students recounted humiliating experiences in front of an audience that resulted in the student exiting from school. Other students were expelled for behaviour and variety of other reasons.

The Saanich Indian School Board has implemented a system where teachers and staff are evaluated by an independent observer, the administrator and also by the students themselves. It is a strong commitment to community and future academic success to ensure that there is harmony and an excellent working relationship between staff and students.

It is absolutely paramount to have the right staff and teachers involved with the young adult students. Staff needs to genuinely appreciate young people and need to be committed in nurturing positive and trusting relationships with individuals and the collective group. The Tsawout literacy group was much more fortunate in this regard. The matching of instructors and the group proved to be extremely good. They enjoy a close, respectful relationship that promotes learning and self-development in this group. Consequently, their attendance is much higher and more committed.

58% of the young adult learners cited that their attendance and participation in long winter Longhouse ceremonies as a factor that impacted their previous school success.

The next barrier to education has great cultural significance and value to the Saanich people. The Longhouse ceremonial season occurs in the wintertime. Long hours have traditionally impacted students who were often tired in the morning. The school is part of the community, and the community is able to encourage and support attendance in a huge way. Presently, there are two young adult students who have been put into the Longhouse and one who receives and does her assignments there.

There has been a great understanding between the importance of both culture and education as being the conduits to success. The Tsawout learners also are avid participants in the Longhouse. They admitted that even though Longhouse season has long hours, it is seen as equally important to their continued cultural, spiritual and social development as their endeavor to develop their formal education.

57% explained that they had conflict with other students in previous schools.

Unfortunately, Victoria and Greater Victoria have been currently notorious in the amount of youth violence that occurs on the Island. Schooling grounds have also become an area where youth can cluster and extreme violence can result. Neighbouring communities have heard about our young adult program and interested inquiries have been made to have students enroll who live outside of the Saanich communities. One interested student from the Squamish Nation was violently attacked by a number of youth on school grounds in Greater Victoria. This incident was a racially motivated assault. This case is currently winding its way through the legal system. The young adult has refused to continue schooling in his district area and does not feel safe to return. He has appealed to come to the young adult program to try to find a place to “be”.

Many of the students explained that they felt uncomfortable in previous schools and that they had conflict with other students in those schools. Part of the time, this conflict was racially motivated; other times it was not. All of the students in the class are related to at least one other person in the room. This creates a dynamic kinship within the young adult class. They also are related to many of the other adults in various programs and some of the students have relatives and children in the Adult Centre daycare. This unique situation of having large kinship ties has created a very supportive and communicative environment for these young people to be themselves in.

Gang mentality is subtle, but definitely recognizable. The Saanich colour for the area is blue. Red is a colour that only one of the young adults will wear. Sweatshirts, hoodies, pants and ball caps are all shades of blue. It is clear that the colour blue is correlated with an acceptable youth value in this area and at the local neighbour high school, which is located about three kilometres away.

This larger youth mentality on gangs and colours is somewhat present amongst the young adults at the Saanich Adult Education Centre but not to the extent or extreme meaning that it demands in adjacent neighbourhoods.

We have had incidents where students from neighbouring schools have driven by the grounds and screamed racial obscenities or will drive by and harass those who are walking the distance on West Saanich road from their homes to school. It is one more strong reason for students to be schooled in their own communities.

PROJECT IMPACT

This project provided a valuable opportunity for the community and the school board to cluster around the issues relating to disconnection that many of the young adults previously felt from a successful schooling experience. It has provided a proactive channel for healthy and productive classroom and community communication and interaction.

Previous to the young adults coming to the Saanich Adult Education Centre, there was a “East-side” and “West-side” attitude that was becoming part of the vocabulary and formulated into two prominent groups amongst the young adult people of Saanich. Since September, the young adults have bonded and become one supportive and cohesive group.

Looking back, there were some incidents of violence that had occurred in previous neighbouring schools and this initially spilled over into this area. Students from the young adult program in particular felt the need to “cruise” back to neighbouring schools where they had previously had unpleasant experiences, had been offended or slighted. This situation was resolved as the school year progressed and students became more community and school focused. They were also encouraged by staff to remain on school grounds to participate in community school lunches and noon hour activities, which would also give them an

opportunity to fundraise and enjoy lunch with family and friends. In essence, they became a valuable part of the program and enjoyed the sense of belonging that all human beings crave.

PROJECT INFORMATION, HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Community elder and *SENCOTEN* speaker – Helen Jack provided *SENCOTEN* lessons to each group, once per week. All students participate in the lessons and value the knowledge of this elder and her time. They have learned the alphabet, fifty fundamental phrases and also how to write *SENCOTEN*.

One young adult mom was able to continue her schooling by having her child enroll in the daycare on site at the Saanich Adult Education Centre. This mom was able to spend time with her young son and continue breast-feeding him, while enrolled in the young adult Program. Another young adult also feels comfortable at being able to place his son in daycare in the morning and visit him at lunchtime. He feels proud to be an integral part of his son's life and to also provide the model of a parent valuing education and going to school.

There is a high level of parental and community involvement in the young adult literacy program. Most parents have had classes at the Centre or have visited relatives while they have attended classes. They feel comfortable at the Centre and enjoy this time to visit and socialize with relatives and friends.

During this first term, the young adults decided on a fundraising event of providing a scrumptious hot lunch to the rest of the Centre at a modest cost. Their menu for the day included spaghetti and meat sauce with toasted garlic bread and caesar salad. Within their group, they preplanned what each person would bring and cook. They set up in the cultural centre and fed seventy hungry people. As a group, they easily pull together to master difficult feats that involve cooperation, teamwork, math, communication and precise timing.

The Tsawout learners threw a jumble word hunt game for family and friends in the second season. A huge feast was coordinated and prepared by all the students. Homemade sweets and confections were the prizes for finding words and making stories.

PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Allowing students to be interactive and to have input on their curriculum, scheduling and education were critical components to the success of both of these classrooms. Young adults are at the age where they need to be interactive and proactive in the paths that their lives are taking. Adult learners also have valuable insight and experience as to what can provide them with meaningful and successful learning.

Young adults also appreciated a predictable, structured environment that coincides well with the cultural practices of the community. It helped to organize classes and preparation that students needed beforehand. Timetables and curriculum were posted and discussed for each term and modifications were made as needed throughout the process. A predictable, structured day also was helpful in keeping the adult learners dedicated to a time frame, but flexible in understanding the weight of both familial and cultural commitments.

One of the laments expressed by both staff and students was the lack of field trips into Victoria. Students stated that they would have enjoyed viewing the IMAX to compliment their science component and also touring the BC Royal Museum, which offered an extensive exhibit on the Nuuchahnulth people. The Victoria Native Friendship Centre is also located in this area along with a number of other Aboriginal

associations and organizations. The Young Adults were grateful to offer a part in helping organize a youth conference that was hosted in the Saanich area.

A paramount issue of importance was the entry literacy level of the learner. Many of the students had difficulty reading and writing at a grade eight level. Even though many students completed grade twelve in the school system, basic literacy was a fundamental issue for the learner. Many of the learners have never been taught how to be a student and the requisite skills that go with that role.

The curriculum in this case was an ill fit in what students wanted to learn and what they were interested in learning. The curriculum was not contemporary and was not culturally in sync with who these people are as individuals or a community. Time barriers and constraints in programming and curriculum often resulted in students not being able to demonstrate what they know. Distant markers and evaluators of written assignments added to the mystique and confusion of the curriculum program.

As with any community, some social dysfunction does occur and does impact the success of the learner. Strong partnership with community, intermediate schools and the services organizations are definite asset in identifying and resolving some of the dysfunction that occurs. These connections and relationships are ongoing and have been made. The staff at the Centre was proactive and involved in determining the challenges that youth were facing and finding solutions with the learners to overcome these struggles. The teachers in the program need to be role models and mentors for the young adults. They need to be able to foster nurturing and trusting relationships that build strong foundations in Indigenous identity. Students need to be able to trust that education is for all of the community and it is not an elite or non-Indigenous practice. It cannot be overstated how the learner and their experience ripples out to touch the rest of their family, relatives and community. This individual experience can be entrenched in growth and learning for all the community. On the whole, the staff that was recruited to work with the young adults was a good match with the exception of one non-Indigenous instructor, previously mentioned in this report.

Three - hour lesson and study blocks proved to be too long for any of the students to maintain attention, concentration and focus. This period was modified into shorter blocks of an hour to allow students to maintain interest and focus for these periods. All students were able to demonstrate better academic success within these new time frames.

Finally, the value of one-on-one tutoring cannot be overstated in the success of all learners in these two groups. Strong academic role models have really helped out in this program. The need for program tutors is vital to the learning success experienced by all students. More access to one-on-one tutoring will really ensure the accomplishments of all students. It became apparent early on that the young adults and the adult learners performed at very different levels academically; from about grade four, to grade nine. This is the strongest reason why there is such a definite need for one-on-one tutoring to be structured into both of the programs.

When there was a chance to provide one-on-one tutoring, primarily from volunteer sources, students developed more quickly and confidently in both groups. They were ecstatic to share their progress and development on student council and in staff and student luncheons.

PROJECT REVISIONS

Timing is crucial to running any project. Interest lists of students in the springtime must be contacted and continually maintained to ensure that the student has an understanding that the program is definitely going to be an opportunity for them to return back to school. Many of the students that did not start in the

program did not fully believe that it would actually take place. With almost a year of experience now in hand, this makes the program a more viable option to young adults for next year.

Students at this stage in their lives are travelers and movers. They tend to move around and have various places they stay at and call home. This is not unusual behavior in close and cooperative Indigenous communities such as the Saanich Nation. Communication through the Saanich Adult Education Centre newsletter is imperative in keeping all community members abreast of programs and their development and enrollment and student assessment dates.

It would be beneficial to incorporate a life skills and personal readiness component into the young adults timetable and schedule. It would offer them a good opportunity to continue to input in their own education as well as illuminate other needs or challenges that only they could identify. Many learners returning back to school have to learn how to be a student. They also need to learn a variety of skills and tasks to ensure their success as a student. It would also provide the school with a good opportunity at preventing any difficulties or challenges in social or academic areas that students may identify.

It was also determined that there was a need to have a focused participatory project that the young adults could really manipulate in meaningful ways. It was determined through personal communications, and student writings that this group was really keen to prepare their own testimonies, stories, poetry and art on “My Life, My Transformation”. This collection of works will be bound and presented to the community in a book format that the young adults will create and decide the layout, formats and final presentation.

Like their world around them, this time of their life is a period that involves intense life changes physically, socially, spiritually and culturally. Like transformer masks and Longhouse dancers that transform and shape shift, this parallel also occurs in the lives of young adults. Change is a constant that also inhabits so much of their culture, so too do the young adults have life changing experiences and events that shape them selves and their world. It is the recounting and processing of these life changes that will shape the book that they will present back to their community. It will be a learning aid and resource for up coming young people of the area who will encounter similar life changing experiences and be able to unfold the experiences of their peers through words and art.

The need for a collective participatory project was also very important to the Tsawout literacy group who are situated approximately eight kilometres east from the Saanich Adult Education Centre. The Tsawout group is a mature group that has a keen interest in cooking and traditional foods and plants. They have decided for their focussed participatory project they would like to create a local cookbook that would incorporate digitally processed pictures of families and their favorite spins on local recipes. The cookbook would also feature the local language of *SENCOTEN* when describing ingredients and amounts. There would be a small index at the back of the book so that this information could be referenced and all housed in one spiral bound book.

Tsawout learners also felt that this could be a valuable asset in preserving local history and recipes as well as using the *SENCOTEN* language to appropriately describe their traditional preparation of the foods. Many of the foods come from the surrounding ocean and the language of the people has their own words for the animals and plants of the area. The book will be called: “*YA LTE ILEN* ” Phonetically pronounced, it would sound like: Yeah! the eethan. Translated into English it means: “ all of us are going to eat.” The book will also be sprinkled with local art and memories of elders and their traditional food gathering, growing and preparation in this area. This would provide a chance for the larger community to become involved in this project. It has also been proven that once these smaller focussed projects occur, many ripples continue to emanate from this point. Community involvement and the resulting community pride that results is hard to evaluate or assess in human terms.

FINAL PROJECT ANALYSIS

The young adults addition to the Saanich Adult Education Centre has completed the Saanich Community circle. They have come to the Saanich Adult Education Centre and walked through the door. Their chances and opportunities for success and education seem certain. They are enthusiastic, motivated and determined to make better lives for themselves.

The Tsawout community satellite project evolved out of a community need and individuals commitment to their own betterment and self-determination. All students have felt the dignity and rewards of reconnecting back to their communities through literacy and learning.

In summary, the Saanich Indian School Board, Saanich communities and students are extremely pleased and grateful for the opportunity of bringing into their house of learning the young adults and by also, having the Tsawout learners. All of the students have been driven enough to dedicate themselves to improving their levels of education. Encouraging them forward is a supportive cultural community of elders and respected relatives who are ever present for guidance and countenance. It is the right people, the right time and the right place for success.

The young adults learners program is clearly in line with the mandate and mission statement of the people of the Saanich communities, the Saanich Indian School Board and the Saanich Adult Education Centre. The voice and the will of the people clearly direct these two entities. It is therefore appropriate that the conclusion of this report end with the Saanich Peoples' vision mission and mandate.

Saanich Indian School Board Mission Statement:

Our mission is to work in a life-long partnership with Saanich People to assure the continuing use of the SENCOTEN Language and the maintenance of the cultural identity of our Nation while giving students the knowledge, skills and attitudes as citizens to enable them to successfully meet the social economic and political challenges of life.

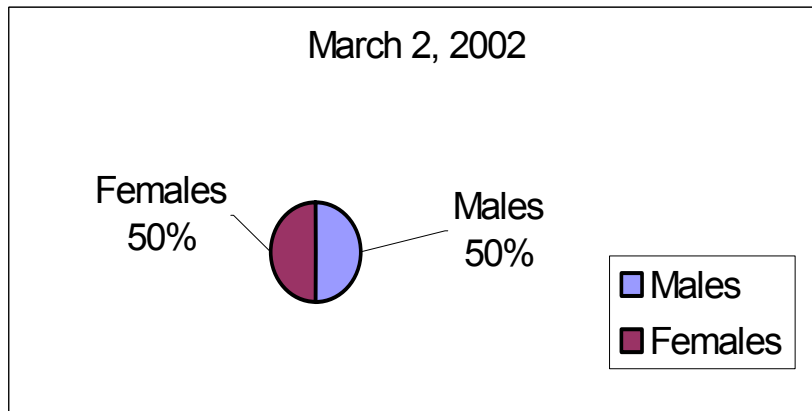
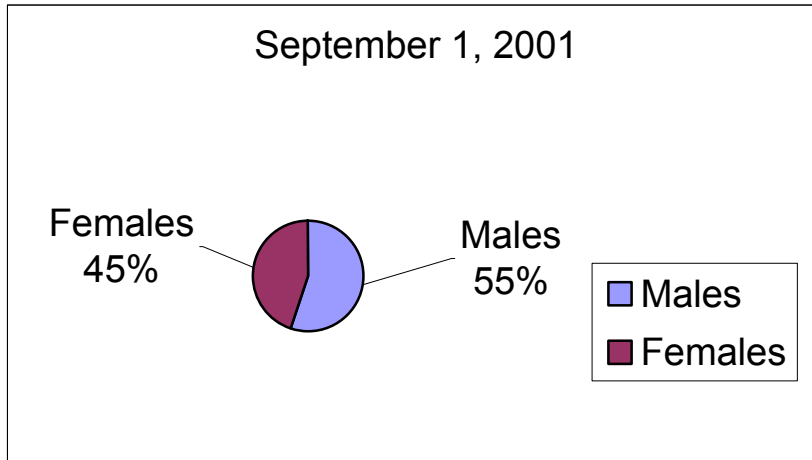
The Saanich Adult Education Centre Mission Statement reads:

Our mission is to enhance educational opportunities for Saanich Nation adults living on and off reserve and in neighbouring communities by offering courses and programs that are community based and community driven, which link to the community's longer range community development plans, to advance economic development, self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

The aim of the Staff and Administration is to make every attempt to offer programs and services that reflect Saanich Nation traditions and values, that are based on respect and an understanding of each person's uniqueness and potential, always taking into account that the learner is an adult, with a vast array of experiences and equal expertise to offer. It is our desire to include the SENCOTEN language and elders in our program delivery, whenever possible.

In short, our mission is to provide accessible, holistic programs preparing adult learners for higher education and vocational training, thus bridging them into other educational organizations and programs of their choice.

YOUNG ADULTS PROGRAM GENDER RATIO



APPENDIX ONE -YOUNG ADULTS PROGRAM INFORMATION INTERVIEW

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No. _____ Band No. _____

DOB: _____ Age: _____ Male / Female _____

Barriers to Education - General discussion questions

1. What was the name of the last school that you attended before coming to SAEC?
2. When was your last day at your previous school?
3. What happened that you stopped going to the school?
4. Have you attended other schools and had difficulty at them?
5. What are the difficulties and challenges you have had at school?

Please indicate the number from 1 through 5 that best applies to these questions. The number “1” being very low, not a factor, “2” having a small amount of impact, “3” having the value of some impact, “4” being quite a high impact and “5” being the highest counter for things that impacted you in previous school systems.

1. Had some health problems during the year.
2. My family had health issues during my school year.
3. It was difficult for me to get to the school.
4. The curriculum was too difficult for me.
5. I have difficulty reading some material.
6. I have difficulty in doing math.
7. I have difficulty understanding information.
8. I have difficulty seeing information on a blackboard or in print.
9. I have difficulty hearing some things.
10. I had trouble completing work for a deadline.

11. I had no academic support from the class teacher and staff.
12. I have difficulty completing my homework at home.
13. I had no school supplies, paper and books to work with.
14. I found school too boring and not meaningful to me.
15. There was not enough First Nations information and support for me.
16. I had difficulty with the teachers, principles and staff.
17. I felt uncomfortable in the school.
18. I had conflict with other students in the school.
19. I was verbally teased at the school by other students.
20. I was physically challenged by other students at my previous school.
21. I did not have the money for clothing and footwear that my peers had.
22. I experience racism in the school from students or staff.
23. I was partying and socializing too much at night.
24. I was too tired in the day to attend school.
25. I did not have anything to eat in a school day.
26. I was restricted from communicating with relatives at the school.
27. During the school year, I had difficulty with police and/or the law.
28. I had difficulty with drugs and alcohol and this had an impact my success at school.
29. I attended the long house in the winter and this affected my attendance.
30. I had to take care of my own children or other peoples so I could not attend school.

Interview Summary

From the general questions and discussion that preceded the questionnaire, students were candid about their last school that they attended before coming to the Saanich Adult Centre Young Adult program. All of the students were in the public system and most of the students came from one school in the district. Two of the students went to different schools out of this district area.

Students generally could not recall the exact date of their last day of school, but could remember the season or time of year that they exited. Most of the students exited from school in the wintertime, before or after Christmas holidays. Young Adults generally felt as though they were invisible in the school system; it simply did not matter if they were there or not. They also indicated that the school was nothing more than a place to meet up with other young people. Students did not talk about going to school for lessons or class.

Young Adult students stated that they had difficulties in attending all schools and from young ages until the present time. One student indicated that they felt like teachers were “power trippers” and were not earnestly there because they enjoyed their jobs. In the general discussion, students had difficulty pinpointing specific things that were the difficulties and struggles when they went to school.

After this general warm up discussion, students were then asked to rate thirty questions from 1 through to 5, 1 being the lowest impact and 5 the highest. A brief summary of the results follows:

Question number 14 on the questionnaire garnered the strongest response. A large majority of the students indicated that school was too boring and not meaningful. The second largest response indicated that students were not able to complete deadlines. When prompted as to why, they answered that this was a concentration issue. A majority of the young adults stated that they had trouble completing work at home. Sixty percent of the students said that they had personal difficulty with previous school staff. A majority of the respondents indicated that the winter Longhouse ceremonies and their participation and attendance was a factor that had an impact on their success and attendance at previous schools. The final question that had a large majority response was that students had conflict with other students in previous schools.

This questionnaire was administered one interviewer. The Director of the centre verified the results.