The Warrior Leadership Program Model (2024)

In the summer of 2015, the Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ people of Hitacu on the West Coast of Vancouver Island asked community members for their perspective about the wants, needs, and hopes for their Nation's men. Men wanted to learn on the land and from the land. They were also looking for a brotherhood with whom to connect. Although initially intended for adult men, only teenage boys attended during the first two years of the program, so it was their vision that shaped what became the Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ Warrior program.

Over the last nine years the program has grown steadily in popularity, and the group continues to meet one night per week in Hitacu and one weekend per month in remote parts of Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ territory. On weeknights, Warriors learn a variety of skills and provide support to Elders and community members with yard work around their homes and wherever else that may be needed. Weekend training not only provides the young men with opportunities to apply the traditional knowledge and survival skills that they have learned on weeknights, but also to nurture their ability to lead small teams of younger Warriors.

In 2018 the Warrior program model was shaped to meet the needs of young men in Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, and in the fall of 2019, a 12-month pilot launch approach began with Kyuquot and Huu-ay-aht First Nations to co-create their version of the program. Today, the program model is hosted in six Nuu-chah-nulth Nations, weaving traditional and mainstream leadership and wellness teachings and practices together on the land to build capability, cultural pride, and confidence in young men. It has come to teach survival in three ways: wilderness survival skills if you get lost in the woods; how to survive and lead in emergency situations; and strategies to be resilient in today's society and in a changing climate. Please follow these links to hear the impact of this program from the voice of its participants: Ucluelet Warriors 2018, Huu-ay-aht Warriors 2020, Warrior Program Model 2021.

The young men who were teenagers when we began are now in their 20s and are teaching this program model to other Nations. In the summer of 2023, several of these young leaders came together to form the Nuu-chah-nulth Youth Warrior Family. The formation of this Indigenous youth-led non-profit society created a better support system for multi-Nation initiatives and an effective way to foster the program model to grow roots in other Nations throughout BC and beyond.

True to its roots, the program model continues to be guided by the voice of the young men who have created a consistent and safe space for all healthy community members to rebuild their cultural and personal pride by sharing their skills and stories. Please feel free to reach out anytime to learn more or ask any questions about this model.

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