

# **Tree of Life: Questions about professional identity for child and youth workers**

**By Natasha Kis-Sines and Ruth Pluznick**

[Natasha Kis-Sines and Ruth Pluznick developed the following questions to use with fellow colleagues at Oolagen House in Toronto, Canada. We hope they will be useful for workers in other contexts. To read more about the Tree of Life methodology they draw on, visit [www.dulwichcentre.com.au/tree-of-life.html](http://www.dulwichcentre.com.au/tree-of-life.html)]

## **PART ONE – The tree and professional identity**

### **Roots of the tree**

- What brought you to this work?
- Events/person that influenced you (Who and what inspired you)?

### **The ground**

- How long have you been with this team?
- What are some of the values and commitments of the team that are most meaningful to you? Why is it meaningful?
- How does this “fit” with your preferred directions for your work?

### **Trunk of the tree**

- What skills and knowledge do you bring to your work with young people?
- What is the history of these skills and knowledge?
- Who in your life first noticed these skills and knowledge? Can you tell us a story about how it might have been visible to them?
- Who on the team is most aware that you have these skills? Is there an example of a time when these skills and knowledge would be most evident to that person?

### **Branches of the tree**

- What are your hopes and dreams for the young people that you work with? For the work you do? For yourself as a child and youth worker?
- What are some of the next steps in your career and life?

### **Leaves of the tree**

- Who are the people who support you in the work you do?

### **Fruits – contributions**

- What has the team and others contributed to your development in work and life?
- What does the team most appreciate about your skills and knowledge? What would they say you have contributed to their work and life?

### **Re-telling of stories**

- Each of the participants is invited to talk about their tree.
- Participants will serve as O/W for each other by noting something that stood out for them during each presentation, and writing this on their teammate's trees of life.

### **PART TWO – Forest of life**

- Place all trees side- by-side.
- Collective re-telling
  - The strong and firm roots we all seem to have which have served as a foundation or proffered directions in our work and as team members
  - The hopes and dreams we have for our youth, our work, and our team
  - The people who we are connected to who have thought us a lot of things
  - The people who continue to support us in our work and life
- When the individual trees are placed side-by-side, do we think of ourselves as a “forest”? What makes it possible to experience ourselves as a “forest”?
- What is made possible in our work with youth by our experience of being a forest?

### **PART THREE – When the difficulties come**

- Like trees in the forest, there are also storms ...
  - What are some of the storms that child and youth workers face in their daily work?

- As a child and youth worker, what are some of the effects of these storms on your work, team, and life?
- Are there ways you respond to these storms that help you to hold on to preferred directions in your work/life?
- How does the team help you to respond in these preferred ways?
- When you respond to storms in preferred ways, what difference does this make in the lives of our youth in residence? To your experience as child and youth worker?

#### **PART FOUR – Certificates**

[This document was downloaded from [www.dulwichcentre.com.au/tree-of-life-professional-identity.pdf](http://www.dulwichcentre.com.au/tree-of-life-professional-identity.pdf)

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