

An Interdisciplinary Journal

Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Editorial - Resilience and Triumph: Moving Forward in a Good Way

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I am honoured to write the editorial for this journal that presents articles on the cultural, spiritual and mental health needs of Aboriginal children. This journal is a powerful and beautiful example of how our newest generation is already leading in a good way and how individuals and organizations, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, are leading with best practices for the wellbeing of Aboriginal children. I have drawn from personal experiences to focus this editorial on the inequalities and overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and youth in the child welfare system.

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (the Caring Society) have given me, and thousands of other children and youth, the opportunity to lead in a good way. I first gained knowledge of the Caring Society in 2012 and was ecstatic to discover an organization that was, and continues to be, so passionate about Indigenous children's rights on- and off-reserve. This excitement continues to grow as the Caring Society continually provides strong support at the federal level for children in need of support and reaches out to former children in care, such as myself, to provide hope, guidance and mentorship for children currently in the child welfare system. With this support I have sought out the truths of the federal child welfare system and its relation to our communities.

The Canadian federal government has a sordid and tragic history with First Nation communities, especially in relation to the child welfare system. While residential schools and the 60's scoop are seen as events of the past, First Nations children continue to be taken from their homes and transplanted away from their communities, families, culture and the much needed teachings that are millennia old. This lack of connection to anything an Aboriginal child once knew is manifesting in our communities as a sickness. Addictions, mental illness, domestic abuse, child abuse, on and on are more prevalent in First Nations communities than in any other community group across Canada. These statements are not to paint a picture of a diseased and desolate nation; instead, it shows a nation that has not been adequately provided for.

These inadequacies continue to come to the surface as the Caring Society drives forward in the groundbreaking human rights tribunal complaint against the Federal government of Canada. The Caring Society has provided strong evidence that the government of Canada has provided inadequate and racially discriminatory services to First Nations communities on-reserve. The Caring Society also argues that

record numbers of First Nations children are being removed from their families due to inadequate services currently available.

I was a target for the inadequate and discriminatory practices of the child welfare system. I was a poor, 5 year old, Aboriginal child of a single mother and that was enough for the government to remove me from my home. I have been out of the system for 10 years, but I am still able to see the lasting, and devastating, effects of being taken from my home. After being removed from my home I was unable to connect culturally, I was never told that I was Indigenous and never knew the sanctity and importance of belonging to a nation. Years later, today, I recognize that this developed a streak of lateral violence within me. The culture, language and people I yearned for so much were unavailable to me so I began to resent what I could not have, and what I was not allowed to participate in.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident unique to me. As the authors illustrate below, the pain of inequality and inadequacy runs deep. However, the brilliance of the mere existence of this journal is showing an even greater strength, coming from strong advocate voices, which are overcoming the inequality and inadequacy and providing for dazzling and hopeful coming generations of First Nations children and youth. In the following pages, the hope and inspiration of these articles is something to take encouragement from and to form a scaffolding of ideas surrounding the rousing and developed ideas.

This powerful journal highlighting best practices for children and youth's cultural, spiritual and mental health across Canada is a beacon of hope for First Nation communities. While the tragedies of the child welfare system have been highlighted above, the overall outcome of these tragedies across this nation has been incredible resilience and triumph. The Caring Society ongoing court case solidifies and stands in solidarity with this refusal to back down and willingness to move forward in our communities. The articles below go to show that First Nation children and youth are in need of cultural, spiritual and mental health, and, are seeking it out. I am proud to be a part of a journal that eagerly highlights the vital needs of children and youth who will be leading the way to a better tomorrow for themselves.