

# Promising Practices from an Indigenous Worldview

Presented by Hulitan Family  
and Community Services Society





# Hulitan Family and Community Services Society

Vision statement:

**Hulitan empowers Indigenous families and future generations, walking alongside them and using the cultural principles of Respect, Honour, Connectedness, Humility and Integrity.**

Mission Statement:

**Hulitan preserves, unifies and advocates for Indigenous families by supporting healing and fostering resilience through culturally rooted programs, services and collaboration with community partners.**

**We offer programs and services aimed at ensuring Indigenous children, youth and families are connected to their culture and remain and/or are returned to safe and healthy environments. In all of our work, Hulitan promotes cultural awareness and fosters a positive cultural identity, by providing people with the skills and knowledge that can help aid in improving the lives of individuals, families and communities.**

# Worldview, what is it?



- The concept of worldviews has been described as mental lenses that are entrenched ways of perceiving the world (Olsen, Lodwick, & Dunlap, 1992).
- Leroy Little Bear described an Indigenous worldview as:

"Any individual within a culture is going to have his or her own personal interpretation of the collective cultural code; however, the individual's world view has its roots in the culture - that is, in the society's shared philosophy, values and customs. If we are to understand how Aboriginal and Eurocentric worldviews clash, we need to understand how the philosophy, values and customs of Aboriginal culture differ from those of Eurocentric cultures". (2000).

- “Language is a conveyor of culture” and the means which knowledge, skills, and cultural values are expressed and maintained.” (*Culture and Language as Social Determinants of First Nations, Inuit and Metis Health, pg.1*). Language holds the key to not only culture but also self-identity, well-being and self-esteem therefore culture cannot be discussed without speaking to language and the importance of oral tradition passed on from one generation to the next. Without the transmission of oral stories, a culture will disappear.
- “It can be said that all language is a means to translate thought. Like a canoe, it carries ideas from one person to another. These ideas when landed or breached, convey the intention of one person to another..... Our ancestors, for example, breached ideas about living that they wanted each following generation to consider.” Wedlidi Speck

# What does it mean to practice from an Indigenous Worldview?



- Worldview must be reflected in your practice, how you show up in the world, walk in this world and the footprints you leave.
- It is crucial to define your principles, what holds up your big house. Principles, values and practice are only as authentic as the people that define them. There needs to be a strong commitment at every level of the organization to live within the values or principles identified. This is a commitment to the people we serve, our families, and the community. This is a manner in which we honour those who came before us and those who will come after us, the commitment must be generational and collective.
- In 2016, Hulitan made a commitment to define our foundation, the four pillars that hold up our Big House, we spent a day together sharing our stories, learning from Elders and collectively deciding on the values that represent our organization and the work we do. These pillars/values inform all decisions in the organization and guide us in our journey to improve our services, honour our ancestors and leave a better world for those who will come after us. The pillars/values agreed upon are: Respect, Connectedness, Integrity and Humility.
- Once the pillars/values were agreed upon the agency discussed the manner in which we live into these values and the ways in which we want to improve. In addition, it was crucial to honour these values/pillars visually, through an expression of art.

RESPECT



HUMILITY



INTEGRITY



# RESPECT



## Respect:

- At Hulitan everyone is a leader.
- There is an open door policy and respect has no hierarchy.
- We walk alongside each, we all have a role and every role is as important as the next. The responsibility is collective, we all must do our part or the circle is broken. We make decisions collaboratively.
- We hold up and offer support to staff re: what they need to do their best work and give back to community in the best way.
- We support each other in good and bad times; we are a family
- Transparency information is shared, there are no secrets
- Demonstrating self awareness
- We are willing to show vulnerability, we respect and love each other enough to be honest
- This is reflected in the work done with families as well, the respect is full circle. People are able to enter Hulitan with non-judgement.
- We hold people up, we believe in the families and their gifts, sometimes we have to have the hope and belief until the family is ready to have it for themselves, that is the definition of taking a journey together.
- Respect is given to all people (no matter what they are facing or have experienced).
- Respect is also understanding our power and privilege, showing kindness, generosity and empathy.
- Approaching situations with love and care, learning from your experiences, sharing your teachings and learning.



### **Connectedness:**

- We are a family and community. Family members are welcome, we know each other enough to know when to joke to ease the tension, when someone needs silence or space.
- We come together to support each other and hold each other up.
- We are honest and transparent with each other and the families we serve.
- We are also connected to our community, through events, celebrations, partnerships and the “work”.
- We are a collective, everyone has a purpose, all members of the family are crucial .
- We are given the space to be our authentic selves, we are honoured for the gifts we bring.
- The people we serve are also part of our family and community. Relationship is everything in this work, people must be given the tools, resources and time to develop authentic relationships. We are dealing with the most important resource we have, families, people with feelings, a story and the ability to, if given a change the opportunity, make meaningful change in their lives.
- We are connected to everything around us. We are connected to each other, mother earth, father sky, our ancestors, the animals and nature. Connection is a commitment, we need to change the way we define work.
- Meaningful change comes from meaningful interactions and a true commitment to the “work”. If we continue to view children and families as statistics, outputs and dollar signs the outcomes will stay the same.
- We are a family and we work as a collective which in turn creates an environment of support. We all take the good and the bad together. The success of one is the success of all.

# HUMILITY



## Humility:

- No one is more important than the other. The whole organization is involved in strategic planning, operational decisions and practice decisions.
- Staff share their teachings, are encouraged to do training.
- Everyone is valued as someone with learning and a gift to share.
- We understand we are not experts in anything. Life is a journey of learning and that people, experiences and teachings come to you as lessons. We know we must be grateful for these lessons even when they are very hard.
- We acknowledge families as experts and we structure our programs so that there is collaboration that honors the families power and knowledge and allows family, community members, MCFD and staff to create plans and goals that reflect everyone's voice.
- We acknowledge the gifts we have been given and those of all people that come into our lives.
- We are able to hear criticism and respond in a good way. Humility comes from self awareness , understanding our triggers and doing our own healing.
- We recognize there is more to the work and our journey then what we see. We give thanks to the ancestors for their guidance.
- We acknowledge our mistakes, we are accountable and open to learning.
- We acknowledge our limitations.
- We show we are human, we are willing to be vulnerable.



# INTEGRITY



## Integrity:

- We practice with transparency and we are transparent with each other.
- Demonstrate honesty with ourselves and others.
- We acknowledge the tough stuff and are willing to have open honest conversations.
- We reflect on our practice and the decisions we make.
- We celebrate successes and failures.
- How we show up matches our words. We say we are a family and our actions reflect that. We say we work collaboratively and we do.
- We are accountable to the families we serve, the community, our partners and each other.
- We do not ask of others what we are not willing to do ourselves.
- We are aware of the systems we cannot change and we work within our reality to support positive outcomes, we go the extra mile.
- We are honest and realistic and what we can and cannot do.
- We believe in wrap around services no one should have to work or live in isolation.
- We walk our talk.
- Elders are present to guide us and hold us accountable.
- We encourage personal growth and providing opportunities to move into new positions within the organization.

# How does all this translate, does it work?



- Hulitán has little to no staff turnover. Most people that leave do so because they are moving out of Victoria.
- In 15 years only two people have gone on short term disability.
- People are willing to go the extra mile without asking what they will get out of it.
- Hulitán has been CARF accredited three times, with no more than three recommendations at every survey and received two mentions exemplary programs.
- Hulitán was mentioned twice in the 2015 Report to Canada's Premiers "as one example of a fully incorporated and professionally accredited child and family service agency committed to providing culturally sensitive and awareness programs and services to the Aboriginal community."
- In 2015/2016 Hulitán provided services to 456 community members through eight programs and services.
- In addition, through interventions we were able to support 68 children to remain in the family home, return 14 children from care and secure 3 out of care placements.
- Within the therapeutic programs 61% of clients completed their therapeutic goals. All services had between a 50 and 75 percent success rate.
- In 2016/2017 Hulitán provided services to 368 community members through eight programs and services.
- In addition, through interventions we were able to support 44 children to remain in the family home, return 25 children from care and secure 4 out of care placements.
- Within the therapeutic programs 68 % of clients completed their therapeutic goals. All services had between a 40 and 70 percent success rate.

In closing.....

I challenge you to think about how you can incorporate an Indigenous Worldview into your work or organization. It is important to look forward and honour the past at the same time.



Remember the choices we make in our practice impacts both the generations who came before us and those that will come after us.

I humbly thank you for your time and for listening to Hulitan's story.  
All my relations....