

**Sheona Motroni
Churchill Fellowship Report
August, 2007**

**The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust
Churchill Fellowship 2006**

**The Department for Community Development (WA) Churchill
Fellowship**

- To attend the International Reclaiming Youth Conference in South Dakota, USA and participate in skill based training seminars involving educators of severely challenging adolescents in schools.

- To visit education sites in the United States applying strength based interventions successfully with troubled teens. Issues around the fellowship include building positive peer cultures, addressing racism and substance abuse, supporting families and students in crisis in our secondary schools.

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Acknowledgements

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2. Executive Summary

2.1 Fellowship Goal

- To attend the International Reclaiming Youth Conference in South Dakota, USA and attend skill based training seminars involving educators of severely challenging adolescents in schools.
- To visit sites in the United States applying strength based interventions successfully with troubled teens. Issues around the fellowship included building positive peer cultures, addressing racism and substance abuse, supporting families and students in crisis in our secondary schools.

2.2 Fellowship Highlights

- Attending a conference where over 300 people who work on the ground with troubled kids from all over the world, came together to share their thinking and skills. A highlight of this experience was a visit to Crazy Horse Memorial in South Dakota where practitioners and students alike, were given recognition for their achievements and courage.
- The beautiful setting for the training in Life Space Crisis Intervention at Spearfish Canyon. The schedule was intense and provided a great opportunity to practice skills in connecting meaningfully with challenging kids, in their own life space.
- The many, many educators and students in educational settings in Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York State, who openly shared aspects of their education freely.

2.3 Major Conclusions, Dissemination and Implementation

The Churchill Fellowship allowed me to explore the many ways State Education Departments, Public Middle, High Schools, Alternative Schools and BOCES were building cultures of inclusivity, restorative practices and strength based interventions for troubled adolescents in the education sector.

The conclusions of this report are listed as recommendations in the later stages of the report. Each section of the trip yielded many specific key findings also highlighted in the report. The key conclusions are centred on:

- The importance for a co-ordinated interagency responses to the issues surrounding troubled adolescents in our schools
- The need for a commitment by the WA Public Education System to support a strategic response to meeting the needs of challenging and vulnerable youth within our secondary schools
- The need to promote and practice preventative, restorative approaches and strength based programs for challenging youth within the education sector and within school communities.

Since my return, I have already been an integral part of the development and trial of pilot Secondary Behaviour Centres in Western Australia. These centres, announced by the Minister for Education, in January, are due to open in October, 2007. Much of the learning I have gained through my Churchill Study, particularly the professional training, is currently being disseminated in a managed process, through the establishment of these pilot programs.

The phases of dissemination for the remainder of 2007 include:

- Presenting this report to Ms Sharon O'Neill, the current Director General of Education and to colleagues and staff, within the Behaviour and Well Being Directorate of the Department of Education.
- Presenting this report formally to the Department of Child Protection, my Churchill sponsor.
- Presenting this report to the Department of Corrective Services and to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Department staff.
- Applying the knowledge and skills from the study directly to the establishment of the WA Secondary Behaviour Centres in the Perth metropolitan and regional areas.
- Developing a series of professional learning modules based on the training I received during my trip. This will offer secondary schools access to contemporary strategies, based on current research, in restorative practices in schools and strength based intervention with challenging youth.
- Present the findings of this report within the local communities to promote the building of restorative school communities to meet the needs of our most troubled youth.

Key Definitions

Throughout the report, reference is made to a range of terms, programs and concepts that need further clarification. These terms are described below:

Special Education Services

Students who receive additional funding in terms of resources and support due to:

- Severe Cognitive Impairment
- Vision/Hearing Impaired Services
- Social/Emotional Impairment
- Learning Disabled

Alternative Education

Students who are mandated or choose to, attend part time or full time at an alternative educational setting. These students include those:

- On brief placements during out of school suspension/short intervention
- On mandated court placements
- On specialised individualized programs due to prolonged school failure/achievement of GEd (General Education Programs)
- Teenage Mothers
- Seeking specialist services eg Charter Schools

Charter Schools

Charter Schools exist within the Public Education Sector and provide an alternative educational option. Specialist programs and subjects are offered.

BOCES - Board of Co-operative Education Services – New York State
BOCES provide a range of education and training alternatives in a regional area. Schools contribute funding towards the development and use of these facilities. BOCES are intended to compliment the educational programs provided by school districts and other agencies in a local area.

Services include:

- Special Education
- Alternative Education

Circle of Courage

The Circle of Courage is a strength based model of Positive Youth Development first described by Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern in their book, Reclaiming Youth at Risk. The model integrates the work of early youth work pioneers, Native American philosophies of child rearing and contemporary resilience research. The model is based on 4 universal growth needs of children:

- Belonging
- Mastery
- Independence
- Generosity

First introduced in 1990, the Circle of Courage model has been applied world wide in schools, treatment facilities and youth development programs. RAP Training embraces Circle of Courage principles and is now being delivered by accredited trainers in North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Response Ability Pathways (RAP)

This 3 day training course outlines the underlying assumptions, key principles and skills practice for reaching vulnerable youth. Participants are taught strategies for connecting, clarifying issues and restoring relationships with young people in crisis. It is designed to teach the skills that will help all young people develop belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. RAP offers an alternative to punitive and permissive approaches for working with challenging kids. The focus is building student strengths and enlisting them in finding solutions. RAP fosters an approach which develops self discipline and self respect in students. The training is cross sectorial and trains through the use of engaging videos and small group role plays

Life Space Crisis Intervention (LSCI)

This 5 day intensive training program developed by Nicholas Long, emphasizes key therapeutic strategies in helping students learn alternatives to aggressive, self demeaning or disrespectful behaviours. It is currently being used successfully by teachers, counselors, alternative and special educators, care professionals and juvenile justice workers. LSCI uses a combination of psycho dynamic, cognitive, behavioural and pro social methods to plan powerful treatment intervention. It uses the student's current life space as the basis of teaching new skills. The course is largely practice based with participants engaging in a range of role plays.

Positive Peer Culture

This approach emphasizes the responsibility students have to help one another and aims to build a comprehensive system for building positive youth subculture. Originally developed only for delinquent youth, PPC is now used in a wide range of settings, including schools and specialist programs. Students learn to identify problems and work towards resolution with the help of their peers. It is constructed around the development of small intimate groups of around 9 or 10 youth and an adult leader. Students are fully involved in the helping. A central value is caring and is modeled by staff groups working with students. The aim is to harness the power of the group to build positive rather than negative peer cultures.

Aggression Replacement Training (see Reference Section)

An approach used widely to develop social skills, anger control and moral reasoning. Program services students moderate to high risk on juvenile court assessment.

Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (Cornell University)

Project designed to provide a crisis prevention and intervention model for residential facilities. Includes:

- De-escalation techniques
- Prevention strategies
- Crisis management
- Reducing injury to staff
- Developing learning circles in organisations

21st Century Programs

Offers academic enrichment in areas of high poverty or low performing schools. Helps students meet state standards in academic core subjects and offers other educational services to families

3. Introduction

As an educator of students with special needs and challenging behaviour for over 20 years, with the Western Australian Department of Education, and as a sessional lecturer in the area of classroom management at Edith Cowan University, I had always been interested in contemporary research related to school alienation, resilience in young people, managing challenging behaviour in schools and more recently the emerging field of brain science with regard to students at risk.

For many years, I had established my own beliefs from the field about what worked with troubled young people in crisis and what didn't but within the field of education, I could not find a philosophical framework that matched my perspective. There were a plethora of paradigms with which to view the troubled youth in schools but most led to fragmentation when it came to service delivery. Having worked in a range of educational settings for marginalized youth over many years, I believed that the need for a model that did less to label children and more to address and strengthen their potential to succeed must exist somewhere. More importantly, I was searching for a model that acknowledged the needs of the child from a multi dimensional perspective.

In 2003, I first became interested in the work of Dr Larry K Brendtro, an educator, youth worker, psychologist and author, after I heard him lecture on the Circle of Courage Model of working with challenging youth, at Edith Cowan University. I began to read his many books and articles, which were better known in justice and welfare circles than in education in WA.

The Circle of Courage model not only aligned beautifully with my other reading but I believed it offered a framework for what I knew from the field was best practice for working with marginalized students. It articulated clearly that meeting the universal needs of these students in crisis, was of paramount importance and I came to believe that our schools could apply the principles of this model when planning for challenging students.

Rather than focus on approaches aimed at providing labels, diagnosing deficits and focusing on their weaknesses. I saw an opportunity to learn how schools could manage these most vulnerable young people within the school community, using a strength based model. I consulted with Larry Brendtro to find districts and schools applying the principles of his work and organized to undertake specialist training at the Reclaiming Youth Seminars in South Dakota.

4. Trip Overview

Dates	Location	Sites
May 2 -May 7 2007	Charlevoix, MICHIGAN	Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District (Vikki Seger) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orion Alternative Program • East Jordan High School • Harbour Springs
May 7-May 14	Albion, MICHIGAN	STARR Commonwealth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Program (2 Cottages) • Montcalm School • (“No Disposable Kids”) • Accountability/Evaluation Unit
May 14-May 19	Du Bois, PENNSYLVANIA	Du Bois School District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle/High School • Perseus House, Eerie Buffalo • Pressley Ridge, Ohio pyle Campus
May 19-22	Gowanda, New York	Gowanda Middle School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21st Century Program
May 23-25	Ithaca, New York	Ithaca School District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TST Boces • Tim Lehmann Alternative School
May 29-31	Albany, New York	New York State Department of Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Education Director • Meeting of Alternative Program providers in NY State
June 16-26	Rapid City, South Dakota	Reclaiming Youth International Conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Day Response Ability Pathways Training • 1.5 Day Accredited Trainer Program • Conference Participation
June 27-July 2	Spearfish Canyon, South Dakota	Life Space Crisis Intervention Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Day Training Program

5. Summary of Visits and Key Findings

The following summary gives a short description of the sites visited and aims to outline key findings from each visit. The structure was centred around answering the following questions

- What service/s are provided by this site?
- What elements of strength based intervention are evident?
- What are the key findings from this site?

1. Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District (Northern Michigan)

Contact: Vicki Seger
Behaviour Specialist/Attendance Officer K-12
MEd, Certified RAP Trainer

Context

Vicki Seger was one of the original teachers trained and accredited to deliver Response Ability Pathways to teachers in Char-Em ISD. Along with Jim Marquoit and Nancy Kohler, this specialist behaviour team run training sessions with whole school staff, administration teams, specialist staff in alternative and special education settings and parent groups settings across Char-Em School District. The workshops are well established and continue to be well received by schools, with a large number of teachers participating in either Response Ability Pathways or Life Space Crisis Intervention Training.

Sites Visited

- East Jordan Public Schools (K-12)
- Harbour Springs Public Schools (K-12)

- Special Education Schools/Programs
- Orion Program (Boyne Valley Education Centre)

Key Findings

- Resource support in the form of specialist support services, are available to students K-12, who are identified as having emotional difficulties in this ISD. Students with identified emotional and behavioural difficulties are recognized as being at risk and are catered for under the banner of special education services. The categories for special education services were very different to our own ie: classification of emotional/behavioural difficulties

- The ISD Team were promoting a common restorative philosophy amongst schools and were delivering services to empower schools with strategies to build restorative models of practice, thus preventing the use of more coercive, less inclusive methods of managing challenging youth.
- A great deal of energy had been invested in promoting the Circle of Courage model and the RAP and LSCI Training to regular teaching and non teaching staff. The feedback from school administrators and teachers being extremely positive.
- One particular secondary school principal had embedded the principles of the model into the school mission statement and ensures that every new staff member undertakes training in Response Ability Pathways.
- The ISD acknowledged the need for both intervention and prevention and offered a range of alternative educational structures for students with emotional and behaviour problems. The Orion Program provided a short term placement aimed at reconnecting students with their home school after a period of specialised intervention. The staff at this centre, including bus drivers and ancillary staff, were all routinely trained in RAP and/or LSCI.
- I spoke with students at the Orion Program who were determined to let me know that their placement in this program was a major factor in turning around their lives
- I left this site believing firmly in the need to embed restorative models at all levels of a system/school administration. The support of the administration at all levels was a significant factor in the impact of strength based interventions on the ground.

2. STARR Commonwealth
 Albion Campus, Michigan
 Tuesday 9th May – Thursday 11th May

Initial Contact: Rochelle Rocco – Administrative/Executive Liaison to the President for Programs, Communication and Major Events
 Focus of Visit

Context

- STARR Commonwealth was founded in 1913 by Floyd Starr. It began as a small home for wayward boys and has grown to be a national leader in strength based practices for children and youth. STARR Commonwealth has multiple campuses across Michigan and Ohio and offers a diverse range of services to troubled youth from all over the USA.

Programs offered include:

- Residential and non residential treatment facilities for adjudicated and non adjudicated youth
- Private residential treatment programs
- Specialised foster care
- Day Treatment and After school programs
- School Training for Educators

Program Highlights

- Strength based, competency driven programs
- Positive Peer Culture
- Co-therapy
- Life Space Crisis Intervention
- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention
- Relapse Prevention Plan
- Psychiatric Services
- Life Skills Education
- Reintegration Plans
- Service Learning/Restorative Activities
- Family Counselling
- Substance Abuse Education & Counselling

Visit Details

Albion Campus Only

Services up to 200 students (adolescent males)

16 different homes

Each Village has separate administration team

1. Maple Village

- 62 Residential Students adjudicated by the court system. Referred by the courts or other care agencies.
- Students divided into cottages of around 12-14 students and case managed by team (shift basis)
- Students grouped primarily by the nature of the offence eg Low Offenders, Sexually Reactive
- Delinquency was used as a term to describe offending youth categorised as low, medium/open
- There is no lockdown at STARR
- Staff include Team Leader (Senior Clinician), Cottage Co-ordinator, Family Support Worker, 4 Youth Specialist, 2 Night Staff and 2 teachers
- Systematic process for behaviour Information whilst at STARR (URI-Data Collection System))
- Teachers certified as Special Educators with specialist training
- All units used Positive Peer Culture as a major strategy for working with students

Other Visits included Kresge Unit, Kindel Unit and Besser Units

2. Research and Evaluation Unit

- Administers range of intelligence and achievement tests on entry
- Collection of baseline information
- Clinical Interview and recommendation for placement

3. Visit to Montcalm Private Residential Treatment Centre

4. Visited Training Arm – “No Disposable Kids”

Key Findings

- This residential treatment facility has a long history of successful outcomes for troubled children. The strength based culture was evident in all aspects of the campus, demonstrated by the organizational structure and the caring relationships between people. The surroundings are beautiful and well maintained. There was no evidence anywhere of damage to property/no vandalism, no graffiti. A sense of pride in the surroundings was evident when I spoke to the boys. This facility offers a real alternative to incarceration with a real opportunity for the boys to resolve their issues and reconnect with their local communities.
- There was a strong emphasis on evaluation and accountability. An evaluation collected a range of qualitative and quantitative data on the progress of the boys and continued data collection after release.
- STARR offers 24/7 intervention. Because students are residential, the opportunity to engage meaningfully with them and to fully address the issues behind their problems is potent. Effective and all encompassing multi dimensional individual growth plans reflected a constant whole team focus on empowering students and supervising plans aimed at meeting specific student needs. Clothing, food, accommodation, counselling, educational and health needs are delivered by professionals, all on one site. I believe this kind of facility would benefit greatly those students at medium to low risk of offending in our state.
- Staff expectations of students were high. There was a strong belief in setting standards of behaviour that perhaps to an outside eye might seem tight, however the students appeared to enjoy the structure and boundaries that the program offered. I observed students moving between classes, handing in homework, engaging in group meetings (PPC) and participating in lessons. There was a high standard of politeness from the boys at all times. Students educational programs offered the same certification as they would receive in mainstream schools but there were small classes and specialised teaching staff.
- STARR Albion Campus enrolled no girls. The general perception from staff was is that in this setting, the presence of females would detract significantly from the highly therapeutic environment. STARR offered co-ed and specialised girls programs on other campuses.

- All staff shared a commonality of purpose and projected a climate of care. The use of PPC throughout STARR focused on assisting and building responsibility for others and was evident throughout. A major responsibility was to ensure new members are integrated into the group and made aware of the culture. I was impressed by the use of PPC principles amongst the staff as each team participated in group staff meetings. The term “development” allowed staff to assist one another to grow professionally in the workplace. As part of team meetings, staff use real work problem situations as opportunities to develop others. Although skeptical of the ability for people to do this I was amazed at the ability to staff to offer constructive advice and support for their colleagues
- Strong leadership was evident. Team Leaders met with staff on a weekly basis and included activities focused on building a positive culture.
- Staff were exceptionally aware of their positions as role models. They addressed each other in formal terms, dressed well. There was also a level of respect in relationships in both formal and informal settings. Staff had a strong sense of their roles and responsibilities and were strongly encouraged to grow by engaging in further education
- All staff undertakes 50 hours of Professional Development on entry, they are mentored in their role for sometime. “Partners in Empowerment” is a key text for new staff. An understanding of PPC principles were also important during induction
- Acknowledgement of family in the restorative program. A specialised role focused on working with the family of the young person was a part of the therapeutic team.
- Caseworkers follow up 3,6 and 12 months after exit
- Little evidence of behaviour modification practices. No evidence of high cost rewards, there were no time out rooms, behaviour charts or heirarchical interventions in classrooms. No reinforcement schedules were evident or specific scheduled rewards but more a focus on teaching discipline rather than imposing it. No expectation of bad behaviour was evident in the classroom eg no removal of sharp objects, door locks
- Commitment to prevention – “No Disposable Kids” was formed 5 years ago and provides prevention arm through training within the education system. Trains teachers K-12 in Life Space Crisis Intervention and whole school strategies for building restorative relationships in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Connecticut and Maryland. PD on Healing Racism, Partners in Empowerment
- Staff diversity was evident within teams. Acknowledging that not all staff were able to connect with certain individuals. All staff were of different gender and ethnicity, personal background and there was opportunity to work way up in organization.
- Community support arm/transitioned living in Detroit. The importance of back up support
- Growth in the Montcalm Program – Private fee paying residential students

3. Du Bois Area School District

Contact: Jeff McCombie

District Consultant in School District

Focus of Visit

- Application of RAP Training and Restorative Practices in a range of settings in Du Bois and in a range of alternative programs in Eastern Pennsylvania

Sites Visited

- DuBois School District

Key Findings

- DuBois High School evidence of a reduction in discipline (47% fewer discipline referrals) over a 4 year period due to a regional/community based response to youth development and extensive training across middle and high school teachers in Life Space Crisis Intervention. More recently Response Ability Pathways was given to all new teachers and classroom aides across the district. I read a series of testimonials and spoke to many teachers who conveyed a sense of feeling empowered in terms of creating positive student-teacher relationships and creating an awareness of student needs.
- DuBois Area High School offered a range of alternative programs to meet the needs of all students. Curriculum was flexible, relevant and responsive to student needs. Some of the innovative practices included an Afternoon School, Credit Intervention, Credit recovery, Partial and Full Time Cyber School, Summer School, Community Service projects and alternatives to suspension.
- DuBois Area High School had trained all staff in workshops on Discipline with Dignity (Curwin and Mendler 2000) Life Space Crisis Intervention (Nicholas Long/Mark Freado) Response Ability Pathways for all new staff.
 - Perseus House

A multi agency, collaborative, non for profit agency aimed at serving youth and families through education, skill building and therapeutic interventions to produce pro-social behaviour and healthy lifestyles. Operational Budget was 2007 is \$15.6 million with around 350 employees. Shared partners include Eerie County, Juvenile Probation, and Mental Health, Eerie School District and others Perseus House runs a range of Alternative Education Programs for City of Eerie

Key Programs

- Collaborative Intensive Community Treatment Program (alternative to residential) 24/7 supervision within the community
- Delinquency Prevention Program (in school/after school programs teaching anger management, pro social skills and building moral reasoning)
- Alternative Education (nearly 600 disruptive youth back on track) In school setting, small group instruction, life skills instruction)
- Charter School of Excellence (an incorporated public school of choice) Yrs 7 -12. Individualised learning plans focus on reading, writing and math and opportunities to explore non academic goals.
- Diverse range of residential programs court ordered, welfare dependent, mental health problems and/or drug and alcohol dependency. Age range for most is 12 years to 18 years

Key Findings

- Perseus House represented the ultimate model for a multi systemic, collaborative approach to working with very difficult adolescents.
- Staff training included Life Space Crisis Intervention and Aggression Replacement Training
- Pressley Ridge:
Ohiopyle Therapeutic Wilderness Camp
1500 Acres in Laurel Highlands of Western Pennsylvania

Guided by principles of Re-Ed, focuses on building therapeutic relationships, the camp provides the opportunity for kids to reflect on their behaviours and prepare them for reunification. Services socially and emotionally troubled youth 9 to 17 years who are seen to benefit from group milieu and can participate in outdoor programs. Licensed by Pennsylvania Dept of Public Welfare

The residential treatment program is for students with current DSMV-IV diagnosis, a psychiatric evaluation, require a higher level of care due to severity of symptoms, are unable to achieve in less restrictive environment, are referred by care managers. Students must have an IQ higher than 70. Referral comes from Juvenile Probation or Children, Youth and Family Services. They have been adjudicated delinquent or dependent. Students need to be able to plan, problem solve and evaluate activities.

Key Findings

- Places boys in a new challenging environment with the view that it presents an environment in which they have not experienced failure. I visited on a particularly wet, blustery day. Positive Peer Culture was clearly evident within this facility with the group responsible for decisions involving the way they live, the decisions they make and how they are made.
- Staff were well trained in LSCI, TCI and RAP
- Reflection meetings were held known as Pow Wows
- Conflict was managed by group problem solving
- Key emphasis – routine, structure, student directed planning, group needs addressed first (PPC) - Huddles
- The boys seemed to enjoy the challenges the environment presented.

4. Gowanda Middle School
Contact: Vicki Cocca
Co-ordinator – 21st Century Program

The 21st Century Program Gowanda School District

This project involved an after school care program at Gowanda Middle School. It works with around 40 children each day between 2pm and 4.30pm The focus of this program is to build stronger connections between the school and the community which is largely Native American. The Circle of Courage principles are highlighted within this program as it supports the belief that it is dangerous for kids to be alone and unsupervised. The principles of Circle of Courage were embedded into school community when Martin Brokenleg and Steve van Brockern were invited to address the whole community by Seneca Dept of Ed. There are two reservations Salamanca and Cattarungus (Gowanda) in the region.

Given the large number of Native American students, the Circle of Courage Philosophy was significant within the school culture. The principal, a Native American himself, was highly visible within the school and worked restoratively with students to maintain connections to schooling.

Key Findings

- The establishment of a Tribal Council/Peacekeepers Court
- Liaison between teacher/student/parent supported by a Title VII position. This role involved conducting home visits, teaching study skills and offered assistance in managing challenging behaviour
- The duality of cultures within this school was significant with a great deal of time and energy going into building a restorative community

- I found significant similarities between the issues faced by Native American students and our own Aboriginal students.
- A great deal of effort was given to celebrating the achievements of students overall and a sense of cultural pride was demonstrated within the school

5. Ithaca School District
Contact: Kim Fontana

TST Boces (Board of Co-operative Education) 37 in NY State School Districts. Schools in the Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga School District pay into BOCES Fund which offer a range of programs within in this community based facility
Visits

- a) Smith School
- b) TST Community School
- c) Lehmann Alternative Community School

These visits allowed me to explore some of the alternative structures and schools within the Ithaca School District. There were a range of services and options for students within this region.

Key Findings

- That the development of BOCES meant that a range of meaningful strength based interventions could be offered by a school district to meet a diverse range of student needs.
- That the creation of a true public alternative school (Lehmann) met the needs of students who, for whatever reason, found the traditional school setting did not suit them. The level of student and parent involvement in this the school governance was extremely high. Courses centered around contemporary issues in society. The school caters for 265 students in Years 6 to 11 and students gain entry only by application. The uniqueness of each student in this school was paramount. They are given freedom with responsibility. There is a demonstrated commitment to the importance of affective and creative aspects of education. Self directed learning and the fostering of self discipline is also a key feature of this school.
- An interesting aspect of Lehmann was the development of an Alternative Community Court. Students were trained in mediation and were encouraged to treat problems on a case by case basis.
- TST Community School provided a range of educational programs for young people. Students could complete their certificates of education at this facility and were taught by specialist staff. Some were trained in RAP and/or LSCI. Group meetings were held to identify and address issues raised by members of the group.

5. New York State Department of Education

I was invited to the New York State Education Department to participate in a regular meeting of Alternative Program educators in New York State. This was a valuable experience where I was able to share our practices in Australia in this area.

6. Response Ability Pathways Training and Accreditation to Train Workshop (extra day)

As an educator, I have participated in a range of professional learning programs over many years. This 3 day training was the most unique and relevant professional development I have ever participated in. My intention as a RAP trainer is to disseminate these skills to as many educators within the WA Public Education System

7. Life Space Crisis Intervention Training

This 5 day intensive program was definitely challenging and was comprised of people from a range of backgrounds including schools. My goal is to become a trainer myself, so I can deliver this very relevant and meaningful curriculum to teachers working with young people in crisis.

8. Reclaiming Youth International Conference

The Black Hills Conference presented. Highlights of sessions attended are outlined below

- Building Blocks of Reclaiming Schools

Steve van Brockern from Reclaiming Youth International discussed the major foundations in order to create circle of courage schools. A K-5 school applying the principles of Circle of Courage was profiled and shared strategies for embedding principles into the school community

- C*L*E*A*R: Looking Beyond Behaviour

Jim Marquoit, Nancy Kohler and Vicki Seger from Char-Em School District outlined the CLEAR problem solving process, based on RAP principles, for a pragmatic structure for effectively addressing the needs of troubled youth. Used extensively in schools throughout the Char-Em District.

- Voices of Youth: Girls from Woodland Hills

This session was absolutely inspiring as they shared how they are helping each other heal from their life trauma and change their behaviour in a strength based environment.

- Reconnecting through Restorative Justice Practices

Once again the Woodland Hills girls shared their narratives and perspectives on restorative justice. They shared stories of how they have become empowered through this process to restore the damage they've done and reconnect them to the community

- Engaging through Authentic Experience – The REACH Foundation
This session run by Jim Stynes of the REACH Foundation highlighted the work of this organization which runs camps and workshops for groups of young people in Australia. Trained leaders aged 17 -25 deliver the programs to 45 000 teens each year through the ability to engage and connect with youth at risk.
- Trauma Healing and Restoring the Brain
This session by Paul Baker, Compassion Associates, explored the impact of too much negative stress on brain function. The workshop explored current findings related to the impact of trauma on the brain and the importance of pro active intervention.

Key Findings from Conference Participation

- That the need for a similar conference within Australia to explore best practice in strength based intervention, where a range of agencies working with troubled youth can gather and share knowledge and skills.
- That many of the issues raised throughout the conference in both formal and informal settings pointed to universal similarities in the issues faced by youth internationally. In particular issues faced within indigenous groups.
- That the need to build community cultures which embrace strength based approaches to working with troubled youth is central to the work done with individuals
- That Positive Peer Culture is an effective approach used extensively within schools, specialist programs and residential treatment centres with severely troubled teens.
- That RAP and LSCI serve as excellent modules of training for both regular and specialist educators in schools.

6. Key Recommendations

The Churchill Fellowship has given me the opportunity to reflect on what is considered best practice for working with marginalised young people within the educational context. The following recommendations outline the key actions I believe are central to making a meaningful impact on the issues surrounding the most challenging adolescents, in our school communities based on the key findings of my fellowship.

Recommendation 1

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That a commitment is made within the Public Education and Training, Welfare, Justice and Health systems to respond in a coordinated and cohesive way to the needs of our most vulnerable youth within the community This recommendation relates to the development of an centralised Interagency Task Force aimed at strategically planning and supporting through resource provision and consulting, on a range of multi-agency initiatives to address the needs of young people in crisis.

Recommendation 2

That a commitment is made to developing an Interagency Residential Treatment Facility in Western Australia, which would provide services to support the needs of those students who are engaging in low/medium risk offending, have substance abuse issues and issues of neglect. Treatment plans would be multi systemic and all services would be provided on site. A multi disciplinary staff would be trained in strength based intervention practices. Students would engage in a meaningful program built on the principles of Positive Peer Culture and would engage in building key academic, vocational and social/emotional competencies. This facility could act as a prevention service with community based support structures to assist in community reintegration including pathways into restorative education programs. Family therapy services would also be integral to this model.

Recommendation 3

That Education and Training Department reflects, within their organisational structure, the ongoing need to embed restorative cultures and practices into school communities, through the establishment of a long term, strategic Restorative Education Initiative. This initiative, over a 5 year period, would focus on building a continuum of restorative practices within the education sector, for working with challenging and troubled youth in schools and districts. A model of coordinated service provision to education districts, school communities and to secondary teachers in classrooms statewide would be central to this initiative. A centralised Restorative Education Unit, within the Education Sector, would be responsible for the implementation of models statewide. Aspects of the initiative would include:

- The establishment of secondary school Restorative Education Hubs to promote strength based interventions and work to prevent future disconnection from schooling. The establishment of Restorative Learning Hubs in WA (2 per district) would act as service centres within a cluster of secondary schools. Hubs will offer short term, strength based intervention, teacher support and professional learning programs. The recruitment and training of specialised staff would be central to the success of such centres. The Hubs would also offer accredited professional learning modules and offer cross-sectorial training in skills for managing challenging youth.
- The establishment of localized off site public education alternative learning centres for our most alienated students 15 years and over. (1 per district in WA) All services would be linked to each other and jointly managed by localized interagency board, similar to the New York BOCES. Schools contribute funds to access a range of services provided by this regionalized group. Off site facilities have established links to Behaviour Hubs in Secondary Schools.

Recommendation 4

Recognition that collaboration between DET and the Tertiary Sector is central to working preventatively with our most vulnerable youth. Collaborative efforts may include;

- offering teachers accreditation for training
- providing a rigorous research base for planning intervention and evaluating change in the area
- offering placements for undergraduate training in a range of fields

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