

UNIT 1

HISTORY, EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE SKILLS IN ALBERTA

OVERVIEW

Forecasts of the future indicate the need for individuals, social institutions and society to change their ways at a much more rapid rate than in the past. The methods of achieving such change will not result simply from recognizing the need. Nor will the changes come from technological changes alone. Although such inventions as the automobile, television and more recently the computer have resulted in major changes in life styles, society at large has not kept pace with implementing the needed coping strategies to deal effectively with this rapid change. **Why is this?**

It may be because we ignore the signs of social crises and react to them only after they occur rather than anticipate and plan ahead to prevent them. In other words, we expend our resources on short term, temporary solutions rather than invest in prevention. We subscribe to the view that human-well being is the product of a good economy and attempt to use economic solutions to social problems.

There is at present a serious gap between the national desire to produce human change on a massive scale and the necessary educational, welfare, technological and manpower resources to meet this objective.

Perhaps the most important factor is that in spite of the rapidly changing nature, scope and complexities of social problems, our institutions continue to use traditional methods to deal with them.

Economic development programs are necessary, however as substitutes for social programs, they will not of themselves resolve the problem. **More than money is needed, more than re-allocation of resources is needed; a change in approach and methodology is required.**

It is increasingly recognized that *social inventions* are required to effect the human and social changes that will improve our present society and ensure a measure of success for the future.

A social invention may be defined as a law, procedure or an organization that affects the ways people relate to themselves and to the world around them.

Life Skills training is an example of such a social invention that is based on some very important theoretical formulations used in creating the Life Skills course.

The Life Skills Course of Saskatchewan NewStart represents a serious attempt to integrate educational and psychotherapeutic principles and techniques for the development of personal competence in many aspects of life. The Life Skills Course as it was originally developed, and as it continues to be delivered by **Life Skills Training Centres**, teaches students those skills or effective behaviors which enable them to take charge of their own lives **responsibly**; whereas many social institutions treat their clients as dependents thus fostering a continuing dependency. The Life Skills Course represents, therefore, not only a promising training/counseling technique but also a new model for human and social development programs.

DEVELOPMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN NEWSTART LIFE SKILLS

The initial theoretical formulation for Life Skills training was made in 1965 by Winthrop Adkins and Sydney Rosenberg when they were employed by the YMCA in Bedford-Styvesant, New York City, to find some means of helping inner city youth who lived in poverty on the streets. They discovered that one commonality in this target population was the lack of those skills required to function in the main stream of society. In reality what they were lacking were basic life skills that would enable them to function effectively in all areas of their lives. In their proposal for a youth training project called Training Resources for Youth (TRY), the two psychologists put forth their ideas explicitly.

In 1967 the Canadian government through the Department of Regional Economic Expansion gifted each province with a sum of money to commemorate Canada's centennial. This project was called "NewStart". Each province used its funds differently. The province of Saskatchewan targeted its funds for use in developing human potential. With this as a goal, the life skills knowledge base was acquired from New York.

In November of 1968, Saskatchewan NewStart, in Prince Albert, formed a task force under the direction of Douglas Toombs to prepare plans to create a Life Skills course along the lines suggested by Adkins and Rosenberg. The initial draft was prepared by a group in Washington, D. C. but the design laid down in New York by the two psychologists **was not followed closely and the result was simply a series of group dynamic experiences rather than a series of learning situations.**

In mid 1969, a Life Skills division was created by Saskatchewan NewStart. Ralph Himsl was appointed manager of the project which included course writers, researchers and teachers who filled the role of coaches. This division was given the resources to create, conduct, evaluate and re-develop the Life Skills course.

The design of the original lessons went through several generations. New concepts were formulated and put into effect. An evaluation phase was added to each lesson to involve students actively and constructively in the evaluation of what they had learned and how they could use what they had learned in their own life situations. In addition, methods of **behavioral rehearsals** were incorporated into the lessons. This had the effect of making the lessons **behavioral** as well as **cognitive**.

This change was an important improvement because the original formulations expected students to gain information from multi-media kits, and each other. The NewStart Life Skills course intended that they not only get information but once having been taught a skill, there was an expectation that the student would gain a degree of competence in using the skill through required behavioral rehearsals called "skill practice". **Knowledge alone was not enough.** If the student did not **act** on what he knew - the experience was fruitless.

A further innovation was the life skills **coaching**. Faced with the problem of training teachers to deal with attitudes and behaviors rather than simply knowledge on the one hand, and their relative lack of constructive experience with disadvantaged people on the other, Saskatchewan NewStart, according to D.S. Conger, Executive Director, Saskatchewan NewStart, decided that it might be more appropriate to train mature, experienced, fluidly intelligent adults to conduct the course.

The name “**coach**” was chosen because coaches are associated with skill training and motivational techniques in their training programs. Furthermore, the term coach does not have the second class connotation of many titles given paraprofessionals. This work with coaches led ultimately to the preparation of a Life Skills Coach Training course.

To invent or prepare the course was one thing, but to have it adopted and used was another. Social inventions are notoriously slow in becoming adopted by social institutions. It has been estimated that it takes 35 years for the average educational innovation to be used in half the schools. Someone once said that “it is easier to move a graveyard than to change a curriculum”. The same resistances have taken place with the Life Skills course.

Saskatchewan NewStart prepared the course because there was an identified need, and they had a vision - a belief in the idea and its possibilities. But time and funds were running out and very little was done to sell the program to other institutions.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE SKILLS IN ALBERTA

Mr. D.S. Conger, Executive Director of Saskatchewan NewStart Canada, in his attempt to interest other institutions in Life Skills, recognized the possible application of Life Skills in rehabilitative programs for psychiatric patients. He contacted Walter Coombs of the Canadian Mental Health Association (C.M.H.A.). This resulted in C.M.H.A. in Edmonton hosting a two day Life Skills seminar in November 1971. It was conducted by NewStart personnel. Approximately sixty representatives from a wide variety of community, social service agencies, educational, correctional, medical and rehabilitative institutions were in attendance. A recommendation from this seminar gave C.M.H.A. the mandate to test the Life Skills program in Alberta.

At the provincial annual meeting February 1972, C.M.H.A. accepted the responsibility of initiating a Life Skills program as its direct service priority. Madeleine Dunkley, C.M.H.A. board member and active volunteer with experience in social work, recreation, television, and design and development of innovative programs for psychiatric clientele, was selected to be trained as a Life Skills coach and to be part of the developmental

process of the Life Skills Coach Training program at NewStart in Prince Albert.

One of her aims was to counter the prevalent belief, held by the initial group of coaches, that anyone who had ever had an emotional problem should be excluded from Life Skills student programs.

During her intensive training at Saskatchewan NewStart, Madeleine was invited to present a workshop Life Skills for the Mental Health Client at the 1972 National Mental Health Conference held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Toward the end of her training she was also asked to lead a group of coaches-in-training in a three week practicum at a Mental Health camp for psychiatric patients at Camp He Ho Ha at Lake Isle, Alberta, which she had directed for many years. NewStart supported and funded this project.

Upon graduation, Madeleine accepted a Life Skills coaching position with C.M.H.A. with the intent of testing the feasibility and effectiveness of the Life Skills program for use with persons who had or were still experiencing emotional difficulties.

From September 1972 to June 1974, C.M.H.A. in Edmonton, presented Life Skills programs for persons who had experienced varying degrees of mental health problems. This was undertaken as a two year pilot project. Referring agencies and other interested professionals were invited to participate and observe the program in action. Dr. A. Riediger of Alberta Mental Health Services evaluated the first two groups. A Preliminary Study was issued November 26, 1973, followed by a Follow-Up Study, issued January 19, 1974.

Based on this evaluation, and encouraging longitudinal follow-up statistics with reference to re-hospitalization and employment, plus community support from referring professionals, C.M.H.A, agreed that the program should be continued beyond the pilot phase.

Life Skills Coach Trainer Trained for Alberta

During 1973, before Saskatchewan NewStart terminated their Life Skills training programs, twelve Life Skills coaches from across Canada were invited to be trained as Life Skills Coach Trainers with the intent that these

trainers would go to their regions, disseminate Life Skills ideology and train other Life Skills coaches as the need arose. Madeleine Dunkley was one of those chosen to be trained. She successfully completed the course and was duly certified as a Life Skills Coach Trainer. In response to requests from across Alberta and Saskatchewan, Madeleine trained two groups of coaches per year under the auspices of C.M.H.A., supervised by NewStart personnel. Of the original twelve, Madeleine Dunkley is the only remaining participant still in practice today. (Appendices G and H)

Life Skills student programs were offered twice a year until 1976. Demand for the program had grown from one coach conducting two groups per day with four intakes per year to two coaches facilitating two groups per day, totaling eight intakes per year. A supervisory position was added to the Life Skills staff.

During this time frame the program became integrated. Referrals were accepted from agencies other than Mental Health Services. Canada Manpower, Child Welfare, Workers Compensation Board, and National Parole were some of the agencies involved. Canada Manpower supervisory and training personnel were impressed with the students' ability to communicate more effectively, set goals, solve problems and maintain a high level of motivation. They invited Life Skills program staff Madeleine Dunkley and Vicki Jolin to design and develop a life skills based Basic Job Readiness Program with a Work Experience component. This course was designed, tested, and approved as an on-going full day program.

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES LTD. - MOVE TO INDEPENDENCE

Early in 1976, C.M.H.A. decided that the Life Skills program was ready to stand on its own, thus freeing C.M.H.A. to focus more on volunteer intensive programs. In keeping with this decision C.M.H.A. supported the Life Skills program in its move to independence.

Two options were open:

1. Join an academic institution
2. move to private school status.

Advice was sought. Training, Research and Development Station personnel (formerly Saskatchewan NewStart), strongly supported seeking private school status. They feared that their vision of creating a safe environment in which learning could take place, and that the “grass roots” **experiential** nature of learning would be lost if the alternate academic option was chosen.

Dr. Walter Johns, past president of the University of Alberta, a frequent visitor, graduation guest speaker, and strong supporter of our early Life Skills programs, expressed the same concerns. Dr. Johns felt that by joining an academic institution, those people who needed help most would be excluded, either by their own feelings of inadequacy or through the selection process.

Their fears were well grounded. As the Life Skills course became incorporated into the curriculums of academic institutions the **“Skills Practice”** portion of the **Life Skills Lesson Plan** has, in many instances, *been replaced by “Lecturette”; thus changing the learning process from “experiential” to “didactic”*

Working toward private school status, Life Skills Training Centres Ltd. was incorporated on February 11, 1976, with Madeleine Dunkley as president, Vicki Jolin, secretary treasurer and Blair Dunkley, vice president.

On March 15, 1976, Life Skills Training Centres Ltd. was licensed as a private school under the Private Vocational Schools Act, Department of Advanced Education. Personnel, program objectives, program content and methodology remained the same. An advisory link was maintained with a committee consisting of Walter Coombs, M.S.W., Dr. Peter Furstenau, Psychologist and Julianna Kratz, M.S.W. The Life Skills Training Centres were licensed to conduct Life Skills Coach Training, Life Skills Student Courses and Basic Job Readiness Training.

In 1982, Saskatchewan NewStart, TRANDS and Publication Satellite who were responsible for publication and distribution of Life Skills manuals and publications ceased production of all Life Skills materials.

The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, who held the copyright on behalf of the crown, chose to grant permission to Life Skills Training

Centres to reproduce, revise, update and market the manuals to meet public demand.

This function has been continued by Life Skills Training Centres since that time.

UNIT 2

LIFE SKILLS THEORY

Life Skills concepts can be identified as: *definition; assumptions about the target population, methods of teaching and learning; and most importantly, the life skills teaching - learning process.*

DEFINITION OF LIFE SKILLS

No statement of the Life Skills rationale can be complete without the inclusion of the following paragraph in which Ralph Himsl so succinctly defines what life skills are and explains the defining terminology.

“Life Skills precisely defined, means problem solving behaviors appropriately and responsibly used in the management of personal affairs. As problem solving behaviors, life skills liberate in a way, since they include a relatively small class of behaviors usable in many life situations. Appropriate use requires an individual to adapt the behaviors to time and place. Responsible use requires maturity, or accountability. And as behaviors used in the management of personal affairs, the life skills apply to five areas of life responsibility identified as self, family, community, leisure and job” (Himsl, 1973, p. 13)

The definition of Life Skills as “problem solving behaviors responsibly and appropriately used ...” refers to the student’s ultimate responsibility for his actions, a logical expectation for an adult learner. The appropriate use of skills requires the student to modify his behavior to the circumstance; furthermore it emphasizes the personal qualities of the knowledge and skills. The student practices his skills in the “here and now.” This practice of “here

and now”, which simply means working in the present, takes on a liberating, encouraging quality. Nothing can change the past; the student can however learn to perform effectively in the present and future.

The statement that the student uses skills “responsibly” suggest a value judgment of some sort. *Training which gave the students skills and no judgment as to their use, or gave no practice in their responsible use, would reflect a faulty design. The course design identifies the criteria for responsible use of skills, and provides practice in the application.*

RELEVANCE OF LIFE SKILLS TO THE TARGET POPULATION

These skills were originally developed for the “disadvantaged” population who were seen as inadequate or lacking in many skill areas. A description of the disadvantage population establishes the relevance of life skills.

This description was gathered from background information provided by some 400 students, who participated in the experimental, revision, and evaluation phase and was repeated several times. In this way, R. Himsl, writes in Readings in Life Skills, p.13 -25, “such a conclusive body of evidence was obtained that inadequacies of these adults could be published with confidence that it was grounded in fact”.

Life Skills Training Centres and operating as LIFE SKILLS COLLEGE, working for the past 22 years with this target population across the width and breadth of Canada; from the northern Yukon village of Old Crow, to the US border, and beyond to North Queensland, Australia, can confirm the following description to be as valid today as it was when Himsl collected his data over twenty years ago.

Many adults fail to handle effectively even those ordinary problems which life brings us. A series of dreary events describes the result: early dropout from school, failure to find rewarding employment resulting in economic and social handicaps, too early marriage with the addition of more problems and persistent economic ineffectiveness. Fed by this lack of accomplishment, feelings of inadequacy grow, and the people seeing themselves as failures in life, and excluded from opportunities offered others, develop a suspicion of authority personified in employers, representatives of government,

policemen, teachers and the like. They develop antisocial attitudes which handicap them in holding jobs and advancing on the job. A sense of inadequacy and related inadequate behaviors become a part of the personality, obscuring even those very real strengths which they possess.

Study of literature and direct observation reveal that many disadvantaged have a complex, interlocking set of inadequate behaviors. They lack the skills needed to identify problems, to recognize and organize relevant information, to work out reasonable courses of action, and to foresee the consequences. They often fail to act on a rationally identified courses of action, submitting rather to actions based on emotion or authority. Often they do not benefit from experience since they do not evaluate the results of their actions once taken. They lack the self confidence to develop their abilities, and have low or surprisingly unrealistic aspirations.

Many disadvantaged lack effective ways of seeking help from each other and from agencies in existence, although some form of public assistance provides much of their income. Long periods of unemployment or frequent job changes mark their work history. They lack basic communication skills and have ineffective interpersonal relationships. As a result of characteristic marital instability, women often raise the children by themselves. The abuse of alcohol and drugs frequently becomes a part of their lives. Many find their lives beset by combinations of more than one such handicap.

Many of these problems and behavioral patterns are adopted by their children who perceive this lifestyle as ‘normal’, and the cycle of dysfunction and dependence on government support continues.

Meaning of “Disadvantaged”: The Life Skills course has been in use for more than two decades. A more comprehensive description of those requiring Life Skills training appears to be called for (Smith, p.15):

“Problem solving is a critical function in daily living, and all too frequently individuals do not have adequate skill level in problem resolution. As Life Skills continues to develop it will come to be used more and more in a variety of contexts including management, consumer groups, etc.; in fact, in any situations in which individuals have problems they desire to solve. Thus it may be more meaningful to state that many individuals can benefit from training if there is a need, and a willingness, on the part of those individuals to either develop new problems solving skills or to improve on existing skills so that they will be able to deal more effectively with life situations.”

From this point of view, “**disadvantage**” is not inherent in poverty or unemployment but in the **lack of skills**. They may or may not have a job; they may be on welfare or have money in the bank. No matter where they are on the socioeconomic scale, they are disadvantaged to the extent that they do not have sufficient knowledge and confidence to resolve life problems creatively.

METHODOLOGY: THE LIFE SKILLS TEACHING / LEARNING PROCESS

Life Skills Course

A course aimed at training people in the life skills, implies certain assumptions. In order to have a Life Skills Course, the life skills must exist as identifiable and describable behaviors. In addition, it requires that some people (*coaches*) already have these skills and can demonstrate them in such a manner that others can imitate them, and through practice, apply them in their life situations, changing their behaviors from what they once were, and so, *learn*.

Through a series of lessons, Life Skills students who come to the Life Skills Course, for whatever reason, can, by practicing those skills, make themselves more effective in taking advantage of opportunities provided by society, thus becoming more self reliant, and responsible by taking control of their own lives.

To achieve this objective the student starts at his present level of behavior and increases his array of effective behaviors or skills to the point where he can handle the complexities of living a productive and satisfying life. The student practices specific, identifiable skills beginning with such basic skills as “*listening*” and “*asking questions*” and moves on **sequentially** to the more complex skills such as “*goal setting*” and “*problem solving*”.

The ability of the student to apply these specific, goal directed behaviors enable him to refashion a picture of himself as a person with demonstrated abilities, and as a person with a new value to himself and those around him.

It becomes obvious then, that the Life Skills Course uses a two step concept as the source of its methodology: **first, *learning starts at the student's current level of functioning and his understanding of present reality*** and **second, the *mastery of long range goals requires the attainment of many intervening goals.*** The ***sequential*** integration of those **skills** required in the mastery of these goals by the student leads to an apparent and significant behavioral change.

The Life Skills concept of skills recognizes that true learning, or behavioral change, takes place when the student has a clear understanding of his goals, a clear description of the new behavior, and an understanding of those conditions, which make the behavior acceptable, or unacceptable. The concept of these new sought-for behaviors as **skills**, make for a happy fit with recognition of learning as ***behavior change.*** A student by definition, is one who seeks behavioral change - a skill has those characteristics, which have great appeal to him. Skills have the connotation of ***clarity*** in description; they have a ***definite purpose***; they have certain ***standards*** by which people judge their ***acceptability or unacceptability.*** And in the Life Skills Course, skill development requires an activity program based on practical application of the skills learned.

Life Skills Course Content

Five categories of life generate the content for the Life Skills Course: **Self, Family, Leisure, Community and Job.** An examination of the students' life experiences using these categories, produced a number of typical problem situations, which lent themselves to development as learning experiences for the students. In the area of **Self**, for example, study showed that the students frequently had distorted views of themselves: they exaggerated their lack of skills or they had little understanding of their abilities relative to other people. Often they were apprehensive in non-threatening situations; they allowed others to dominate them. Problems of similar nature are addressed in Life Skills lessons dealing with **Self.**

In the area of **Family**, students showed lack of those basic skills required to provide a safe and healthy environment for their children through their developmental years; they frequently did not know how to discipline children consistently and effectively; they lacked the skills to give their children helpful information about sex; they often failed to handle arguments and disagreement in the home in a non threatening manner and they knew little of the need for planning for survivors in the event of death. Once again, a number of typical problem situations lent themselves to the adaptation of Life Skills lessons in this area.

From the point of view of **Leisure** a look at the students' life styles identified another set of problems. Typically they had limited knowledge of leisure time activities. Alcohol dominated much of their leisure time in one way or another. The Life Skills Course responds to this lack by providing the student with experiences in which he can creatively explore a wider range of community activities.

In the area of **Community**, students showed limited participation in the life of the larger community. Problems typical of these situations provide the basis for structuring Life Skills lessons in the Community area.

Many Life Skills students do not know how to find employment. Typically many students do not know how to present themselves in the most favorable light to the prospective employer. Others become frustrated because they set unrealistic employment goals for themselves. Life Skills lessons deal with problem situations such as these in the area of **Job**.

While the course provides a pre-planned set of experiences in which students apply problem solving techniques to the lessons, the students also bring their own unique personal problems to the Life Skills group. When these problems are appropriate to be dealt with in the Life Skills group, they become part of the course proper.

It is important each student feel that his/her unique problem is worthy of consideration. It is also important that the coach be skilled enough to incorporate the subject matter into the lesson.

THE LIFE SKILLS PROCESS

How does it work? How does the student integrate the Lesson Content?

1. The Knowledge Dimension

In the Life Skills process, students respond to the course content on three process dimensions: 1) **the knowledge dimension**; 2) **the student use of group dimensions**; and 3) **the problem solving dimension**.

In responding along the first of these dimensions, **the knowledge dimension**, the student may react first in any one of its three domains, *the cognitive, the affective, or the psychomotor*. If he reacts in the *cognitive* or *knowing* domain, he may, for example rephrase a sentence in his own words or relate the discussion in a lesson to an experience in his own life. Any manipulation of course content such as repetition or recall of content, explanation, or evaluation represents a *cognitive or knowing response*.

Students also respond in this dimension with *affect* or *feeling*. This **affective response** may occur before, at the same time, or after the cognitive or knowing response. (*It has been noted that it is frequently characteristic of the disadvantaged to hold knowledge in low esteem*). If this is so, the initial reaction might well occur in the affective domain. Whatever the sequence, the Life Skills course recognizes the affective reaction and encourages its expression and control.

Identifying and expressing feelings are skills taught early in a Life Skills course. **Unexpressed or suppressed feelings inhibit the development of behavioral change and prevent the student from facing himself and others**. At the other end of the continuum, **expressed feelings open the student to new understandings of those around him, helping him recognize that others have the same fears he has, and yet, manage to function in spite of it**. In addition, the student soon comes to the realization that the mere expression of feelings often assists in controlling them.

*(Perhaps it may be worthy of mention, that many of the Life Skills providers have chosen to discount the **affective domain portion of the knowledge dimension**, thus depriving the student of the full opportunity for growth that the Life Skills course was intended to provide).*

In the third category of behaviors, **the psychomotor** or **acting** category, the student uses his body: he may stand up, conduct interviews, or demonstrate new behaviors to others. The student's **psychomotor response provides the most obvious evidence of full participation in the activities of the lesson**, thus verifying his integration of the lesson content at least at the conscious competence stage and at best at the unconscious competence stage.

In summary, his **cognitive**, or **knowing** use of the content provides him with a necessary "factual" base; his **ffective**, or **feeling** response to content expresses his will to face consequences of the new knowledge and its effect on him; and his **psychomotor** response represents his commitment to action.

2. Student Use of Group Dimension

The second, or **Student Use of Group** dimension, describes the purpose of the learning group. The student uses the group to practice new behaviors. He uses feedback from the group to modify behaviors new to him; he uses individuals in group as models for desired new behaviors; and he uses the group setting in which to **practice and develop his skills** of self expression. The group affects its member most when a strong sense of mutual trust is established. **All acceptance makes everyone feel good, but stunts growth in skills and development of problem solving capabilities; all challenge makes people react defensively and become set in ineffective behaviors.** A healthy group seeks an essential **balance between acceptance and challenge** which it provides.

Students respond at three levels on this dimension. At the first or **safe level**, the student continues to use behaviors that met his need in the past. In the second level of group use, the **careful group use level**, the student ventures into the practice of behaviors new to him. At the third level of development, the level of **risky group use**, the student asks directly for feedback on his new behaviors, seeking to refine them and make them more effective.

3. The Problem Solving Dimension

Students could use both **the knowledge and use of group** dimensions diligently and still achieve none of the objectives of the Life Skills Course. A third dimension is necessary to complete the Life Skills Process/Content model. The **problem solving** dimension provides this step.

In this dimension the Life Skills student uses a variety of problem solving behaviors. Roughly stated, he **recognizes** a problem situation, **defines** a problem, **chooses** an alternative solution, **implements** it, and **evaluates** the results. Each one of these processes is made up of many sub-processes. It might be less complicated to look at the sub-processes as the **simple or basic skills** required before a **complex skill** such as problem solving is tackled.

The student acquires and practices an increasing number of problem solving skills as the course progresses, until ideally, he uses all of them as the situation requires. These **problem solving skills** or behaviors provide the **third dimension**, thus completing the process model.

To summarize: the student uses the first dimension of the Life Skills process to manipulate the course content, he comes to **know it** in the **cognitive domain**; he reacts to it emotionally in the **affective domain**, that is he **feels it**; and in every lesson he reacts behaviorally by **doing** something about it. As he gets involved in the second dimension, the student uses the group to develop a knowing or cognitive use of content; he uses the group to express and control his feeling response and he takes action, becoming more involved as his learning increases.

Finally, and most importantly, the student applies **problem solving skills** to the lesson content, using behaviors from the vast array of skills he now has at his command. The student responds to the course content, **knowingly, feelingly** and by **action**; he uses the group to refine his response to the content; he, then, applies a complete range of problem solving skills to the situations in the content.

USE OF PROCESS IN THE LIFE SKILLS COURSE

One of the most noteworthy elements of life skills theory is the importance placed on what is termed “**process**”. The attitude of most of the authors who have written about life skills theory, (e.g., Curtiss & Warren, 1973) is that the importance lies not so much in “**what**” is taught but “**how**” it is taught.

The training process involves starting at each student’s current level of functioning and his understanding of his present reality; using the coaching technique of moving from simple to more complex skills; while maintaining a predetermined course of sequencing of skills taught in each lesson.

Unlike many “education” programs, success of the Life Skills Course requires that students make effective transfer of their problem solving skills. While the problem solving process incorporates all the life skills, the persons using the life skills course, e.g. the **Life Skills Course providers and coaches**, must concern themselves with the “*process*” that overrides all *others* in the Life Skills course; that is the **transfer of skills** from the training centre to everyday life.

There is little doubt that the process of **transfer of training** incorporates many subtle integrations of new knowledge, judgments by the person making the transfer as to the consequences of changing his behavior in different settings, dealing with uncertainties, and many others, different for each person and infinite in variety.

The Life Skills course provides each student with an opportunity to participate in all of the following processes, each process embraced by the succeeding one, and all subsumed by the **transfer process**: accepting training, committing oneself to the group and its activities, observing the demonstration of a new skill, practicing a new skill in group; discussing the practice of the new skill; practicing the new skill outside the group, practicing the new skill after completion of the course, incorporation of the new skill into one’s behavior pattern.

It indicates that movement down the page, and across the page from left to right, increases the commitment to adoption of the new skill. The more the behaviors appear in the psychomotor domain, the greater the conviction the coach has that students can make effective transfer. It follows then, that the students must display a willingness to change by practicing the new behaviors.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of the Life Skills Course depends to a great extent on observation of the student behavior as suggested in Figure 5, however **effective transfer requires more than simply practicing new behaviors in the classroom**. It requires development in the mind of the student an **awareness and knowledge of the concepts**, on which the life skill course depends.

So how does this learning take place? How does this process of integrating sub-skills, which are manifested outwardly as observable behaviors translate into cognitive structure?

Dana Mullen, writing in “A Conceptual Framework for the Life Skills Program” 1981, chose to title this process of integration the “**Life Skills Integration Model**”. This title was well chosen because it captures the idea that the learning of life skills is a process of first, integrating sub-skills and next, having these sub-skills successively integrated into higher-order life skills, which in turn are presented as observable interpersonal and problem solving behaviors of an increasingly complex nature.

In this way, the cognitive powers move up, in the area of **Self** in relation to the **external world**, from a concrete level to the level of formal reasoning.

In the process, the concept of *Self in relation to Others* is developed, leading to the formation of a coherent *Self-Other image*, which generates

the **Balanced Self-Determined** behavior that is the goal of the course. The term “Others” in “Self-Others image” includes not only individuals but also people representing “society at large.”

This process of integration of life skills into cognitive organization has been expressed in The Dynamic of Life Skills Coaching (p.89) as the sequence: ***unconscious incompetence - conscious incompetence - conscious competence - unconscious competence***, “where the skills learned so painfully seem to be a natural part of your life.”

In The Dynamics of Life Skills Coaching (p.92) this process is expressed in this way:

“The Life Skills course aids students to become aware of these (creative problem solving) processes and to practice them. Then, when they are integrated at the level of unconscious competence, these new creative behaviors become part of the student’s ‘automatic’ responses to problem situations.”

ELEMENTS IN THE LIFE SKILLS INTEGRATION MODEL

A Life Skills course is a combination of **program** and **training**. These two components form the total course to which the students respond in the Life Skills Process/Content Model.

The Life Skills **PROGRAM** consists of:

1. The Training Course Plan
2. Life Skills Theory
3. Life Skills Coach Training

Life Skills **TRAINING** is composed of four factors (Himsl, p.15):

1. The Life Skills Lessons;
2. A Life Skills coach and his or her training and life experience;
3. The students and their life experiences;
4. The resources of the community.

The students and coach together constitute the **LIFE SKILLS LEARNING GROUP** in which the training process occurs.

This group provides opportunities for real interpersonal encounters, the giving and receiving of feedback, problem solving activities, self and peer evaluations and other co-operative experiences. *“The expertise of a trained coach is a sine qua non of an effective learning group.”* (Mullen, p. 71, 1981). In other words to conduct an effective Life Skills group, a well trained Life Skills coach is essential. It is **impossible without it**. The coach is the catalyst that makes the process work; therefore, it is imperative that the coach has sufficient knowledge, mastery and experience in the skills of processing.

THE TRAINING PROCESS

The **TRAINING PROCESS** involves a student in a **LIFE SKILLS LEARNING GROUP**.

An important facet of Life Skills theory is that students bring with them to the training course an array of strengths and abilities as well as inadequacies. Training begins for them “where they are,” at their current level of functioning and understanding of present reality. The training process begins by engaging the students’ abilities in selected experiences.

The **training process** is activated by some kind of **CONCRETE EXPERIENCE** which acts as a **stimulus**. It may be a modeled behavior, or the students’ own actions, or through audio-visual aids presentation. Its value lies in its ability to stimulate the senses, so that as the lesson proceeds to the **evocation phase**, its content can be readily grasped and exploration of its significance can commence.

An essential element in the training process is **FEEDBACK** resulting from behavioral experience. The Giving and Receiving Feedback lesson is presented as soon as some degree of safety in the group has been established. Another extremely valuable resource that contributes to profitable feedback is videotape recording. It enables students to visualize themselves and their behavior in concrete rather than vague or abstract ways. In this way they gain the “**objective distance**” that is necessary for observing and improving their behavior.

The Life Skills Process Model illustrates the three dimensions of the **STUDENT RESPONSE TO COURSE CONTENT**.

While the student responds to all the experiences of the course, there must be specific “**practice**” of the **NEW BEHAVIOR**. This may be done in the classroom or it may occur outside of the training centre; wherever the new behavior is practiced, it is part of the training process.

As the new behavior is practiced, the students engage in exercises that train them to look at the effects their new behaviors have on others. They learn to make an “**critical evaluation**”, judging whether or not the behaviors they choose to put into practice are appropriate and responsible. They also learn

to do a reality check; to ensure that they are interpreting the information on which they base their judgments in accordance with reality.

Evaluation cannot be regarded as a one-time event in the cycle of the Life Skills training process. Critical evaluations are required at each point in the development of a new concept and the consequent restructuring of the student's world-view.

The total response to a behavior by a student in the Life Skills Learning group, when practiced and evaluated, makes up the data about the real world that is taken into a student's mind, to be organized and used selectively in the solutions of problems. The **cognitive restructuring and conceptual growth** integrates the behavior into the student's view of the world. In this manner, since the student **knows how to use the behavior**, it becomes a **BEHAVIORAL SKILL**.

As the new skill is used in the performance of another lesson with another **CONCRETE EXPERIENCE**, both are subjected to **FEEDBACK**, and the training process continues in another cycle following the lesson structure of *stimulus, evocation, objective enquiry, skill practice and evaluation*.

The Objective of the Life Skills Program

The overall objective of the Life Skills Program is to develop a **BALANCED SELF-DETERMINED PERSON SOLVING PROBLEMS CREATIVELY IN EVERYDAY LIFE**.

This quality of behavior is made possible by the integration of Life skills into cognitive structure and the growth of a Self-concept, which leads to the formation of a coherent **SELF-OTHERS IMAGE**.

The student's self worth is elevated; he feels better about himself; he knows he has the necessary life skills to function appropriately and responsibly as he sets out to reach his own goals in the reality of his world.

UNIT 3

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES (CANADA) LTD.

Operating as

LIFE SKILLS COLLEGE

STANDARDS AND EVALUATIONS

LIFE SKILLS COACH TRAINER TRAINING PROGRAM

The Trainer of Life Skills Coaches, in addition to being an experienced, “*permanently certified*” coach, will be committed to a continual pursuit of personal growth-- knowing that he or she must develop the ability to act out and role model the desirable behaviors that they hope to help others achieve.

The Trainer must function consistently at a higher level than the coach trainees. Otherwise the latter will suffer either by making little or no progress, or, in extreme cases, by actually regressing to the level of an incompetent trainer.

The Trainer will be a “**credentialed**” and “**functional**” professional (Carkhuff, 1971) *Credentialed professionals* are those who have evidence which indicates that they have successfully completed a variety of training programs, and upon whom the training institution has conferred a stamp of approval - certification. *Functional professionals* are those who exhibit and use the skills demanded of the profession.

The “functional” professional will base his performance largely on a coherent and comprehensive theoretical understanding of “**androgogy**” **which is the art and science of helping others learn (Knowles, 1970)**; he will know this **differs from “pedagogy” which is the art and science of teaching others.**

Malcolm Knowles (1976) provides the following succinct check list of indicators to help Trainers assess to what extent they are truly professional. It would be helpful for institutions to also ask that their Trainer's performance be based on the same criteria, namely:

Assumptions that:

- * Learners are capable of self-directed development;
- * training is a process of self-development through collaborative inquiry;
- * and the role of the Trainer is that of a facilitator and resource to self directed learners.

Beliefs that:

- * Adults want to improve themselves;
- * and learning is enhanced when stimulated by intrinsic motivation.

Criteria that:

- * Places great emphasis on establishing a climate conducive to learning (a climate of warmth, mutual respect, caring, trust, informality).
- * Engages the learners in diagnosing their own needs for learning, assessing the gaps between where they are now, where they want to be, and how to get there).
- * Engages the learners in formulating goals that are meaningful to them.
- * Develops a sequence of learning experiences that take into account both group similarities and individual differences, with the organizing principle being "learning projects".
- * Selects techniques and materials that engage learners in an active process of self directed inquiry.
- * Engages the learners in a mutual process of evaluation based on performance criteria.

Gerald Egan (1975) paints a vivid “portrait” of the ideal Trainer and also of what is minimally necessary to function competently in this demanding profession.

The minimum role of a Trainer is concerned with designing, developing, conducting, processing and evaluating learning experiences. To do this, the trainer must have the ability to:

- * Organize
- * Revise training based on feedback
- * Select appropriate instructional methodologies
- * Write clearly and concisely
- * Interpret feedback results
- * Interface with subject matter experts
- * Organize the cognitive content of the training
- * Adapt/revise existing lesson plans
- * Apply appropriate learning and motivation theories
- * Formulate behavioral learning objectives based on identified learning needs
- * Select and/or develop appropriate audio/visual materials
- * Conduct classroom training
- * Develop performance measures based on behavioral learning objectives
- * Sequence behavioral learning objectives

What is outlined above might suffice in a training organization that can provide necessary support and consulting personnel, which are knowledgeable enough in Life Skills Theory, Methodology, and Learning/Teaching Process, to ensure an effective program. When these services are not available, and they rarely are, Trainers are required to have additional skills to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Therefore, additional Life Skills Coach Trainer role functions might be concerned with arranging, coordinating, and maintaining support services; planning, controlling and directing; consulting and conducting research projects for the Trainers own training commitments, for other client groups, and for other staff. Added to this, the Life Skills Coach Trainer must also have the ability to:

- * Apply systematic managerial approaches to problem solving
- * Coordinate activities and compile information
- * Conduct recruiting and selection procedures for training participants
- * Administer staff training and development programs

- * Determine, locate and procure learning materials and equipment
- * Write narrative reports and course descriptions
- * Establish training schedules
- * Measure indirect results of training based on “back home” post training requirements, to formulate and refine learning schedules

- * Conduct interviews, surveys, and evaluate informal and formal feedback from trainees and agencies

- * Prepare statistical reports of classroom training for internal and external reporting requirements

In summary what we have is a training chain whereby the Life Skills Coach trainer trains the Life Skills Coach who in turn trains the Life Skills student (client). If the effectiveness is not to be dissipated or diluted from generation to generation, and if it is to retain its reproductive integrity, then obviously, the first generation Trainer must meet the highest possible standards. Anything less will jeopardize attainment of the final objectives, and be a disservice to those we claim to help.

The Life Skills Training Centres have developed both the Life Skills Coach Training Course and the Life Skills Trainer Training Program in close adherence to the standards as set out in the above. Adherence to these standards is maintained in design and delivery of all Life Skills Training Centres programs.

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES CANADA LTD.

Operating as

LIFE SKILLS COLLEGE

“APPLICATION PROCESS”

TRAINER OF LIFE SKILLS COACHES

Individuals wishing to apply for Life Skills Trainer Certification are required to complete seven years of training and apprenticeship to be completed in three phases.

PHASE 1 (two years) pre-requisite

1. Applicants interested in training as a trainer of Life Skills Coaches must first complete Life Skills Coach Training and receive interim certification as Life Skills Coach.
2. Applicants must attend de-briefing weekend 3 months after initial training. Interested individuals must then pursue permanent certification completing 480 hours of supervised Life Skills group work.
3. In addition, interested applicants must have experience in a variety of Life Skills group settings. (i.e. different target populations and geographic locations; youth; corrections; aboriginal; severe employment disabled.)
4. While working as a Life Skills Coach, individuals pursuing trainers' training will avail themselves of every opportunity to attend open and ongoing coach training functions including Meeting New Coaches Day; Learning Helpful and Harmful Group Behavior Sessions; Workshop Weekend; participate in practicums and practicum feedback and provide ongoing support, where and when appropriate to coach training groups.
5. During Phase One, applicants must also complete levels one and two of Relationship Group Process Training.

PHASE 2 (two years) *Application and Initiation of Trainers' Training.*

Individual applicant will initiate meeting with a member of the trainer selection committee of Life Skills Training Centres for the purpose of detailing goals and intentions for pursuing trainers' training. His/her work record and experience in group worked specifically as a Life Skills Coach will be reviewed. Suggestions will be made for a broader working experience if needed.

Expectations of the Life Skills Training Centres Ltd. will be outlined and applicant will devise a training plan encompassing three (3) years of training including a two year internship.

Training plan is presented to the Board of Directors at which time applicant will undergo an in-depth interview with the Trainers' Selection Committee.

Once training plan is accepted, applicant enters into a training contract with Life Skills Training Centres Ltd.

Having initiated his/her formal application, individual is expected to be completing his/her Level Three Relationship Training Group Process and commencing certification in Levels One (1) through Three (3) of Integrated Neuro Systems.

PHASE 3 (three years) *Trainer-in-Training and Internship*

Having successfully completed the Life Skills Diploma Program and having been accepted as a candidate of Life Skills Trainers' Training, individual applicants will avail themselves of opportunities to provide assistance in administrative matters and auditing and assisting in the facilitation of Relationship Group Process Training.

Administrative matters will include: marketing and implementing various training programs; conducting Life Skills Coach Training interviews; attending community demonstrations and providing public education information to various education and social agencies regarding Life Skills. Applicant must demonstrate mastery in presentation of Life Skills Theory as it pertains to an experiential educational model. These activities are undertaken with supervision of a Life Skills Trainer and/or board member of the Life Skills Training Centres.

Other administrative tasks will include becoming knowledgeable of various funding sources, follow-up and invoicing for programs initiated. Implementing practicums for student programs and Coach Training programs; answering individual requests for information re: Life Skills Training Centres programs and Life Skills Coach Training; summary report writing, program evaluation and data recording.

Applicant will initiate a specified period of training and will daily attend a full three (3) month Life Skills Coach Training Program. He/she will attend as an experienced “Coach” and continue to provide ongoing administrative support. This will include participation in the evaluation component of student coaches-in-training when training of coaches is completed. Applicant will participate in a full review of his/her participation in group; strengths and areas where more experience is needed.

Training plan will be revised or adjusted as needed and applicant will then initiate a Life Skills Coach Training Group overseeing applications; interviews; set up of facility; ongoing updating and review of all funding for such training. The set up of this Life Skills Coach Training will be done under strict supervision of a master trainer and in conjunction with an experienced Life Skills Coach Trainer.

Applicant will attend every day of Life Skills Coach Training in conjunction with a master coach trainer. He/she will, under on-site supervision commence training of coaches and be considered a **“trainer-in-training”**.

In the **second year of Phase 3**, applicant will conduct two (2) Life Skills Coach Training Groups.

As **“trainer-in-training”** applicant will work independently (with outside support and supervision) in 4 of 12 weeks of training in the first group and in 6 of 12 weeks in the second group. All other group time will involve ongoing training with a master trainer on-site.

During this time applicants are also expected to maintain administrative responsibilities, continue personal growth and be involved in implementing and auditing other programs offered by Life Skills Training Centres.

In the **third year of Phase 3** the **Life Skills Trainer-in-Training** will complete one year of internship working independently, in conjunction with other trainers and the supervising master trainer, continuing all previous tasks outlined and demonstrating continued mastery of skills. He/she will complete 2 more Life Skills Coach Training Groups with on site supervision of a master trainer in the final 3 weeks verifying skill competence of trainees and validating Life Skills Coach Trainer-in-Training mastery of the Coach Training process.

Upon successful completion of Phase 3, applicant will be awarded a Master’s Diploma as a “Life Skills Trainer” certified to train Life Skills Coaches and supervise coaches in Life Skills Student Programs.

LIFE SKILLS COACH TRAINER

Training Process

PHASE 1 (Year One and Two)

Complete **Life Skills Coach Training**

Achieve **Life Skills Permanent Certification**

Attend open Life Skills Coach training group exercises

Complete Level 1 and 2 of Relationship Training

PHASE 2

Complete Level 3 Relationship Training

Begin Integrated Neuro Systems Levels 1, 2, and 3

Make formal **Application for Coach Trainer Training**
to Life Skills Training Selection Committee

Avail oneself of opportunity to begin internship in administrative assistance

Complete **Life Skills Diploma Program**

Submit training plan to Life Skills Training Centres Board of Directors

PHASE 3 *Accepted for Life Skills Trainer Training*

Attend Life Skills Coach Training Group daily as an experienced coach

Set up coach training group.

Attend Life Skills Coach Training daily as a trainer-in-training

Commence independent training 4 weeks of 12 as trainer in training

Commence 2nd group **independently handling the group training process** six of the 12 weeks

Demonstrate mastery of: administrative skills; public education presentations, managing all aspects of setting up and implementing Life Skills Coach Training Groups

Intern in 2 groups with on-site supervision by Master Trainer in final 3 weeks

Evaluation

Certification as Life Skills Coach Trainer

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES (CANADA) LTD.

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LIFE SKILLS COLLEGE

LIFE SKILLS COACH TRAINING

A TWELVE-WEEK COURSE

INTRODUCTION

The candidate for Life Skills Coach Training at Life Skills Training Centres Ltd. is prepared to conduct Life Skills programs. The intensive, mainly experiential, twelve-week training program of approximately 1000 contact hours, includes a variety of theoretical and practical knowledge. Essentially, the candidate is trained to bring students to competence in ways of successfully managing their personal affairs in the areas of Self, Family, Leisure, Community, Job and/or Education.

The broad spectrum of skills developed in Life Skills Coach Training is in demand not only by prospective Life Skills Coaches but also by counselors and social workers, teachers and trainers, politicians and clergy, outreach workers, band councils and friendship centre workers, interpreters and educational assistants, group home and crisis centre workers, corrections and court workers, day care and mental health workers, radio broadcasters and television producers, and others in people-related fields.

COURSE CONTENT

Basic Communication Skills

The coach acquires competency in speaking, checking for understanding, listening, identifying breakdown in person-to-person communications, using gestures and other non-verbal forms of communication.

Human Relations / Interpersonal Skills

The development of these skills is central to a coach training program. The coach develops a sensitivity and awareness in his training which he transfers to the classroom. Behaviors are learned, practiced and modified until the coach develops competency in such areas as:

1. attending behaviors, expressing, sharing and responding to feelings, giving and receiving constructive feedback, initiating and contributing data, seeking contributions from others, summarizing, clarifying, coordinating, integrating, elaborating, setting standards and orienting, testing for consensus, gate keeping, encouraging and supporting, harmonizing and compromising, confronting and resolving conflict;
2. coping with such harmful behaviors as blocking, dominating, recognition seeking and competing, self-confessing and sympathy seeking, special interest pleading, side tracking, withdrawing, “horsing around” and assuming that the problem is clear;
3. managing stress and preventing burnout;
4. thinking critically and applying the principles of *Balanced Self Determined* behavior in own personal life and in Life Skills coaching;
5. defining the role of *Sexuality and Communication* in the enhancement of interpersonal relationships; and,
6. making effective process interventions and contributions in diagnosing and commenting on various aspects of group process for the development of effective coaching techniques.

Family Process

Through an experiential group process the trainee learns to improve family interactions by exploring various approaches to parenting, affirming and emphasizing the resources each family member already possesses, reducing conflict in the family, communicating with children, talking with teens, increasing choices and responsibilities of each family member, helping

families to change, developing support systems -- those skills required to make “*family*” an enriching, positive experience.

Relationship Skill Development

An introduction to *Relationship Training* provides an experiential process of exploring the dynamics of relationships and cultivating skills to initiate, develop, nurture, maintain, assess and close a variety of relationships from the professional to the intimate.

Problem Solving Skills

The problem-solving component includes demonstration of the problem solving skills, practice in them and practice in teaching them to others. It contains some theory, demonstration of problem solving systems, the use of heuristics and skill practice in synectics.

Theory and Knowledge

The coach demonstrates his competence in all the skill areas by accumulating and understanding specific content from many sources, formal course work being only one. The content knowledge requirements for coach training include:

1. the theoretical foundation of the Coach Training and Life Skills programs, their structure, concepts and experiential nature of training;
2. the principles of learning in the affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains; and,
3. Understanding the ‘**Use of Process in Life Skills**’; understanding the integration and transfer process;

3. group dynamics, group development and phase progression, performance-centered counseling, behavior description, behavior modification, skill training and ethical problems of coaching.

Lesson Preparation Skills

The coach trainee develops expertise in writing an effective lesson plan, adapting material to the needs and abilities of the students, relating relevance of material to real life situations (transference), sequencing of skills training, setting objectives and goals. The trainee will also develop abilities in skill assessment and evaluation and will practice report-writing skills, which will be integrated into the skill development.

Lesson Presentation Skills

The coach develops the behavioral skills required to facilitate the learning process in the implementation of Life Skills lessons. These include:

1. skills in questioning, skills in recording, categorizing and summarizing data, and reporting outcome and information to the group;
2. motivating students in the classroom, gaining commitments for change from students, planning activities with the students, leading discussion groups, and using behavioral counseling techniques;
3. techniques of role playing, conducting the case method and organizing *group-on-group* situations; and,
4. using audio/visual equipment for recording and playback, creating simple teaching tapes, visual aids and displays and selecting the most appropriate medium to present a concept.

Practicum

The coach tests his/her skills in lesson presentation during a one-week block placement in a Life Skills student group.

Opportunities for team coaching are also provided as are occasions for the trainee to demonstrate his understanding of coaching theory and practice through design and presentation of Life Skills lessons with his peers.

Counselling Skills

With the aid of *Performance-Centered Counselling* techniques the coach practices and demonstrates effective counseling skills. Adequate experiential practice will assist in developing and perfecting this valuable counseling technique.

Modification Skills

The coach will learn how to adapt the Life Skills Program as to time and place to meet the special needs of different cultural groups, agencies and geographic locations.

Cultural Enrichment

The coach will also learn how to enrich Life Skills programming through integration of local culture with Life Skills lessons by arranging for speakers, guests, films, tours, and the sharing of students' own knowledge and traditions.

Public Information/Education and Community Development

Community awareness is stressed. Through an experiential process the trainee develops skills in organization and presentation of Life Skills Theory and Concepts to a variety of community agencies.

Evaluation Skills

The coach's ability to evaluate is integral to the learning process. In some cases the process of evaluation cannot be divorced from the major skill, because in and of itself, it is of an evaluative nature. For instance, the human relation skill of 'giving and receiving feedback' falls into this category.

Other evaluation skills in which the coach develops competency are performance evaluation skills. These include observing, analyzing and evaluating his own performance and that of his peers and students to identify strengths and weaknesses, feeding back evaluation data and using techniques for the development of student self evaluation skills.

Finally, trainee develops competency in the evaluation of overall program effectiveness and in the writing of reports.

LIFE SKILLS COACH TRAINING

~ THE PROCESS OF APPLICATION AND SELECTION ~

STEP 1. APPLICATION

It is required that the applicant submit:

- (a) A detailed Application Form
- (b) Proof of Academic Standing

Include official transcripts of highest level of academic achievement (minimum GradeX11 or G.E.D. Diploma preferred). If official transcripts cannot be obtained, applicant should supply *certified* statements confirming academic standing achieved.

Certification of transcripts and diplomas must be effected by imprinting them with the official seal of the institution endorsing them by hand with the written signature of the responsible school officer. Photocopies which are not certified in his way are not acceptable.

STEP 2. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Confidential letters of recommendation are required in support of your application for Life Skills Coach Training from three persons under whom you have worked or studied. When approaching these people for a confidential letter of recommendation, please ask the for their comments on the following.

- (a) The capacity in which you they know you;
- (b) Your potential as a Life Skills Coach trainee and your personal suitability for working with people;
- (c) And information they might wish to include regarding your personality features, the kind of relationships you are able to develop with others, your emotional stability, work habits and skills, attitudes revealed etc.

Letters of recommendation should be sent directly to:

Office of the President -
Life Skills College

STEP 3. *PERSONAL INTERVIEW*

Applicants meeting the above criteria will be contacted and a personal interview will be arranged in Edmonton approximately two to three months prior to the course start date. (Please notify Life Skills Training Centres of any change in address or telephone number.)

If coming to Edmonton is impossible, please contact Life Skills Training Centres to arrange a time when you can call back for a telephone interview with a selection committee or meet with our representative in your area. The telephone number to call is (403) 424 3843.

STEP 4. *PERSONALITY APPTITUDE ASSESSMENT TESTS*

At the time of the interview, the applicant will be asked to complete one or more personality and aptitude assessment tests. The assessment tests will be scored, interpreted and rank ordered on the basis of indicated suitability and probable success in training and group work.

STEP 5. *NOTIFICATION OF STATUS*

Applicants will be notified by telephone and/or by letter whether or not they have been accepted for a particular program at least one month prior to the course start date. In special circumstances, an attempt will be made to provide earlier confirmation of acceptance.

Due to the large number of applicants, not all acceptable candidates will be accepted for a specific training session, however, these applicants will be given priority in the next available course.

***Life Skills Training Centres' trainers
and coaches look forward to working with you.***

***Should you have any questions or matters
for discussion, please do not hesitate to call.***

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES (CANADA) LTD.
BOX 43030 Standard Life Post Office, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4M8

**APPLICATION FOR
LIFE SKILLS COACH TRAINING**

Please mail to the above address/deliver to 6th Floor, 10242-105 St. Edmonton,

Name: _____
(Surname or Family Name) (First Name) (Middle Name)

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Current Mailing
Address _____
_____ Postal Code _____
_____ Telephone _____

Name, Address and Telephone Number _____
of Person to be contacted _____
in Case of Emergency _____

Date of Birth _____ Social Insurance Number _____

Marital Status _____ Number of Dependents _____

Band Name _____ Treaty Number _____

Occupation _____

Employer _____

Address _____ Postal Code _____
_____ Telephone _____

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

Please list all schools attended at the Graduate, Undergraduate and Secondary levels. include Technological Institutes, Special Studies, Correspondence Courses and any other education and/or training. Begin with the school you attended most recently.

Dates	Name and Location of School	Degree/Diploma Specialization
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What language(s) other than English do you

Speak? _____ Read? _____ Write? _____

WORK and/or VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Please list your most recent work experience first:

Dates	Employer	Type of Work
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

PERSONAL STATEMENT

The personal statement is a most important part of your application for Life Skills Coach Training.

Describe below your skills, abilities, life and work experiences and changes you have undergone.

For example, include work you have done in social agencies and schools, responsibilities in paid and volunteer positions, awards received and reports and articles of some consequence you have written. Consider also technical and trade experience as well as work in people- related fields.

Add any other information you feel pertinent to your acceptance for Life Skills Coach Training. (use additional sheets if necessary)

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of Recommendation must be sent directly to the President, Life Skills Training Centres (Canada) Ltd. by three persons under whom you have worked or studied and who are knowledgeable of your skills attitudes and qualities.

Please list below the persons being asked to submit the letters of recommendation.

1. _____
(Name) (Position Title and Organization)

(Address) (Telephone Number)

2. _____
(Name) (Position Title and Organization)

(Address) (Telephone Number)

3. _____
(Name) (Position Title and Organization)

(Address) (Telephone Number)

PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Interviews are required of all applicants approximately two months prior to the course start date. You will be contacted and an interview scheduled.

DECLARATION

I certify that the particulars furnished on this application are true and complete in all respects.

(Applicant Signature) (Date)

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES (CANADA) LTD.

CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS

~ PREAMBLE ~

VALUES

The profession of Life Skills Coaching holds the worth, dignity and capability of every human being as of primary value. Therefore, Life Skills coaches shall not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, language, religion, age, gender, marital status, physical and mental handicap, economic condition or national ancestry and they shall work toward preventing and eliminating such discrimination in rendering service, in work assignments and in employment practices. The profession of Life Skills Coaching affirms that society has an obligation to ensure that all people have access to resources, services and opportunities required to promote their well-being in addition to the right to learn the skills necessary for the development of human relationships and that each person has the right to self determination with due regard to the interests of others.

PURPOSE

In accordance with these values of this profession, Life Skills Coaching is committed to fostering capabilities and skills in the individual through its professional services and activities. Life skill practices focus on the relationships among people in their social environment. Life Skills Coaching endeavors to enhance the problem-solving and functioning capacities of people to help them better utilize personal and environmental resources.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Life Skills Coaches have an obligation to protect and promote the interest of clients through professional services delivered with integrity and competence. This can be achieved only by establishing and maintaining high standards of coaching practices. The following Declaration sets out the

fundamental ethical principles to which Life Skills coaches should adhere in professional relationships and practice.

LIFE SKILLS COACHES' DECLARATION

As a member of the profession of Life Skills Coaching, I commit myself to fulfill, to the best of my ability, the following obligations.

1. I will regard the well-being of the students and groups I serve as my primary professional responsibility.
2. I will fulfill my obligation to students and responsibilities to the agency
with integrity and competence.
3. I will coach in a conscientious, diligent and efficient manner.
4. I will respect the students in my professional relationships with them, and act in accordance with the students' needs and the appropriateness of the coaching situation.
5. I will protect the privacy of the students and hold in confidence all professionally acquired information concerning them. I will disclose such information only when authorized by students or when obligated legally or professionally to do so.
6. I will not allow outside interests to jeopardize my professional judgment, independence, or competence.
7. I will work for the creation and maintenance within agencies employing Life Skills coaches of conditions and policies consistent with the
values and obligations of this code.
8. I will endeavor to promote and maintain excellence in the profession of Life Skills Coaching.
9. I will attempt to differentiate between the person and the behavior.

Permanent Certification of Life Skills Coaches

Permanent certification is available only to applicants who have successfully completed Life Skills Coach Training conducted by a certified Life Skills Coach Trainer and conducted by Life Skills Training Centres Ltd.

Applicants for a Permanent Life Skills Coaching Certificate must meet the following criteria:

1. *Hold an Interim Life Skills Coach Training certificate.*

In the event the Interim Certificate has expired, a letter requesting extension must be submitted prior to the date of expiration of the certificate. Extensions will be granted for one year and further requests for renewal will be given individual consideration.

2. If permanent certification is not secured within four years of completing Life Skills Coach Training, the applicant may be required to complete additional upgrading. This will be discussed at the time the applicant requests an extension to his/her certificate, which may extend beyond the four year limit.

3. The applicant must have facilitated a minimum of two Life Skills programs of 240 hours each, for a total of 480 hours of actual group contact.

4. Group Contact requires that the applicant be in attendance in a group conducting a life skills program. Hours spent in one-to-one counseling, supervising, follow-up by telephone, liaison or referral, does not constitute group contact hours. Time accrued in facilitating other types of groups will not be accepted for certification.

5. The applicant may have been the sole facilitator or a co-facilitator with equal responsibility in the group. In the case of co-facilitation, each facilitator will receive full credit for all hours in actual group contact.

Equivalency

Applicants for Permanent Certification who do not complete the required two groups of 240 hours each may qualify for certification provided they meet the following criteria:

1. Conduct of a minimum of five shorter Life Skills programs totaling 480 hours.
2. Each short program must have a minimum of 90 hours, to be conducted over a maximum of 15 weeks, with no less than six (6) hours of group contact time per week.
3. The basic lesson plans in the Self Track of the Life Skills Coaching Manual must be taught as core to the 90 hours of group contact time.

Group Size

The number of participants constituting a Life Skills group shall be a minimum of eight (8) and a maximum of 25.

Curriculum and Methodology

1. The lessons in the Life Skills Coaching Manual (Saskatchewan NewStart) must be followed in sequence using the methodology (lesson steps) as directed in the manual. (Stimulus, Evocation, Objective Enquiry, Skill Practice, Evaluation).
2. The applicant in his/her application must make the appropriate distinction between a Life Skills student/client group and a Coach Training group.
3. The applicant must have initiated the group sessions: presented basic lessons in sequence; provided for skill practice; monitored skill development; evaluated skill development; and, closed the programs.

Request for Permanent Certification

The applicant should submit his/her request in writing to Madeleine Dunkley, President of Life Skills Training Centres Ltd. at the location where the applicant's training was conducted. Where appropriate, a duplicate copy of the request must be sent to the Head Office of Life Skills Training Centres Ltd. in Edmonton for verification.

Each application for permanent certification must include:

1. Name(s) of employer or contractor
The dates of the group(s), noting start and finish dates
The number of hours of group work per week
Where the group(s) were conducted
Number of students/clients who attended weekly
2. The name of the co-facilitator if the group was co-facilitated
3. A detailed outline of the actual lessons taught and the sequence in which they were taught.
4. A letter from the applicant's immediate supervisor who observed/monitored the program and who attests to the criteria outlined herein, as well as the content which was taught. The applicant must provide a letter for each Life Skills group conducted.

In the event that there is any reason that Life Skills Training Centres questions the validity of the application or of the applicant, or if there is any reason to question legal or ethical issues involving the behavior of the applicant, then certification may be withheld until such time that the applicant provides verification that he/she has met the criteria required for permanent certification and/or all areas of concern have been resolved to the satisfaction of the Life Skills Training Centres. The Life Skills Training Centres' Board shall be the final arbitrator in all aforementioned matters.

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES (CANADA) LTD.

***LIFE SKILLS DIPLOMA PROGRAM**

Life Skills Training Centres Canada Ltd. are now offering a nine month training program leading to a Life Skills Diploma.

The Diploma Program was developed and implemented in response to the growing demands within the para professional market that certified Life Skills Coaches have more in-depth counseling skills, on-the job experience and advanced relationship group processing skills

The Life Skills Diploma Program consists of:

- 1000 hours training leading to a certificate as a Life Skills Coach.
- 200 hours of advanced counseling training leading to a certificate and designation as an Operant Effectual Counselor.
- 200 hours of Relationship Training leading to 3 levels of certification in Relationship Group Process.
- 480 hours of on the job experience conducting Life Skills Student groups using the curriculum and methodology developed by Saskatchewan New-Start; resulting in specially trained coaches receiving designation as *permanently certified* Life Skills Coach Counselors.

Each applicant for the Life Skills Diploma Program can set up an individualized training plan incorporating full-time and part-time study. Upon successful completion of all certificate programs, individuals completing 9 months and 1880 hours internship will be awarded a Life Skills Diploma.

All Life Skills Diploma Programs are trademarked and copyrighted. They can be taught only by *designated certified trainers*. Life Skills Training Centre Trainers are distinguished for having completed a minimum of seven (7) years training leading to Trainer certification.

Life Skills Training Centres Canada Ltd.(1976) are certified by the Post Secondary Education Commission of B.C.; Ministry of Education of Yukon and licensed by Alberta Advanced Education and Manpower

* Certified in British Columbia only at this time.

EVALUATION OF COACHES IN TRAINING

In the first phase of the course the coaches in training learn, modify and practice simple skills. Their adaptation and integration of these skills are continuously evaluated by the coach training group. In addition upon completion of their practicum, the coaches are evaluated by the student group that they coached. *(See Appendix F-1)*

As the coach becomes competent in complex skills, his self concept deliberately shifts from his conception of himself as the operative agent in a selective status giving system, to that of operative agent in a system which enables each individual to develop fully his pre-existing potential.

His competence is demonstrated and evaluated in his presentation of theory and lessons; goal setting, and solving instructional problems.

The course design ensures that every coach in the training group has worked closely with every other participant. As a result, every coach in training is in the position to assess the competence of his peers.

An evaluation agenda of all competencies included in the curriculum serves as a guideline during final evaluation for certification by group consensus.

Certification of Coaches in Training is granted by consensus of the Coach Training Group. Consensus reflects consistently demonstrated competence in all skills outlined in the curriculum.

STANDARDS AND EVALUATION

LIFE SKILLS STUDENT PROGRAM

Course Plan:

1. Identify the needs of the student accurately using input from the:
 - student, (*Student Interview Form - Appendix B*)
 - Referring Agent, (*Referral Form & Guidelines To Referral Appendix C*)
 - Life Skills Training Centre Staff.

2. Identify expected outcomes.

3. Identify additional areas and skills that need improvement or understanding. (*Student Self Evaluation Form - Appendix D*)

4. Insure the Course Content is responsive to both individual and group needs.

“The Life Skills coach and Life Skills supervisor are required to have knowledge of Modification Skills so as to adapt the program to meet the special needs of the group, whatever they maybe, i.e. cultural, geographic, educational, physical, age, gender, etc.”

5. Evaluate Skill Development on an on going basis during the course based on:
 - Self Evaluation,
 - Peer Evaluation,
 - Feedback from coaches.

6. Evaluate Student Skill Development in light of the expected outcomes. (*Student Progress Report - Appendix E*)

- 7 Assist students in setting goals and planning for their continued personal growth after the course is completed.

8. Follow up on student progress as they move into Further Education,
Job Training or Employment. (*Student Course and Coach Evaluation*
Appendices F-1, F-2, F3)

REQUIREMENTS OF A LIFE SKILLS COURSE

Because of the complexity of Life Skills training many factors must be considered in the design and delivery of an effective minimum (usually shorter) version of the Life Skills Course.

The ideal model includes 240 hours of classroom activity spread over a 16 week period to accommodate the learning phases. Shortening the duration means reducing the course components usually at the sacrifice of skill practice, leaving the students with only the cognitive and affective experiences.

The course can also be shortened by excluding the “processing” which is required for the students to link new skills and their practice with relevance for themselves and their life situations.

In order to achieve adequate skill development in a condensed version of Life Skills the following factors must be considered:

1. **Qualifications of the Coach**

The prime considerations are the training and experience of the coach.

The greater the deviation from the ideal Life Skills model the greater the need for the coach to compensate as much as possible for any reduction in the Life Skills Components. In addition to his training, the coach draws from all his coaching experiences to effectively adapt to the target population and to accommodate educational level, age, culture, etc.

2. **Target Population**

The skill level of the students is critical factor in determining course length.

Students who are successful in managing their lives may benefit from a shorter less intensive program. Their need may be personal enhancement or focus on a particular skill area that they might have identified as inadequate.

Those students whose function level is considerably impaired because of gross skills inadequacies require the full range of training, 240 hours over 8 weeks to 16 weeks (preferably) depending on whether the classes are held half days or full days.

A Life Skills course to be recognized as acceptable Life Skills training should include no fewer than 90 hours delivered over a period of 15 weeks with no fewer than 6 hours training weekly.

Since course content includes the students' life experiences, a heterogeneous group is most desirable for adults.

3. Class Size

The number of students in the class significantly affects the speed with which they move through the curriculum and the process of skill development.

While a smaller group may progress more quickly they are deprived of valuable knowledge that is inherent in the range of input from a larger group.

Conversely too large a group will be restricted by time constraints in processing and practice of the more complex problem solving skills in shortened courses.

4. Curriculum and Methodology

Specific lessons must be included to develop the foundation or compulsory skills.

Secondary lessons supplement the basics developing more complex skill sets for problem solving.

A third category of lessons is selected by the coach in response to specific group and individual needs.

Lesson sequence is paramount to skill development building toward problem solving. i.e. Until the students develop effective communication skills they are unable to solve interpersonal problems.

Video recording play back is an essential component in Life Skills training. A Life Skills classroom must be equipped with video recording equipment that is used regularly as a feedback resource. The coach must have expertise in its appropriate use.

Skill transfer is the ultimate measure of success of the Life Skills training. When students apply their newly acquired skills to bring order to the troubled areas of their lives the purpose of the training is satisfied and can be used as a measure of its effectiveness.

Compulsory or basic lessons must be included in sequence utilizing the Life Skills methodology in *lesson structure: stimulus, evocation, objective inquiry, skill practice, evaluation* and process. No fewer than the following lessons from the Self Track should be covered.

Lesson Outlines

Meeting One Another
Seeing Oneself on Video
Surveying Life Skills
Listening To others
Describing Feelings
Relating To Others
Giving and Receiving Feedback
Expressing Trust in the Group
Depending on Others
Rating Behaviors in Groups
Giving a Talk
Describing Feelings 2
Debating the Topic: To Work Or Not To Work
Identifying Assumptions

The following lessons required to progress to complex problem solving skills may be used out of sequence if a classroom situation or if an individual student's crisis might be resolved by the introduction of a particular skill set.

Progression from the Self Track into Family, Community, Leisure, Job and Education also begins at this point.

These lessons include the following:

Relating Behaviors To Roles
Fighting Fairly
Learning Helpful and Harmful Behaviors in Groups
Explaining Life Skills To Others
Communicating With Children
Trying a Creative Exercise
Giving Help With An Individual Problem
Identifying Strengths of the Family

The remaining lessons are selected at the discretion of the coach to meet specific group and/or individual student needs, and/or if time allows.

All lessons, activities, classroom incidents, external incidents affecting the classroom, as well as personal issues that students introduce are to be purposefully incorporated into the course as learning experiences.

Appropriate closure to all courses is an essential part of the training.

Confidentiality must be strictly observed at all times.

LIFE SKILLS STUDENT PROGRAM EVALUATION

The evaluation process in a Life Skills course must occur at many different levels and with the Life Skills Training Centre this process begins from the first moment of contact with the student.

Interview: Referring agents (where applicable) submit referral forms outlining needs, goals, and expected outcomes for their clients.

The student is informed about the style, content and expectations of the training program. The interviewing coach explores personal information regarding the student's living situation, means of support, family, recreation and social activity, health, education, and work history. (See: *Guideline To Referral and Referral Form, Appendix C, C-1*)

During Course: Every lesson has an evaluation component. The student is able to evaluate his own effectiveness in skill performance and progress in skill development. There is also provision for the student to receive feedback from video, coaches, classmates and significant others in the classroom and outside. Lessons and materials specifically designed to evaluate skill development are taught and used at intervals during the course.

Course End: The student is evaluated by the coaches, fellow classmates and him/herself at the end of the program. Specific attention is paid to the skill development and performance indicators that were identified at the start of the program. (There is ample evidence to show that subjective evaluation of skill development by an expert is a valid measure)

Follow up: The students are contacted at 3, 6, and 9 month intervals to track their personal development and progress towards their goals. Some students have maintained contact with the Centre for over 15 years. Life Skills Training Centres research, tracking student progress and skill retention, has been conducted over extended periods of time. This research has shown long term behavioral change and success.

Continued positive results and continued demand for student/client training and for Life Skills Coach Training confirms the value, importance, and need of standardized high quality Life Skills training.

UNIT 4

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES (CANADA) LTD.

Responding To Community Needs

Development of Life Skills Based Programs to Meet Needs Identified by Community

During the Life Skills program pilot phase with the Canadian Mental Health Association, community agencies throughout Alberta became aware of the positive results of Life Skills training.

After the Life Skills Training Centres became incorporated and started delivering Basic Job Readiness Training, requests from other communities could be met. A variety of Life Skills based training programs were designed and delivered to respond to the requests. Communities beyond the borders of Alberta became consumers of Life Skills training. Inquiries came from the United Kingdom, Africa, Australia, and other points around the globe.

The experience and affirmation gained by the Life Skills Training Centres staff not only equipped them to identify employment preparation needs of their students, but, also, to augment the Life Skills curriculum in the **family track** which was falling short in responding to students' needs.

The training and experience of the coaches enabled them to adapt the Life Skills training to a wide variety of students in a wide variety of settings while consistently providing the necessary focus.

BASIC JOB READINESS TRAINING

The curriculum for Basic Job Readiness Training was designed at the request of Canada Manpower as a result of employment barriers identified in clients. The same inadequacies/skill lack that surfaced in personal, family and social situations interfered with success in acquiring and furthering education, vocational training and employment. Faulty belief systems created barriers to employment. These could be identified and explored.

Skills in management of personal affairs are transferable to employment. After a student has overcome personal barriers, the addition of goal setting, career planning, resume writing, interviewing etc. is accomplished with relative ease.

The “rehearsal” of skills in the classroom provides for a testing opportunity and the practice that builds the independence and self confidence required in obtaining and maintaining employment and/or furthering education or training.

Independence resulting from self confidence and skills acquisition also serves to build support networks or to seek and utilize available resources in times of need.

Through Basic Job Readiness Training and Canada Job Strategy programs Social Assistance recipients, women long out of the work force and youth with few marketable skills and no employment history, have been trained for employment.

With Life Skills as a foundation for teaching the participants to manage their personal problems, the job readiness skills become practical for the clients who then become confident and motivated to join the work force.

For those clients, many of whom were trapped in the welfare syndrome, discovering that they had potential for independent and productive lives gave them a new optimistic outlook on life.

Learning effective communication skills, identifying their own needs by recognizing their feelings, and feeling valued by others who could give them

feedback about their behaviors provided specifics for behavior change towards more appropriate conduct.

Positive results from the new behaviors encouraged further practice and results with the end product being increased self worth and self confidence. Fear, misinterpreted as lack of motivation, was no longer a barrier to risking an application for employment or further training. Inappropriate behavior no longer closed the door after the interview.

New found self worth fueled enthusiasm for academic upgrading, which was previously rejected. Domestic problems were resolved so that they no longer prevented participation in employment or training.

Health needs and personal care became important.

Children and family responsibilities became a source of pride and motivation rather than an unmanageable burden.

While job search, application forms and resumes are necessary in the world of work, these did not address family dysfunction and other serious personal problems that prevented consistent employee work performance.

LIFE SKILLS FOR EDUCATORS

Public Education and Community Awareness presentations by Life Skills Training Centres staff and Coaches-in-Training groups, identified the needs of educators for the non academic element of teaching. Teachers, both mainstream and aboriginal as well as Special Education teachers, administrators and others who held responsibility for education in the community, expressed a desire to learn to communicate more effectively with their students, give them help and support and particularly discipline them in a healthy positive way.

Most educators knew theoretically how these could be achieved but were unable to carry them out in practice.

They were most receptive and enthusiastic about acquiring these new tools to enhance their performance in the classroom. Identifying and solving problems from the child's perspective was new to them. Their new skill development enabled the educators to guide problem resolution rather than expect/demand resolution by inexperienced children.

After completing a series of Life Skills training sessions, the participating educators were excited about reporting the successes of their new techniques.

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING WITH ABORIGINAL GROUPS

Band Members

Working with first nations communities both at general band level, as well as with leaders and administrators, it is abundantly clear that lack of basic interpersonal skills underlie the community's social and consequently economic development problems.

With only a few exceptions band members have inadequate education, severely restricting their employment opportunities in a limited job market. Work in the surrounding area is usually even less accessible and at best only seasonal.

A family breadwinner finding himself in this situation, fails to meet his family's needs, suffers loss of self esteem and self worth, and frequently turns to substance abuse which in turn renders him even more unemployable.

From a social perspective this frustration and hopelessness frequently manifests itself in family violence. Lack of emotional support and family guidance, in addition to inadequate finances for the basic necessities of life, result in childrens' inability to perform in school. The children drop out of school and following the modeling of their parent or parents, turn to substance abuse to cope with their own life situation. - **And so the cycle continues.**

The employee whose life management skills are inadequate frequently finds himself enmeshed in problems with his spouse and children, parents and other relatives. Because of the problem it is not unusual for him to be bouncing back and forth from jail, to child welfare authorities, to courts, school, hospitals, and treatment centres. Maintaining regular employment becomes impossible.

Since so many are caught in these kinds of problems, coupled with poor training at the management level, entire economic development projects flounder. The community is left financially poorer with its members suffering increased feelings of failure and hopelessness.

Band Employees

In the case of the band employees, ranging from secretarial to chief, all too frequently the employee is inadequately trained to meet the responsibilities of his position. The result of poor performance in meeting these responsibilities is **extreme stress and burnout**. Stress and burnout of a band employee affect the care of his own family, thus straining the community's financial resources. Band business and the community are adversely affected by the waste of financial resources as well as loss of service.

There are usually a few individuals who have excellent management and interpersonal skills as well as good training. Because they are few in number and get little support from their poorly functioning colleagues, they tend to burn out and to ultimately leave their positions or their community - which now suffers another setback.

Elders

There is frequent reference to the utilization of Elders to provide guidance, strength and support. This is a very important resource in the community. However it has become evident that many Elders are victims of the residential school system. Having acquired only a minimal education and having lost their self worth both as persons and as first nations people, many of them have also lived their lives in alcoholism. Having suffered and survived and aging, possibly with failing health, these **gentle caring individuals** can provide the encouragement, support and advice in what **“not to do”**.

In some cases because of isolated life styles or resentment of mainstream society and particularly of their residential school experience, Some Elders may advise against education. It is common for grandparents to raise their grandchildren where the parents are unable to do so. Some grandparents have been known to spare their grandchildren the trauma of school by keeping them at home.

In today's aboriginal community with its current economic and political problems, it is reasonable to question the fairness of the demands placed on the shoulders of many Elders.

Culture

Culture is frequently pointed to as a solution to the problems of first nation people.

While the **importance and value of culture is indisputable** it may represent a weak link in the chain of strengthening first nations people for at least two apparent reasons:

1. Cultural knowledge and practice have been adversely affected by colonization and the residential school system. First nations people may have been deprived of cultural knowledge. In some communities children and/or young parents do not know their language and are unfamiliar with the values and practices of their culture.
2. Independence (Self Government) and general improvement in the lot of first nations people requires their ability to relate to and conduct business with mainstream society which, for the most part, is unfamiliar with aboriginal culture.

In order for first nations people to have equal access to technology, resources and to compete in the **same markets**, they will require the **same “mainstream tools”** in addition to their own culture.

Aboriginal Children

In the classrooms of junior high schools on reserves the students displayed lack of motivation and goals, low regard for education, poor academic performance, disruptive behavior, lack of respect and a high tendency to drop out.

When a Life Skills Course, conducted by a **qualified, experienced coach**, was introduced, it quickly became evident that the students valued education; and understood and accepted its importance to their future. They aspired to careers and improved lifestyles. And most significantly they were starving for recognition and care from adults.

The element causing the disparity of perceptions was the inappropriate, often intolerable situations at home within the students' families.

These children spoke of their family situations. They spoke of fatigue and stress, loss of self worth and lack of sleep because of frequent all night partying in their homes. They spoke of ***hunger*** because alcohol took precedence over food in the household income. They spoke of ***fear*** for their own personal safety and that of their siblings and parents in their violent homes.

Where children suffer physical, emotional and sexual abuse in their homes, the trauma continues while at school. They are concerned with “***what they are coming home to***” when they disembark from the school bus after lengthy rides. ***Anxiety***, increases by the inability to complete homework assignments because there is no quiet place to study. When they need help, very often there is no one there to help them, or, family members are themselves uneducated and unable to help. Frequently ***bingo*** takes adults away. The student returns to school the next day to face detentions as punishment for incomplete assignments or inadequate quality of work. The school reports the poor performance to the parents who in turn mete out further punishment.

Hopelessness is prevalent. Children have no power and are unable to control their environments. When the adults in their lives are unskilled in life management, they are unable to get their own needs met let alone the needs of their children. ***Suicide attempts*** are a common disclosure. Although the attempts were unsuccessful or intervention was effective, the problems for the students continue because the adults don't know what to do to change the situation.

Isolation of teens is a serious detriment to their social development. Parental inadequacy contributes to teens' lack of transportation to recreational/social resources. Recreational activities are usually restricted to hockey and fastball augmented by rodeos and pow wows, activities that serve the interests and abilities of limited numbers of youth.

Recreational centres are frequently converted to Bingo Halls. Frequently recreational centres operate during business and school hours, thus making them inaccessible to the youth.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is a prevailing problem in most first nations communities as well as in mainstream society.

The failure of resolving this problem lies in the tenacity of the faulty belief that the abuse is the problem rather than a symptom. This belief compounds and perpetuates the problem.

Massive amounts of funds have been dispensed for substance abuse treatment and training of counselors. The problem has not diminished.

Strengthening: the Individual: the Family: the Community

Life Skills Training - Through Life Skills skill development and skill practice individuals are empowered to identify their needs, make decisions and choices to best address those needs; and have the self worth and self confidence to take the appropriate action to fulfill their own needs, carry out their family responsibilities and go on to contribute to the stability and growth of their community.

This acquisition of effective interpersonal and problem solving skills promotes individuals to ask for help when necessary, feel more comfortable in realistically upgrading their interpersonal and work skills and to prepare themselves for productive employment; thus eliminating the need to hide or escape to substance abuse or succumbing to a life in the welfare syndrome.

Knowing how to get their needs met; to express frustration, fear and anger appropriately reduces violence.

The individual who himself feels whole and strong is more able to care for and model a healthy lifestyle for his children.

He has the self worth to *live his culture* and the resources to *strengthen his community*.

The Life Skills Training Centres have provided Life Skills programs for Aboriginals through “Outreach Programs” on reserves and in urban centres. This has been done consistently **by invitation**. Funds permitting, the invitations have often come repeatedly.

On reserves Life Skills has been included as the personal development and life management foundation on which to build employment and marketable skills. Basic Job Readiness and Canada Job Strategy Projects enabled Life Skills to apply interpersonal and life management skills to career planning and employment. Frequently, upgrading was the route taken.

The Personal Development phase of Life Skills Training empowers participants to appreciate their own strengths through the knowledge that they have *freedom of choice*. This enables the students/participants to successfully complete upgrading or training and to **move on** to an urban setting if necessary; to successfully adjust, adapt to urban living, to cope with mainstream society and become self supporting and responsible in caring for their families. A very valuable two way cross cultural experience is realized by the integration of aboriginal and mainstream students in the Life Skills classroom.

Community Treatment Strategy

Community Treatment Strategy resulted from benefits derived by Life Skills students and deemed to be therapeutic in aboriginal communities. Other community groups requested similar training.

Community Treatment Strategy is a range, combination and series of Life Skills based programs that are designed to teach individuals to meet their own needs responsibly and appropriately; strengthen them to carry out their family responsibilities effectively; increase their employability; to contribute to the growth of their community and to improve leadership so that the quality of life of all involved will improve.

Each community participates in the strategy design to determine how best to approach resolution of their social and economic problems in ways that are acceptable to their community members.

Many communities sponsor members in taking Life Skill Coach Training so that they may establish Life Skill training as a resource in their own community.

LIFE SKILLS FOR IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants from a dozen countries preparing for employment struggle with language and cultural barriers.

Women particularly were burdened with expectations to manage family life where their school aged children preferred the customs and lifestyle of their Canadian peers, and with which the mothers were unfamiliar.

In many cases these women lived in fear of their husbands. (Wife beating was an accepted practice in their home land). They felt isolated and, either uninformed, or too ashamed to reach out for help.

Experiences in their country of origin accompanied them to Canada making them fearful of authorities i.e. social workers, police.

The Life Skills program offered these people an opportunity, in a safe environment, to become acquainted with a Canadian they could learn to trust, With the practice of English, they could learn new skills and how to integrate them into family, social and work life; to ask questions in their attempts to understand cultural differences and where they could connect at a feeling level with others in the same circumstances.

They addressed their fears and anger about the abuse and corruption by their own government officials.

By practicing the interpersonal skills taught, they came to feel more valued and capable.

Learning more about themselves and others increased their flexibility with, and understanding of, their children in their double cultural struggle.

From their strengthened personal positions, job training became easier and less frightening. They became more able to ward off those Canadians who blamed them for the unemployment in this country, as well as those who displayed prejudice.

LIFE SKILLS FOR THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

Residential Aide Program - Requested by Grant McEwan Community College

“A program designed to train mentally handicapped individuals to assist in the care of a physically disabled adult enabling that adult to live independently in his own residence.”

The aides involved were educable, however were capable of only limited academic achievement.

An abbreviated basic Life Skills course held one day weekly for about 16 weeks, was one of the several training components provided to equip the aides for their employment.

The Life Skills lessons required a minimum of adaptation by the experienced Life Skills coach.

The trainee “aides” consisted of some 12 males and females in their twenties who had few marketable skills and poor, or no work history.

As the aides easily learned and practiced their new skills, they were delighted with the ‘normalizing’ effect on their relationships and feeling of equality with others. They were particularly responsive to the experiential and supportive methodology, where skills are taught and practiced in a safe environment, before there is an expectation that the skills will be used in the work site.

Less physically disabled individuals also participated in a Life Skills workshop so that they might support aides in their work.

Informal follow-up contact with the aides indicated that many of them terminated their employment as result of feeling exploited. Their disabled “employers” lacked interpersonal skills making their relationship with their aides unpleasant. The pay was minimal; the hours were long with few evenings or weekends off.

MENTAL HEALTH CLIENTELE IN LIFE SKILLS

With the development of medication that was effective in controlling some illnesses those patients afflicted could live in the community rather than in institutions. However, their illness and/or environment prevented their acquisition of appropriate interpersonal and life management skills. The experiential model of Life Skills provided these patients with life skills so that they could live more productively and independently at greatly reduced social and financial cost.

Medication and therapy address the **illness**. Life Skills Training works with the **well part of the person**. Life Skills addresses those behaviours and develops those skills required to live and/or work in the community.

LIFE SKILLS AND FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Individuals who are dysfunctional or who are unskilled in managing their personal affairs cause or contribute to their family’s breakdown.

For those individuals, their skill inadequacies further damage their self worth and self confidence in addition to the lack of family supports or from abuse by dysfunctional families. The common relief is alcohol abuse.

The trauma to the family is perpetuated by continued dysfunction by its members. Eventually one or more agencies of child welfare, medical/mental health or the court systems become involved. The personal, social and financial costs to the community are staggering.

In most of these cases, it is evident that the family members are distressed rather than disturbed. With Life Skills training, the individuals can be salvaged. Equipped with a new array of skills in their own life management

and in family management, individuals may reconcile their families and redirect them in an appropriate and responsible lifestyle.

If the family cannot be reconciled, then its members can move on to building new healthy relationships and families.

WOMENS'/MENS' GROUPS

Gender specific groups benefit from Life Skills Course when necessary because of limiting circumstances such as: culture, prison population, etc.

However, greatest benefit is acquired in heterogeneous groups. Given the current social climate of broken homes, family violence, loneliness and isolation of adults, mixed groups provide the framework in which relevant skills can to be learned and developed in safety.

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING IN PARENTING

Poor parenting is more the result/consequence of inadequate personal and life management skills than of not knowing what children require; therefore a comprehensive Life Skills Program is required to teach and strengthen adults for their parenting responsibility.

Parenting courses and workshops are helpful only to enhance the performance of parents already skillful and nurturing. Improved relationships between parents and teens can be achieved through more effective communications; the ability to administer emotional first aid and by having a good grasp of discipline approaches and strategies.

MENTALLY/PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED

For those suffering impairment, life skills are frequently inadequate due to a number of factors including institutionalization; inability or lack of resources in the home, misconceptions about the handicapped individual's need for or capability of learning appropriate and responsible behavior.

Consequently these individuals often conduct themselves in a socially unacceptable manner. The response of others is often avoidance at best and rejection at worst.

The effects of rejection aggravate the individuals' feelings of inadequacy causing him to act out. He may try harder to do what he has always done; demonstrating the same behaviors that have been ineffective in the past thus creating hurt and anger which translate into rebellion or social withdrawal.

Offering equal access to Life Skills training for the handicapped improves their social behavior and increases their life management abilities. Increased self worth and consequently an improved quality of life results in greater productivity and more independence.

Integration (except with the severely handicapped) with healthy members of Life skills groups serves to help *'normalize'* the handicapped by providing them with role models and by creating an environment of equality.

LIFE SKILLS FOR PRISONERS

The prisoner serving his sentence benefits from Life Skills by becoming aware of the alternatives to unacceptable behaviors and those behaviors which fail to produce the desired results.

Although in his environment he may be unable to utilize all the interpersonal and problem solving skills, his self esteem grows with new learning as he identifies his strengths.

He may recognize the potential of Life Skills training to maintain his relationships outside the prison; to improve his coping and survival skills inside the prison; to become less damaged by imprisonment; and to be more receptive to rehabilitation upon his release.

UNIT 5

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UNIT 6

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