

A few years ago my mother introduced me to the possibility of healing using natural remedies and I have been exploring them ever since. After being on medication for quite a few years I wanted to make an effort to find the root of my sickness and with time, become a healthier person. I have always been skeptical about prescription drugs, always wondering whose interests were served by advertising and prescribing them. I also often thought about how people healed before prescription drugs. I believe in the power of the mind, as well as in the benefits of maintaining a positive spirit in relation to the ability to heal. Since I continue to heal using natural remedies, I thought that pursuing the topic for this project would be a very interesting way to educate myself further.

How do First Nations communities conceive of and heal from illness?

There is a belief in First Nations communities that illness can be caused by a number of factors including soul loss, the casting of spells and simply from bites or cuts (Snow and Stans 29). For some Natives illness is "...the tangible consequence of an imbalance of some sort in the patient's system" (Moerman 6). There are five elements that are part of Indian medicine "the patient, the doctors and collectors, the herbs and the treatment or songs (Snow and Stans 25). In the report she provided me with, Diana Billy emphasized the importance of spiritual balance and explained that prior to gathering any of the medicine the earth provides "you say a prayer of thanks and give back something to Mother Earth, a gift of ground tobacco [or] Cedar and or Sage" (3). The earth provides a wealth of plants that can be used to heal everything from headaches to high blood

sugar, however it seems that non-natives are only just starting to take advantage of the natural remedies that are accessible to them. This type of treatment has been more widely accepted and used by non-natives (Snow and Stans 35) though "...only 10 percent of the world's quarter million flowering species of plants have been tested for their medicinal properties" (35).

I crated a medicine cabinet, similar to one you would find in any household bathroom, however inside I have placed natural remedies for common ailments. I chose to present the information I gathered in this way to show that there is room for this kind of healing in non-native communities and that there are natural cures for all of the things often treated using the medicines available at drug stores. The "natural remedy medicine cabinet" also demonstrates that there exists many benefits from Native and non-Native people sharing their knowledge with each other.

I began this project by going to the library and doing some research on First Nations communities and their use of natural remedies. Following this I contacted my partner's father, who lives in Squamish and is an active community member, and asked if he knew of anyone I could interview for this topic. After a visit to Totem Hall in Squamish, he put me in touch with Linda Williams who then provided me with contact information for Diana Billy. Diana and I corresponded by email and spoke on the phone a few times. It was important for her to learn about me in order for her to answer the questions I had outlined by email. It turned out that Diana, who provided me with a great response to my questions, actually lives just one road over from the house in Squamish

that I spend many weekends at. Diana told me that she felt there was a reason we were brought together and that it had to do with our individual purposes in life. I have included my email conversations leading up to my interview with Diana as well as the report that she created for me.

After completing some research, speaking to Diana and reading the report she provided for me, I have come to understand that there are many things that can be learned from the respect that First Nations people have for the earth and all it provides us with. From them we can learn not only how to heal using the gifts of the earth but that the process of gathering these gifts includes giving something back. This provides a way of demonstrating and understanding how the ways in which we constantly take from the earth without giving back have a serious effect on the planet and the population.

What can First Nations people teach us about how to respect the earth and heal from it and in what ways does this translate into solutions for dealing with the current state of the environment?

The following is a short report by Diana Billy following our phone and email conversations

Diana Billy
Swanania (ancestral name)
Traditional Medicine and Basket weaver
Cultural Interpreter

My Parents

My Parents are Richard Billy (SR) of Squamish Nation, a hereditary Chief Siamcun and my late mother is Anna Billy of Lil'wat nation MT. Currie BC, Lil'wat ancestral name Keekyick

Coast Salish Territory
Squamish Nation Member
Squamish Valley—Wai-wakum Reserve Brackendale BC

I had the best learning experience with both the different tribes. I had a lot of insight of our cultural through my great grandpa Dominic Charlie who lived in the Capilano reserve. They had Traditional longhouse ways to teach our family. And from my mother side we had learn their traditional family ways from the Lil'wat Nation of Mt. Currie. We had the best of both worlds. Through Language and medicine and songs. Big families on both sides.

Anna Billy (late), my mother was a traditional medicine women that helped many people across Canada, and beyond with her medicine. I watched and practised the medicinal ways of my late mother Anna Billy.

Spiritual balance is so important. If you're going to take from Mother Earth, you have to give back. So before you begin to gather anything from our Earth, you say a prayer of thanks. And give back something to Mother Earth, a gift of ground tobacco of Cedar and or Sage

And Sweet Grass, it will be a part of the earth around you. That is giving back to Mother Nature. You should notice that when man takes from earth whether its copper or gold or oil, they don't give back to our Earth. So you'll see that not taking care our Earth and Water we have no pristine forests or pure water anymore. Or not much left on Earth. Everyone is accountable and should learn how to give back to our Mother Earth and learn how to recycle like mother Earth. You see the recycle ways of Mother Earth through the 4 seasons, in the Spring time every living plants etc are becoming alive and showing a rebirth of themselves. Summer is the harvest time of berries and flowers and edible plants that are ready or almost ready to harvest. The Fall time is the hibernating time, when everything is resting and time to recover and sleep for wintertime. All the seasons and everything in our World are connected. We have to learn how to live in harmony with our Mother Earth and take care of her as she takes care of us.

Here are some basic medicines we use in our family and share with others.

The Plantain leaf which is good for all skin ailments.

Eczema, pimples, scars, burns, wart removal, cuts scrapes skin lesions. Also use for lungs taking away mucus and use for stomach ulcers.

Devils Club uses are good for the whole well being of your body. Including Arthritis is a good bone mender. They used it long ago for TB, measles. Drinking a tea of the Devils club is good for rigorous sports, like a ginseng.

With the Cottonwood bud use it has so much uses especially for all lung ailments, including asthma, pleurisy, and pneumonia etc. Is a good warm body rub when mixed with Olive oil. Uses are for sore muscles and ear aches. Body aches and pains. The Cottonwood bud our family do not go without as it has so many uses.

With all these medicines of our Earth, you can make a tea of them or simmer with oil and apply where needed. And make Tinctures of these 3 medicines. With each season there is something to gather and use as medicine or food.

Cottonwood Bud



Devil's Club



Salish Bighouse

Salish Bighouse has been teaching since 1984, a unique experience for all. To live like they did over 1000 years ago.

Ensxi'pm

Thank-you

Swanamia

Diana Billy