

**A HEALING BALANCE:
PhotoTherapy, Art Therapy,
Coast Salish (and other Aboriginal) Clients,
and HIV/AIDS**

Canadian Art Therapy Association 2010 Conference Presentation Submission by:

Judy Weiser, R.Psych., A.T.R., Director of the PhotoTherapy Centre

50-word Conference Program Description

As HIV/AIDS continues to spread in Coast Salish and other Aboriginal communities, non-Native Art Therapists are increasingly asked to help Native clients cope during their healing journey with this virus. This Presentation shows how PhotoTherapy (and Photo Art Therapy) techniques involving ordinary personal snapshots, can be effective tools in helping.

ABSTRACT

The meaning (and intention) of both "art" and "therapy" differ from culture to culture -- and this is especially important to remember when interacting with Aboriginal clients in the complex interface between the two.

Creative expressions by Aboriginal children, youth, adults, and elders will often contain "secret layers" of particular colors, graphic symbols, iconic imagery, metaphoric communications, and spiritual meanings, that non-Native therapists might innocently overlook or culturally misunderstand, due to simply not understanding what they are seeing.

Cultural differences can produce nonverbal boundaries and hidden borders between therapists and clients, that too often remain unperceived, even while unconsciously interfering with mutual good intentions.

What AIDS means inside the heart, mind, and spirit of those living with HIV, will usually influence the condition of their physical health just as much as their medical situation. Emotional, mental, and spiritual concerns of clients who have the virus in their body will deeply affect the quality and direction of their lives and their relationships with loved ones.

This Presentation will briefly review some of the major psychosocial issues of HIV/AIDS which most strongly impact Aboriginal people, including addressing some key subtle differences that their traditional cultural backgrounds, multi-generational residential school abuse legacy, and more recent political circumstances, create in the form of unspoken barriers and differentially-perceived realities -- between non-Native therapists attempting to help, and their clients in whose worlds they must walk, in order to do so.

This Presenter, an early pioneer of PhotoTherapy and Photo Art Therapy, will share, discuss, and illustrate some of these techniques that she has found to be particularly helpful in her 20-plus years of private practice (where she long-specialized in counseling HIV-positive Coast Salish and other Aboriginal people, assisting their families and communities, and training others to do so).

The goal of this Presentation is to discuss and illustrate not only the "what" but also the "WHY" of several culturally-appropriate (and successful) techniques of PhotoTherapy-based Art Therapy interventions that can be especially successful with Aboriginal clients.

Bio and other information on next page.....

Presenter BIO

Judy Weiser is a Psychologist, Art Therapist, Consultant, Trainer, and early pioneer of PhotoTherapy techniques. Director of the PhotoTherapy Centre in Vancouver, she authored the classic text: PhotoTherapy Techniques: Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Albums. In her past three decades of private practice, she specialized in HIV/AIDS-related therapy with Aboriginal youth and adults (both on-reserve and street-involved). Often invited to counsel, teach and attend ceremony in lower-Island Coast Salish communities, Judy was recently asked to be one of the Counselors supporting Survivors at the upcoming Truth and Reconciliation Hearings in Winnipeg. *She can be reached at: jweiser@phototherapy-centre.com or 604-689-9709.*

Detailed OUTLINE for Presentation

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Presentation about HIV/AIDS Psychosocial issues in general
- 3) Presentation about HIV/AIDS Psychosocial issues specific to Aboriginal people (and in particular, Coast Salish people and communities)
- 4) Presentation about Art Therapy and AIDS
- 5) Presentation about PhotoTherapy (and Photo-Art Therapy) and AIDS
- 6) Presentation (accompanied by numerous slide examples and personal anecdotes) about Presenter's own work using these techniques in over 20 years of therapy with HIV-infected/affected Coast Salish (and other Aboriginal) clients.
- 7) Conclusion and discussion; handouts will be distributed

Presentation OBJECTIVES

By the time they leave, those attending will be able to

- 1) List some of the most significant psychosocial (emotional, mental, and spiritual) issues affecting all people infected by HIV
- 2) List some of the issues faced by most Coast Salish (and other Aboriginal) people infected or affected by HIV (and their communities), that are not as prevalent amongst non-Natives with this illness,
- 3) List some examples of useful PhotoTherapy and Photo Art Therapy techniques shown by Presenter to be effective in helping Coast Salish (and other Aboriginal) clients cope better with "life with HIV/AIDS"

References and other information on next page.....

Presenter's own PUBLICATIONS relevant to Presentation

([NOTE](#): [The full list of all references follows this excerpt](#))

- Weiser, J. (2006). HIV/AIDS-related counseling issues -- What my clients have taught me along the way. The B.C. Psychologist, Fall, 6-9
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