

## Young Warriors Network offers unique family healing workshops

by John Copley

Once again the Vancouver-based Young Warriors Network (YWN) is leading the way in the development of programs designed to foster and maintain strong family relationships. By utilizing the strengths of the individual through education and discussion, foundation director Lee Mason has initiated a unique program that not only unites the family, but also offers the important ingredients necessary to ensure that it stays that way.

Mr. Mason, an experienced and highly regarded workshop facilitator, says the unique program is "being hailed as one of the most significant workshops ever offered to help bring the family unit back together."

The five-day workshop, which is available for on-site delivery in communities across the country, embraces the philosophy that "two heads are better than one".

"The program is the only one of its kind in the country right now," explained the founder and director of the popular, fast growing Young Warriors Network, Lee Mason, during a recent interview with *Western Native News*. "The unique program helps families to get on track by providing them with the tools to first develop, then maintain, healthy family relationships. The workshop includes the involvement of both adults and youth and embraces a philosophy that enables the entire family unit to gain a better understanding of themselves through dialogue and realistic self-evaluation."

The Family Healing Workshop currently being promoted by the YWN contains three components. The first deals with the adults in the family, the second with the youth. The final component brings the adults and children together, reuniting the family in a healthy environment by using a "non-threatening approach and incorporating a resolution circle" to resolve family differences.

"The adult component," explained Mason, "begins with a real eye-opening videography that covers a variety of subject matter including early Native

history in North America, the arrival of strangers on the continent, the introduction of alcohol and its damaging influences on the family and community unit and the general attack on Native culture via residential schools and family separations."

The adult segment of the workshop examines in depth "the multi-generational impact on native families and their communities" today.

"We endeavor to answer questions and create solutions," assured Mr. Mason. "It's important for the whole family to understand why alcohol and other drugs are consumed to escape pain and how the cycle of addictions encourages family violence. To remove the obstacles in our path, we must first understand how they got there. Then we have to learn how to handle them, how to hurdle them. To do this it is important to understand why we are in the situation we are in; how we got here and how we can improve our lot by working together in unity."

The youth component of the Family Healing Workshop begins by covering much of the same material the rest of the family is learning to interpret.

"Damaging influences created over a long period of time," explained Mr. Mason, "are still having a major effect on people today. The youth component shows participants how to recognize and understand how these negative influences still affect our parents and our grandparents, and how we, as young people, are also caught up in the non-productiveness of it all. The component deals with getting the youth to first understand the issues that created the problems, then helping them come to terms with the situation by taking control of their lives, taking responsibility for their futures, and in the process becoming healthy role models in their communities.

Lee Mason is a well-known workshop facilitator with a reputation for honesty and integrity. Genuine in both his philosophy and approach, Lee is also well known for delivering positive results. During the past four years he's facilitated numerous youth empowerment workshops, including youth counselor training programs, across B.C. and Alberta. He's also hosted the Scared Straight Program and facilitated numerous adult trauma workshops. Focused on assisting each participant that attends his education and healing workshops, Lee Mason also provides additional support by encouraging one-on-one sessions.

"Many people have concerns and issues they don't feel comfortable sharing in a group situation," explained Mason. "Sexual abuse, residential school nightmares, loss of loved ones, there are many subjects that people have difficulty talking about. It's imperative to be there for those people, to encourage them, and help them find ways to deal with their specific grief or

crisis. Once we find a way to put the past in perspective, there is no hurdle that cannot be overcome, no goal that cannot be attained."

Participants in the Family Healing Workshop learn what the term 'non-functioning family' means. They also deal with subjects such as family violence, family roles and codependency. They discuss and learn about the family cycle of alcohol, separation, divorce and drug abuse. Most important, they learn how to end the cycle by opening lines of communication by utilizing kind words and good examples.

To learn more about the Young Warriors Network Family Healing workshops contact Lee Mason by calling (604) 983- 9813 or 604 313-2896.