

A Different Approach for Distinct Results

We have had the privilege of partnering in the development of unique programs and initiatives for a number of Indigenous leaders, organizations, and communities. What follows are tangible results produced by extraordinary heroes applying a unique approach.

These programs are distinct, designed to leave participants being effective leaders instead of knowing more about leadership. This fundamental shift in focus demands a methodology that is participant-led and discovery-based. This is in contrast with the “expert” model of a teacher delivering knowledge, which is what most people have grown to expect in leadership training, economic development, dealing with trauma, and building community.

Some of the leaders we have partnered with and the results they produced

1. Norman Yakeleya (Former National Chief of the Dene Nation)

“You gave me a key... but it was me that had to turn it. And when I turned it, I opened a jail. So I was in a jail without having the bars”.

Norman Yakeleya, former National Chief, Dene Nation

Norman Yakelaya, through his participation in the Unstoppable Being A Leader program discovered his true purpose in life: that “all Indigenous youth in Canada are free from the trauma of the past.”

The Dene Nation elected Norman as National Chief soon after in the fall of 2018

Under National Chief Yakeleya's leadership, in collaboration with the Grand Chiefs, the Dene Nation now “speaks with one voice” for the first time since 1969.

The Dene Nation made Unstoppable their official leadership development partner for three years, empowering the first Youth Leadership Council, where a group of 10 youth—one woman and one man from each of the 5 Dene regions—created the following Noble Cause:

We exist to create the leaders of the future, youth who say what the future looks like, tackling the social issues of today to create a better tomorrow, protecting youth, and providing pathways out of generational trauma. Youth are proud to be Dene.

[Interview with Norman \(17 min\)](#)

[Residential school apology from Pope Francis](#)

2. **Dr. Betty Bastien** (Professor at Red Crow College)

We hired Unstoppable Conversations because we were stuck; we felt we were working very hard, exhausted and burning out, and we needed a change in our conversation.

What we got out of the unstoppable [training] is becoming aware of the limitations that we created - a limiting culture focused on our [dire] circumstances, and what we got to do was create a conversation based on our soul calling, passionate and inspiring.

The result of the workshop was that those conversations that produced ineffective actions were brought to our awareness, and we understand that they resulted from our burnout. We have created results based on our commitments and [have a] structure to support those commitments.

Betty Bastien, Author,
Blackfoot Ways of Knowing – The Worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi

Creating a New Future from the Leadership Course (recordings)

[Betty - new future](#) (30 Seconds)

[Betty Bastien creating what life is about](#) (30 Seconds)

3. **Angelina Pratt** (Vice Chair of Nechi Institute)

In just two days, my thinking got turned upside-down and sideways, opening up conversations that were trapped in a deadened cycle on a repeated loop. The insight for me was the recognition that the "thinking " which precedes conversations can either contribute to their success or their failure, depending on whether you want the same results or want successful, meaningful conversations. I choose the latter.

Angelina Pratt
Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) and Vice Chair of Nechi Institute

Angelina created a Podcast after the Leadership Course

<https://www.alcoholfree.com/listen/podcasts/episode/were-human-lets-get-disruptive-and-shake-things-up>

4. Leese Papatsie (Manager, Heritage Appreciation)

I want Nunavumiut to stick together and say one thing: food costs are too high in Nunavut—one simple message. I do not want to see kids and elders go hungry. I want to thank you for helping me realize who I am and what I think I can do. I still remember what you have taught me, and it will continue to help me (when I want it to!!)

Lessee Papastie

Lessee participated in the Aboriginal Leadership Development Program led by Vik Maraj. Who she became and what she created is extraordinary. Lessee discovered she could make a difference in life and transformed from an innocent bystander in her Inuit community to a Global Leader. Here commitment end Food Poverty in the North of Canada resulted in her:

- Creating a Facebook called *Feeding My Family*, with over 21,000 members
- Being interviewed by the BBC News, Globe and Mail, Al Jazeera
- Inspiring other Not for Profits to be created (Adopt-a-Family Program and Food for Nunavut Group)
- Global attention from a visit from Princess Sarah Ferguson, Dutchess of York

5. Casey Adlem (President, Larga Kitikmeot & Larga Ltd.)

We trained the leaders of Larga, who provide accommodations to Indigenous People from the north who need critical medical attention from urban hospitals.

What an incredible 2 days we had with the group last week! Wow! The skills and knowledge you shared with us are having a profoundly positive impact on me and how we all interact with one another. I'm not only extremely impressed with your work, but I'm grateful. Thanks again.

Casey Adlem
President, Larga Kitikmeot & Larga Ltd.

6. Dene Tha' Community School:

We worked with the staff of the Dene Tha' Community School in Chateh Alberta. Chateh at the time had one of the highest crime rates in Canada, including murder, assault, and domestic violence. This impacted the quality of children's lives and their ability to learn. We worked with teachers to strengthen their ability to teach in this environment and make a difference.

Shara Tacomba, Education Assistant

Everybody was afraid of talking about the truth before Unstoppable Conversations came here. What they do is similar to our Dene culture regarding beliefs and values because it reminds us of who we should be.

We need this for our youth also because it will teach them how to open up. One of the things that surprised me when we worked with Teacher Assistants and Teachers is that the problems of the Teachers was so similar to our problems. Now, we can be more open.

Sarah Wells, Teacher

Having Unstoppable Conversations work in our school was very beneficial. It allowed us to speak our minds without fear of consequences and lifted a big weight off my shoulders. It's interesting that what you think people think of you is usually much more negative than what people actually think of you....we often think the worst.

Allan Pastion, Culture Coordinator and Education Assistant

I found that the Unstoppable Conversations work lets the 'real you' come out and cuts through all the other garbage that stops us. The work we did was really practical making an impact on relationships, our work at the school and everyday things.

Sherry Lambert, Education Assistant

The work with Unstoppable Conversations let us feel good about our diversity – each person being different. It lets us be more positive and I find that many staff are much more positive now in how they speak. This sort of work would be great to have for our youth. They need to learn this.

Gordon Munro, Principal

I didn't know what to expect with this workshop with Unstoppable Conversations. I was somewhat concerned about its usefulness for a busy school staff. I was happily surprised. It was a great workshop and got us to think about all of our responsibilities on a deeper level. It made a big difference to the morale of the school by having us distinguish what's a story and what's real. This had dramatic effect. It also made me realize that I needed to be honest with myself regarding my aspirations and I decided that day to apply for position of school principal. I think this could be really helpful for students and everyone.

Yolanda Talley, School Board Representative

I didn't know what to expect for this workshop and I was pleased with what he was teaching the staff. It felt that he was referring exactly to issues I was having, so I think it was really good. I think this should be offered to our youth as well.

7. **Jamie Zettler** (Commander Officer of the North, Northwest Territories RCMP)

We developed the first program in Canada, supported by both Dene Leaders and RCMP Leaders, to reconcile the differences of the past and bring in an entirely new era of trust.

The RCMP in the Northwest Territories, over the years, has developed an awareness of reconciliation, systemic racism, intergenerational trauma and cultural awareness with our communities. The Northwest Territories (NT) RCMP will need to continue developing our understanding of this path with our communities. With this evolving awareness and knowledge, the NT RCMP must transition to "operationalize" this knowledge in our duties. This will look very different in five or ten years as it evolves and continually changes as we learn from our communities what has worked and what has not. Some things will not meet our expected results, while others may exceed them. The most important aspect will be that we continue our open bilateral dialogue with the communities as we grow this important relationship. I believe this is the next step in our evolution in the Northwest Territories, and I look forward to the ongoing work with the Dene Nation.

The methodology of the pilot program, developed by Unstoppable Conversations on behalf of the Dene Nation, is adopted from successful examples in other jurisdictions, including post-Apartheid South Africa and Northern Ireland. Within Canada, the Coburg Police Department has already begun high-level implementation of elements of the program internally and has been actively involved in shaping how this will roll out with the NWT RCMP and its service members. The pilot will begin within one region in the NWT (out of 6) with ten (10) NT RCMP employees from various duties and 10 Indigenous leaders engaging together in a series of unique workshops.

"This is an opportunity to bring to life the Truth and Reconciliation Calls-to-Action while demonstrating a new way forward in Canada for policing and justice that reflects unity between Indigenous and Canadian leadership," continued Dene National Chief Yakeleya. "However, it is crucial that this is an Indigenous-led process. The only way we can make effective, long-lasting change is to employ the principle of 'Nothing About Us, Without Us'; understanding lived experiences must be a key part of breaking down the walls of colonial justice systems."

- Jamie Zettler, CO, RCMP "G" Division