

# REPORT ON YAYA MAY RETREAT, MAY 2011

-by Wade Lifton -

*Wade Lifton was the contract-person helping to organize our active Fraser YAYA team to put on another successful Youth & Young Adult May Retreat, Cultus Lake Camp, May 2011*

*Wade Lifton is Children & Youth Minister @ Mt. Seymour United Church in North Vancouver, a Board Member at Naramata Center, and active in [theWATERproject.ca](http://theWATERproject.ca), which harvests rainwater and manages water resources in the villages of Adexor and Adexor-Kpodzi, Ghana.*

*The following is Wade's report to Fraser Presbytery about the 2011 May Retreat....*

Fraser Presbytery:

As you celebrate this year's May Retreat, I have a few reflections to offer.

I just completed a six-month social change leadership program, and after studying the various approaches of how we contribute to a better world, my faith in the importance of successful, transformative events like May Retreat is renewed. Beneath the important work of re-tooling the political and economic structures of our society is the work of addressing people's inner lives. Structures that are more just and sustainable will not uphold without the foundation of a more loving culture.



Shifting culture, values and behaviours is daunting and ambiguous work – and May Retreat is one place that accomplishes this work incredibly well.

At the beginning of the weekend we invite participants to think about the way they really want the world to be, how they want to be in the world, and to try living that out in these days together. They name the ways they want to behave together, and they set that as the standard for the weekend. In the days to come we watch participants and leaders act with committed loving kindness. I witness moment after moment of God's Kingdom showing up. At the end of the weekend we acknowledge the special community that has been created, we offer questions to help individuals identify specific experiences, learning and tools that they will take with them, and we invite them to raise the bar on how they carry the light they experienced and shared at May Retreat out into the world. I believe this bookend of invitations frames the weekend in a way that creates a space for transformative community that is then released beyond Cultus Lake.

One of the leaders commented that something we do well at May Retreat is taking what works and running with it. The successful model is a result of years and years of trial and error, fine-tuning and building on strengths. Not only has a successful model been built, but a culture has also been created. Past leaders and return participants know that May Retreat is a place of belonging and acceptance, where people are actively inclusive and loving. They live this norm from the moment they arrive, which new participants quickly realize, and they begin living out of this same loving standard. This culture has been carefully cultivated, and stays alive because of the momentum and relationships that are carried forward each year.

It takes an incredible amount of work every year to put all the logistics and pieces in place, building a solid container that will hold this experience. And it is so worth it. Youth are transformed by a truly safe place where they can open to experiencing the sacred within and around them. Young leaders are nurtured and mentored. Ministry personnel experience and learn from a thriving youth ministry. The impacts of this event ripple far beyond the weekend. It is a ministry that you as a presbytery have invested in significantly over the years, and it is one you can celebrate with pride.

With gratitude for your commitment to youth and to May Retreat ~

Wade Lifton