

Walking Between Worlds:  
Mentoring Peers Experiencing  
—Hearing voices and Parallel—  
Realities

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Hearing voices and Parallel Realities are real human experiences that can be both a curse and a gift, depending on one's response to them. They can be complex and difficult experiences to navigate and make sense of on one's own. With proper guidance and mentorship one can learn to not only live with them, but even thrive. Instead of being pushed to the margins and being left out of a community, people experiencing these gifts can take on new, meaningful and enriching social roles within their community. In this workshop we will explore how mentorship is a real game changer

# Hearing Voices

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If you hear voices, see visions or have similar sensory experiences – you're not alone. The statistics vary, but somewhere between 3 and 10% of the population have experiences like these (increasing to about 75% if you include one off experiences like hearing someone call your name out loud).

Despite being relatively common, many people who hear voices, see visions or have similar experiences feel alone. Fear of prejudice, discrimination, and being dismissed as 'crazy' can keep people silent. At a time when we are told that it is 'time to talk', it is important that anyone courageous enough to speak out is met with respect and empathy.

People of all ages and backgrounds can hear voices at some point in their life, for many different reasons. Whilst some are distressed by their experiences, people can – and do – find ways of living with them.

<http://www.hearing-voices.org/>

# Parallel Realities

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Experiences of voices, visions, thoughts, feelings, emotions and other experiences that other people do not share in, understand or relate to

Parallel Realities includes hearing voices but Hearing voices does not encompass all of Parallel realities

# Childhood

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Growing up in the arctic

Elders as guides, mentors and unique form of peer support

# Turning Point 1

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Childhood Abuse, including sexual

Beginning of the voices and parallel realities

Mistrust of Adults

Wounded Communities

Not just a lack of community but a community that is the source of pain and suffering

Fear of engaging world around me; community was no longer experienced as a source of healing and wellness but as a source of pain and suffering

Intergenerational Trauma

# Move to South

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Outsider

Sports

Keeping things to myself

Absence of guides and mentors

Aversion to vulnerability

Complex PTSD; another lens to experience the world

# Turning Point 2

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WBC Alberta Accident

Mental Health Crisis

Pathologizing of my Person

Pathologizing my experiences, voices and visions

Addiction



# Turning Point 3

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Medical Model: Stuck in a holding pattern, revolving door

Disenchantment with North American Medicine and Medical Model;  
some parts are supportive, others are barriers to healing

Limitations of Mental Health System and Medical Model

Learning about Alternatives to Medical model

Not enough; something missing

# Turning Point 4

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Discovering Peer Support

Learning that I am not alone

Learning to about mutually beneficial and supportive relationships

Non-hierarchical

No power play

Not authoritarian; something inposing on you

Reciprocity

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“Peer support is a system of giving and receiving help founded on key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of what is helpful. Peer support is not based on psychiatric models and diagnostic criteria. It is about understanding another’s situation empathically through the shared experience of emotional and psychological pain.”

Mead, Hilton, & Curtis, 2001, p. 135

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Learning I have something to offer and gifts to share

Hearing Voices Movement- guidance at a distance

Starting a Hearing Voices and Parallel realities group

recovery narratives

Still something Missing

Searching for more

Lack of and scarcity of Mentors who experience parallel realities and hearing voices in close proximity

# Turning Point 5

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## **Walking Between Worlds**

Cultural and Spiritual Awakening

Connecting with Indigenous Elders (guides and mentors)

# Fighting Colonization: Decolonization

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Reclaiming lost or rare traditional roles (Mystics, medicine people, healers, seers, Shamans, guides, etc)

Reclaiming Voice Hearers and those who straddle two worlds

Colonization of the mind

Loss and scarcity of mentors and guides

Few Elders experience parallel realities and hearing voices

Few elders know the teachings around parallel realities

# Two Spirited

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“Two-spirit” is a term used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity. It refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit.

The creation of the term “two-spirit” is attributed to Albert McLeod, who proposed its use during the Third Annual Inter-tribal Native American, First Nations, Gay and Lesbian American Conference, held in Winnipeg in 1990. The term is a translation of the Anishinaabemowin term *niizh manidoowag*, two spirits.

Because the term two-spirit was developed by Indigenous people to describe experiences of their communities, the use of this term by people who are not Indigenous is considered cultural appropriation. For some, two-spiritedness is more than just an identity; it is a traditional role that some Indigenous people now embody in their modern lives.

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I have also been taught that 2S refers to individuals who may be female in body and choose to live the warrior role or a traditionally male role in community, and vice versa, and those who can switch back and forth and play multiple roles. And of course, that we carry two spirits, and at times were revered as having much more ability to converse with the spiritual realm. The ability to walk in 2 worlds.

Michele LeMay



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<https://lgbtqhealth.ca/community/two-spirit.php> Researching for LGBTQ Health

Two-Spirit Community “Two-spirit” refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity.

[lgbtqhealth.ca](https://lgbtqhealth.ca)

# Indigenous Teachings

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Indigenous elders and mentors use traditional teachings to mentor others. These teachings include:

Hearing Voices are not pathological but a gift for the individual and community

Not a mental health challenge but a spiritual one

Walking between Worlds; straddling worlds

Balance and Harmony

Medicine Wheel

7 Grandfather Teachings

The 4 Sacred Medicines

Traditional Medicines

Ceremonies

Stories

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movement from disengaged and disconnected from community to connection and engagement with community

Also involved in and passionate about creating a healthy and healing community

Redefining things that worked for me:

le community, parallel realities, hearing voices, journey, mentorship and guide

# The Medicine Wheel

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# Values

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The Seven Grandfather Teachings and MHCC Guide lines for practice and training of Peer Support

Indigenous teachings and values overlap with peer support values and practices

They both support and create community

# Guidelines for the Practice and Training of Peer Support

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The following list of values best define peer support in the view of leaders involved in this project:

- Hope and recovery – acknowledging the power of hope and the positive impact that comes from a recovery approach
- Self-determination – having faith that each person intrinsically knows which path towards recovery is most suitable for them and their needs, noting that it is the peer's choice whether to become involved in a peer support relationship
- Empathetic and equal relationships – noting that the peer support relationship and all involved can benefit from the reciprocity and better understanding that comes from a similar lived experience
- Dignity, respect and social inclusion – acknowledging the intrinsic worth of all individuals, whatever their background, preferences or situation
- Integrity, authenticity and trust – noting that confidentiality, reliability and ethical behaviour are honoured in each and every interaction
- Health and wellness – acknowledging all aspects of a healthy and full life
- Lifelong learning and personal growth – acknowledging the value of learning, changing and developing new perspectives for all individuals

# The Seven Grandfather Teaching

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Honesty: better to fail by honesty than succeed by fraud

Truth: It is always easiest to speak the truth

Humility: To be humble about your accomplishment is to be strong

Love: It is important to care for one another

Wisdom: With hard work and dedication knowledge will come

Courage: Let nothing stand in the way of doing the right thing

Respect: Give it. Earn it. Receive it.

<http://ojibweresources.weebly.com/ojibwe-teachings--the-7-grandfathers.html>

# Seven Grandfather Teachings

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To cherish knowledge is to know **WISDOM**;

To know **LOVE** is to know peace;

To honor all of the Creation is to have **RESPECT**;

**BRAVERY** is to face the foe with integrity;

**HONESTY** also means “righteousness”, be honest first with yourself – in word and action;

**HUMILITY** is to know yourself as a sacred part of the Creation,

**TRUTH** is to know all of these things.

<http://empoweringthespirit.ca/cultures-of-belonging/seven-grandfathers-teachings/>



# The Seven Grandfather Teachings

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<https://unitingthreefiresagainstviolence.org/services/the-seven-grandfather-teachings/>

# Belonging

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Belonging is the intrinsic worth of the person as an integral part of the community; that the person has the opportunity to have a meaningful and enriching role within the community. One in which they can contribute to the community's strength, health and vitality. This is balanced by the fact that communities are the natural contexts in which the person can flourish and reach their full potential. This is why welcoming, non-judgmental, open, healthy, holistic, vibrant, dynamic communities are needed and desired. Communities give rise to and shape people and a myriad of people form and shape communities.

# Returning to the Path: The Sacred Journey

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Challenge of finding a Mentor

Being a part of a community that accepts me and engages me; a community I can engage in and shape

Spirits are attracted to me

Discernment- what comes from the Creator and what does not

Peer Support Worker, Guide, mentor and Role model

Mentoring Others: Peer Support and Indigenous teachings

Building Capacity- Peer Support and Indigenous communities

# Mentors

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- strongly rooted in their communities and healing culture
- rooted and aware of the way they make sense of their experiences with hearing voices and parallel realities
- Knowledgeable in various ways of making sense of experiences with parallel realities and hearing voices
- open and nonjudgmental in the way that peers make sense of their realities
- a willingness to explore other ways of make sense of the experience with the peer
- gently drawing out of peers how they refer to and catagorize their experiences

Exploring experiences where they are at

# Mentors

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- Drawing out of them how they view and interpret their experience
- do not coerce or bind peers to take away the mentors way of making sense of the experience
- support peers in taking away what is liberating helpful, positive and empowering from the experience from what is painful, chaotic and terrifying
- willing to be open to learning from the peer and the conversation; life long learning
- allowing the peer to explore and try on diverse ways of making sense of their experience
- it is a dialogue at times and involves co-sharing

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- allows for the opportunity to experience co-vulnerability
  - creates a space and atmosphere for peers; allows the possibility to develop a new and/or different perspective and path to explore
  - supports the peer in being aware of and open to the potential of changing the relationship they have with the voices and parallel realities
  - opens peers up to recognizing and learning about the various ways peers can interpret or respond to their experience; offer them a wider perspective and lens
  - sharing how they have transformed and learned how to live with these experiences
  - the mentor is constantly seeking to expand and enhance their way of making sense of their experiences and creating new meaning; creating new ways of explaining and perceiving their own personal experience
  - its an on going processs that includes reclaiming and seekling out everchanging, and adaptable explanations and teachings around hearing voices and parallel realities

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- shares how their experiences can be a part of the human condition and beyond.
  - Seeing and supporting it as a calling or gift rather than pathological
  - Gives the peers space to recognize, discover, cultivate and build new pathways
  - Mentors over time build rapport and environments that allows peers to take risks. They allow peers to try on new ways of being and making sense of their experiences. And how these new ways of being connect them with the world and how the world engages and connects to them.
  - Mentors act as a guide who seeks to promote comfort and safety. Yet to support the peer to become comfortable with vulnerability.
  - Mentors support peers in exploring their inner strengths, gifts and lens.
  - Mentors rolemodel and guide peers in discernment- how to determine what is healthy and affirming and what is unhealthy and toxic
  - Mentors rolemodel and live the values, principles that support the healing and recovery journey

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- Mentors guide peers in cultivating and making use of traditional teachings, medicines, practices and ceremonies
  - Mentors live in a way that shows that it is possible to live a full, meaningful and enriching life
  - Mentors support and encourage peers in taking on and creating meaningful roles in the community



# Contact Info

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