

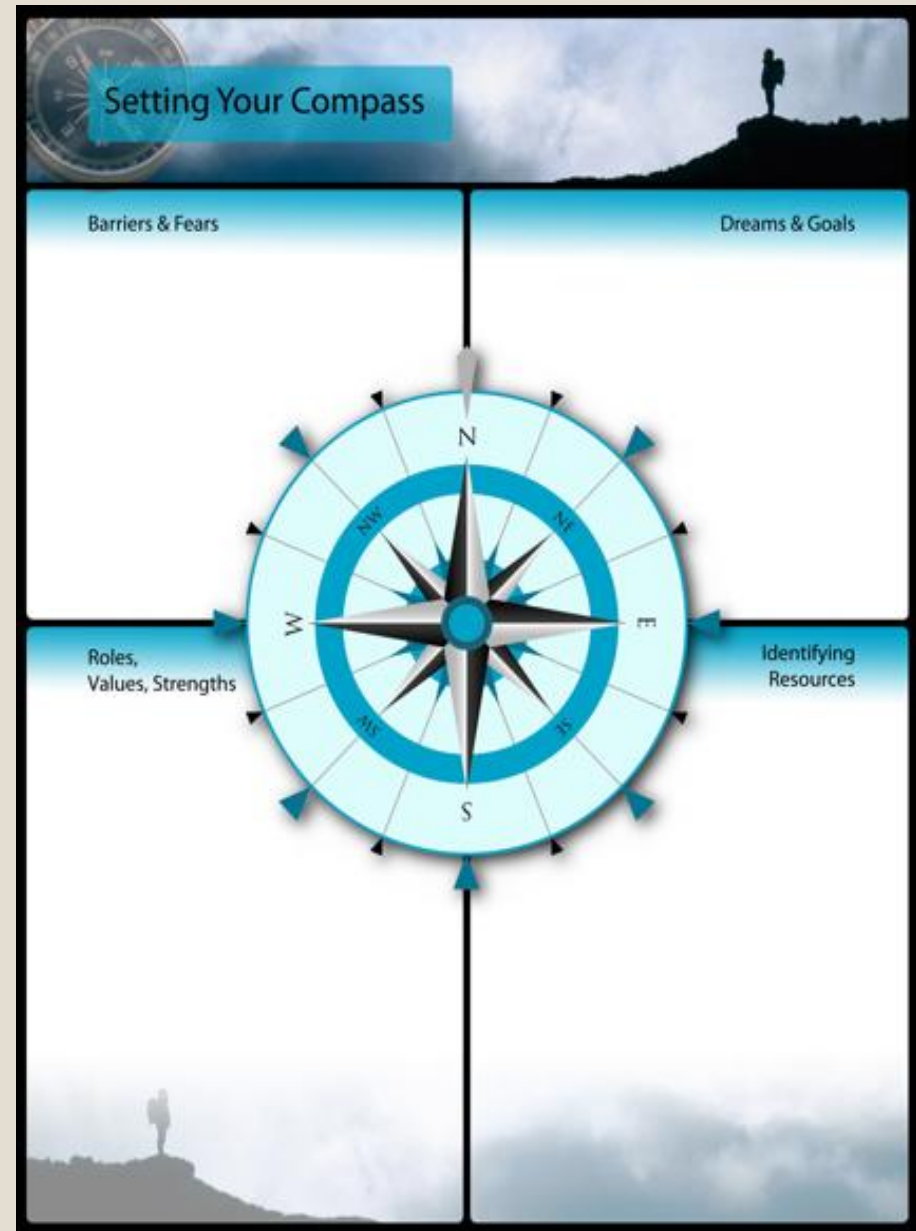
The Voice of the Earth: Connecting with Nature as a Pathway to Resilience

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With the Youth of Kaslo
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Research Approach –

<http://www.pathstothefuture.com/>

- Ethnographic-Narrative Approach:
 - Multiple data sources: archive searches, interviews with community residents, narrative interviews with youth, life-space mapping, poetry, photography, possible selves, lifelines and turning points
 - Outcome –
 - Youth developed *Future Bound: A Lifeworks Expedition Workshop for Rural Youth* which they co-facilitated with me
- Funding provided by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council



Setting

- Population 1 000 (Kootenay-Boundary Region)
- Primary industries: accommodation and food service, resource industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting), and retail trade (StatsCanada, 2003)
- Less than 30% of the working population employed year round full time, compared to the provincial average of 48%.
- Unemployment rate was 18.4 %.(aged 15 to 24)



Setting

- Men were employed in full-time, full-year work more than twice as often as women
- Average total income for men was twenty percent higher than the average total income for women (StatsCanada, 2007).
- 28.5% of families in the area earned below \$30,000 in annual income.
- 70% of women were or had been single parents.



McCreary Adolescent Health Survey 2003

Health Issue	British Columbia (Avg.)	Kootenay-Boundary Region
Marijuana Use	37%	50%
Alcohol Use	57%	71%
Injured in past year	34%	42%
Drove car after alcohol use and/or drug use	25%	33%
Engaged in binge drinking in past month	25%	38%
Seriously considered suicide in past year	16%	19%
Suicide attempts	7%	13%

Participants

- 40 participants who were between the ages of 17 and 20 and who had lived in the area for at least 5 years.
- 25 females, 15 males
- Research took place over 6 week period followed by an additional 3 week period two months later
- Follow-up meetings over the next 3 years



A Moment in Time

Over the past 3 years prior to my research and one year into the research project out of the small cohort of those aged 17 to 21:

- 3 youth died in one car accident

- 3 youth died in a second car accident

- 1 youth died in a skiing accident

- 2 youth died in an avalanche

- 4 youth suicides

Plus an increase in mental health issues - hospitalized for severe depression /manic behaviours/drug overdoses





Rhizomes



My life began as a tiny seed, fragile and delicate.
Unnoticeably, my roots reached down and took hold.
As the years went by, they grew stronger and stronger,
Nourished by the love of those around me.
Fed by snow-capped peaks and spirited rivers,
Fueled with warmth and shelter.

In time, a rhizome formed, stretching and spreading,
Traversing over well-known fields and valleys,
Reaching for untrodden pathways, unexplored terrain.
Branching out and seeking new sustenance,
Excited by free-living exploits
Ferreting out unknown sources of stimulation.

Entwining with other roots and branching into complex patterns,
Surprisingly, out of this seemingly convoluted mass,
A variegated, multifaceted plant – surfaces.

I am

I am the snow falling on the mountains,
the water rushing in the river,
the Stellar's Jay laughing from the cedar,
the coyote's yelp across the meadow.

I am the baby gazing in wonder,
the toddler with scabby knees,
the child with dirty hands and face,
the adolescent with tears in her heart.

I am the actor strutting my stuff across the stage,
the joking, laughing, silly one,
the one who is made fun of,
the one who never could fit.

But I am also the one who sits by rivers and lakes,
who feels peace and forgiveness,
who whispers her heart's desire in animal
ears,
who joyously races with the wind.

Grace



WHO AM I?

I am the giant cedars that stand majestically by rushing rivers.

I draw up nutrients from deep within the forest's bed.

I embrace black bears within my womb-like trunks and protect them from the winter cold.

I raise my arms in the presence of the wind and rain and delight in the delicate snowflakes that perch on needle tips.

I am sturdy and unshakable.



*I am the glacier-fed lake sustained
by alluvial silt.*

*I am the vast depths of silent cold
waters that hold secrets of past
ages.*

*My bottomless depths so
seemingly dead, bring life to
mountain rivers.*

*I am a mirror for lone evergreens
clinging to fissures in granite slabs
and the sunny avalanche lilies that
push up through melting snow.*

*I am the source of nourishment for
the valleys below.*



I am the glaciers atop distant mountains, dirty around the edges and salty to the taste.

Red algae decorate my icy surface highlighting my shiny points.

I surprise unwary travellers with the birth of a deep crevasse.

I am the cold wind that blows across the timeless icy mass bringing fresh mountain air to the valleys below.

I am the last remnants of another age, slowly creeping down into gouged out mountain valleys, changing slowly in times of rapid change.



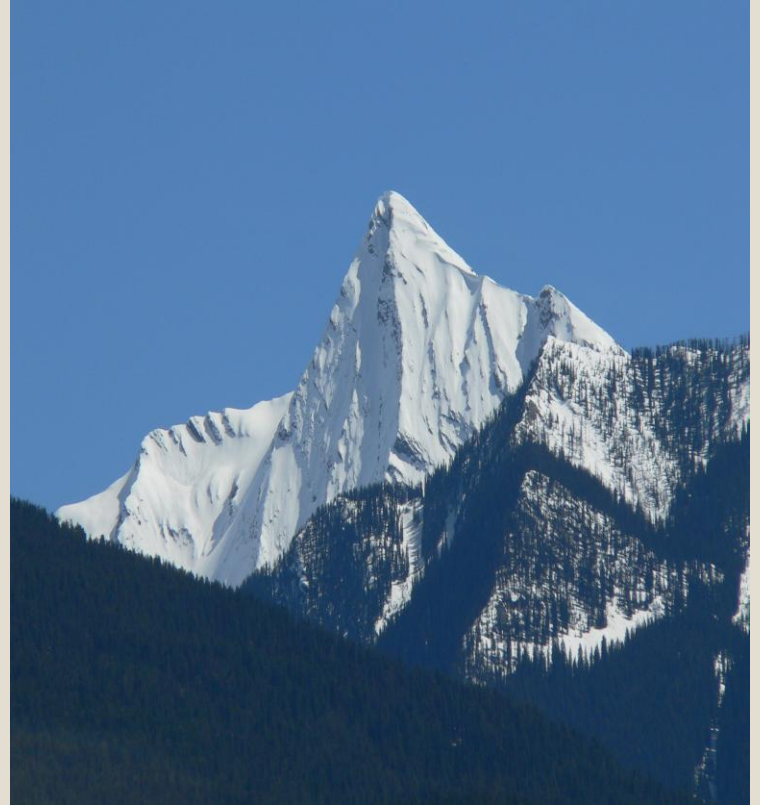
*I am the mountains that have
endured the passage of time.*

*Mineshafts cut through me and my
once pristine green quilt has been
shaved in places so that my carefully
made soil spills down
rushing streams into the valleys
below.*

*My ridges are not quite so sharp
and my pointed edges have been
filed by the wind and rain and
snow.*

*I am all that is tenacious, persistent,
robust, and hardy.*

*I am the backbone of British
Columbia, rated high among the
beauties of the world*



Relationship with Nature



- Provides youth with a sanctuary for healing, a place to achieve new perspectives and to embrace new possibilities.
- When saturated with chaos and stress, the physical environment offers a sense of place, of rootedness.
- Expands the definition of mental health from an emphasis on individual autonomy to include the capacity for experiencing mutually enhancing relationships and reciprocity with nature.
- The natural world presents another external protective factor.
- If our relationship with the natural world is healthy, then our human relationships are likely to be healthy as well.

Resiliency



Thanks for listening to the voices of youth



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