

Foreword

Michael Hart

I recently attended an international gathering focussed on Indigenous cultures entitled Manito Ahbee held in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It included the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards, an Indigenous market place and trade show, an education day, music festival, and an international competition Pow Wow. Literally thousands of people attended and participated. While my son and I attended the Pow Wow, I could not be but overwhelmed with the grand entry of approximately 800 hundred dancers. I thought about how many of our people continue to align themselves directly in the path that our ancestors have laid out for us. It was truly an event that presented a snap shot of how far our peoples have come despite the ongoing colonial oppression. When I returned to my office, after the weekend, I was quickly reminded that despite these changes, we continue to struggle to maintain, regain, our space in our own lands. I had just spent time in a First Nation where a community worker and I discussed the concerns she was supporting others to address, including a grandparent who has limited, if any, say in the well-being of her grandchildren in care; a parent who is overwhelmed with the number of suicides in her families that she too wanted an end to the pain; and a neglected child who is not wanted by his own family members because "he is too hard to handle."

I believe we need to continue building on the path that our ancestors have laid out for us. We need to remember the historical oppression our peoples have

faced and how we continue to face the new forms of colonialism present today. This challenge can seem overwhelming as we struggle to meet the needs of the communities and address community wellness despite the fact our agencies and organizations continuously face inadequate funding and support. Still, we must be prepared to address how our identities have been shaped by this oppression and the need to ensure our cultural identities remain, as we define them. We need to turn to our understandings and views of how to move forward by including and relying upon our own Indigenous knowledge. We need to live and work in ways that reflect our values, and incorporate our sacred and traditional teachings in today's context.

I trust that this issue contributes to the building of our path. Together, these articles address several issues, dynamics and perspectives evident in our ongoing development as Indigenous nations and peoples, including the history of Indigenous child welfare and the sixties scoop, cultural identity, Indigenous knowledge, and Indigenous ways of life. With these contributions and our reflections as readers, practitioners, educators, and concerned individuals, it is my hope, and I believe the hope of many, that we may move forward to the point where such gatherings as Manito Ahbee are regularly and frequently enjoyed and experienced by thousands of our children and families across Turtle Island as it is meant to be: an expression of pride in one another and in ourselves.