

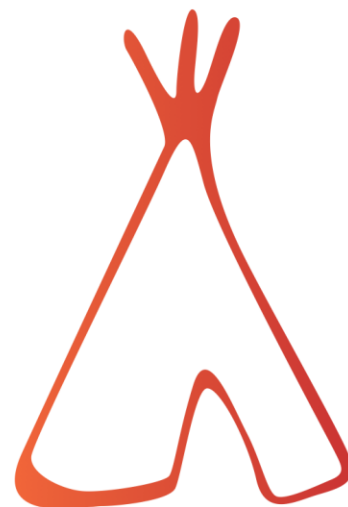
First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal

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

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Foreword

Andrea Auger

Reconciliation and Research Manager and Coordinating Editor *FPCFR*, First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada

Contact: aauger@fncaringsociety.com

Dear Readers,

As we move forward with the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* into its 12th year, we reflect on the many changes to the journal. We have made the move almost exclusively to an online format which has eased data management and allowed us to expand our reach. The *FPCFR* also accepts other manuscript formats such as audio recordings as well as submissions in Indigenous languages.

The *FPCFR* has always been unique in highlighting community stories, successes and promising practices. In the past couple of years, we have shifted our focus to include publications by children and youth. Since 2014, we have featured Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth in three issues, one completely by young people. We are proud to feature another young author in 11(1).

At the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, we are passionate about ensuring young voices are uplifted in expressing their views and opinions because they are relevant and important. Children and young people are informed about issues and understand them if they are given the chance. Not only do they remind us about right and wrong but also do so in a way that is honest. As Cindy Blackstock says, “children are ambassadors of love and fairness.” As adults, our sense of love and fairness is often overshadowed so children and youth can teach us and guide us back.

Moving forward we will continue to consistently publish the works of children and youth and provide mentorship opportunities when we are able to. We welcome you to join us in uplifting the voices of young people!

Happy reading,

Andrea

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Editorial: What can we achieve if we aim high enough?

Courtney Powless

Education and Public Engagement Coordinator and Coordinating Editor *FPCFR*, First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada

Contact: cpowless@fncaringsociety.com

In a special presentation to the Toronto Youth Corps in 1972, Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl spoke to why we should believe in one another. Frankl argued that to see what human beings are truly capable of, we must aim north of our destination—when we believe in each other’s greatness, we account for drift and crosswinds, and promote one another to become who we are truly capable of being. This belief in one another is critical to bringing reconciliation to fruition. Likewise, engaging in reconciliation offers us opportunities to uplift one another as we reimagine our communities and our country as places founded on love, equity and respect. Reconciliation, characterized by the acknowledgement and redressing of harms, and the paving of a new path towards well-being for Indigenous communities, is at the core of *First Peoples Child & Family Review*. This volume, while not guided by a particular theme, is replete with reminders of how we can engage meaningfully in reconciliation—within the academy, in community research, and as citizens.

Starting the issue is “The Neglected Human,” a commentary by a young woman and student at the University of Toronto, Muriam Fancy. In her article, Fancy discusses the historic and continuing discrimination against First Nations children. Citing the residential schools system and underfunded and inadequate First Nations child welfare services, she argues, “[i]t has always been harder for the Indigenous peoples to receive the most basic treatment as human beings in Canada and the Indigenous child is no exception to this oppressive, unwritten rule.” Fancy brings our attention to the January 2016 ruling by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal which found that the federal government of Canada discriminates against First Nations children living on reserves by underfunding of child welfare services. For Fancy, this ruling is an opportunity for us to come together to create meaningful, positive change for First Nations children and their families. Echoing Frankl’s esteem in human beings, she writes: “It seems that we as Canadians do not yet know what we are capable of when standing in solidarity with a community that has faced generations of unimaginable brutality; our ability to make change at all levels of life faces no barriers when we stand together.”

Following Fancy’s commentary, we turn to research that reminds us that, to be respectful and successful working with Indigenous communities, approaches must recognize and reflect the distinct realities of a given community. In “Understanding the Environment: Domestic Violence and Prevention in

Urban Aboriginal Communities,” Goulet, Lorenzetti, Walsh, Wells, and Claussen examine the unique risks and protective factors related to domestic violence in urban Aboriginal contexts. In their meta-analysis, the authors identify a number of shared risk and protective factors in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities; however, they also find that a complex history and legacy of colonization is critical to understanding domestic violence in urban Aboriginal contexts. Concluding that existing research does not reflect the needs of Aboriginal women, they argue that future research and prevention should be community-led, reflect the current and historic realities of the population, and build on traditional cultural knowledge and practices. Standing behind this argument, we at the Caring Society encourage researchers and communities looking to address issues like domestic violence against Aboriginal women to turn their eye to long-standing inequities in services for Aboriginal communities that places First Nations young people at greater risk for poverty and disadvantage, including violence. Addressing structural barriers that hinder the well-being and success of First Nations children is a critical step towards building healthy communities.

This leads us to an example of successful cultural adaptation. “Odemiwin: Understanding and Supporting Childhood Stimulation in an Algonquin Community” tells the story of a research and health team working in collaboration with community to develop a locally adapted child stimulation activity in the Algonquin community of Rapid Lake. Through their research, the authors learned that while there was a lack of continuity in the transmission of parenting knowledge and practices across generations, Algonquin parents and caregivers weren’t simply lacking in parenting know-how, but held different perspectives and assumptions about how to stimulate and teach their children. They also learned that a common developmental screening tool was perceived by parents and caregivers in the community as a test of their competence rather than a tool to support child development. Recognizing the cultural bias of the tool, the research team worked in collaboration with community members to develop a locally adapted child stimulation activity. They framed the activity in a way that was meaningful to caregivers, grounded in traditional Algonquin concepts of health and well-being, and promoted community-wide involvement in childhood stimulation and play. Hence, this article reminds us that as we strive towards better health and social outcomes for Indigenous children, families and communities, it is necessary to be mindful of our assumptions, and acknowledge the cultural lens through which we see and relate to the world.

Bringing the volume to a close are two articles which exemplify reconciliation in action on a personal and community level. In “Aboriginal Graduate Student and a Non-Aboriginal Faculty Supervisor: A Relationship Examined,” an Indigenous graduate student and a non-Indigenous faculty advisor share their experience working together, and creating a meaningful and fruitful relationship. Through mutual respect, openness in sharing their experience, and a desire to understand one another, Danica Lee and John Poulsen developed a trusting, reciprocal relationship that enabled them to offer each other consistent feedback, and to learn from one another. “More Than a Social Justice Project: The Continued Road Towards Truth and Reconciliation” describes community members coming together for a conference aimed at transforming the legacy of residential schools in London, Ontario, and reimagining their community as a place of reconciliation. As author Sarah Burm writes, “[The] conference was more than a social justice project; it was an opportunity to allow humanity to win out over inhumanity; to show what reconciliation can look like when we push the conversation, not only with our words, but with our actions.” These stories are but two microcosms of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples taking place across the country. As we find our place, individually and collectively, in

reconciliation, we should ask ourselves, *what can we achieve if we aim high enough?*

We can make justice and equity for First Nations children and families a reality if we can only first conceive of it in our hearts and minds. Let us heed Fancy's call to action. Let us stand together as human beings, and reimagine our communities and country as places where every child and family has the services and supports they need to be healthy and lead a good life. Let us make our intentions manifest and work together in respectful, collaborative and non-discriminatory ways to develop services and approaches that reflect the distinct needs, values, and cultures of communities, so that children and their families can feel proud of who they are, and where they come from, and strive forward with dignity, confidence and self-respect.

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The Neglected Human

Muriam Fancy

Contact: info@onenationtwoworlds.com; Website: www.onenationtwoworlds.com

Muriam Fancy is a second year student at University of Toronto studying Indigenous Studies and Peace, Conflict, and Justice in hopes to become a human rights lawyer. She began her own organization in 2011 called "One Nation, Two Words" (www.onenationtwoworlds.com) which aims to bridge the gap in education and health between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through advocacy work. One of Muriam Fancy's accomplishments is presenting to over 800 students and faculty in school and organizations in Toronto regarding the history and injustices Indigenous youth face living on reserve. Some examples of venues that she has spoken at are University of Toronto Dalla Lana School of Public Health and International Development Conference. Additionally, Muriam Fancy has also sent 500 pounds of winter clothing and school supplies to Indigenous communities in northern Ontario.

The Canadian government has defined the capabilities of First Nation parents in terms of "neglect." It is because of this term that many children are taken away. However, the term neglect receives its meaning from concepts of poverty, poor housing, and substance misuse which is ultimately correlated to the intergenerational trauma of residential schools that many First Nation parents continue to suffer from. It is the differences in ways of life that led the federal government to treat the Indigenous children living on-reserve and in the Yukon with racial adversity; a genocide spanning over a 150 years through a merciless system described as residential schools; schools replete with rape, deaths (without reporting names of the deceased), and institutionalized child neglect. It was and continues to be genocide through schooling, constructed after Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonal, described educated Indigenous children living with his or her parents as "...simply a savage who can read and write" (TRC, 2015, p.2).

The closure of the merciless schooling system, "commenced in earnest in 1970, [and] was accompanied by a significant increase in the number of [Indigenous] children [taken] into care by child-welfare agencies" (TRC, 2015, p. 69). By 2010, approximately 27,000 Indigenous children were not in their parents' or grandparent's hands and homes (AFN, 2013). Many of the children were placed with non-Indigenous families. A major cause for this was due to significant underfunding by the Canadian federal government. As Dr. Cindy Blackstock observed, an Indigenous child living on reserve in Canada means receiving "less government funding for statutory child welfare services than other children even though there are more First Nations children in child welfare care now than at the height of residential school operations" (Blackstock, 2009, p.89). It has always been harder for the Indigenous peoples to receive the most basic treatment as human beings in Canada and the Indigenous child is no exception to this oppressive, unwritten rule.

Dr. Blackstock testified to these events at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. This trial brought light to the fact that neglect for First Nations children is a result of a country who has neglected the First Nations children by discriminating in funding amounts to First Nations agencies and communities. The tribunal was filed because Dr. Cindy Blackstock and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) saw a human right violation which was First Nation children receiving exponentially less welfare funding than the rest of Canada. In 2016, the Tribunal ruled in favour of First Nation children on reserve, concluding that there was discriminatory funding as between such children and children off reserve. Moreover, the adverse impacts of significantly less funding for Indigenous children on reserve arose "only because of their race and/or national or ethnic origin. Furthermore, these adverse impacts perpetuate the historical disadvantage and trauma suffered by Aboriginal people, in particular as a result of the Residential Schools system" (First Nations, 2016, p.162).

History for the Indigenous community in Canada has been similar to a tornado, never stopping, always swirling and bringing new adversities in its path. Despite such apparent injustice through demonstrative evidence, time and time again Canada has yet to see with its heart rather than through its eyes; Canadians only see differences amongst each other, never unity or commonality. As a non-Indigenous youth I have understood this ruling as a chance for Canada to make amends, to make a difference, and to allow reconciliation to begin. It is through the winning decision of this Human Rights Tribunal that the first step of reconciliation has been taken, and that this government has had no choice but through the Tribunal to hear multitude of stories of individuals who were silenced that had to face the brutality of the welfare policy in Canada. The Tribunal outcome is one that should be celebrated and not forgotten. From my perspective, as a youth who is actively trying to be an ally to Canada's Indigenous community, this is a step in the right direction. It seems that we as Canadians do not yet know what we are capable of when standing in solidarity with a community that has faced generations of unimaginable brutality; our ability to make change at all levels of life faces no barriers when we stand together.

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

Understanding the Environment: Domestic Violence and Prevention in Urban Aboriginal Communities

Sharon Goulet,¹ Liza Lorenzetti,² Christine A Walsh,² Lana Wells² and Caroline Claussen³

¹ Consultant, Alberta, Canada

² Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada

³ Department of Sociology, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Corresponding author: Sharon Goulet, s.small@shaw.ca

Abstract

Aboriginal women in Canada are at significantly higher risk for spousal violence and spousal homicide than non-Aboriginal women. Although the majority of Aboriginal people in Canada live in urban settings, there is a dearth of literature focusing on the experiences and violence prevention efforts of urban Aboriginal peoples. In order to understand issues relevant to the prevention of domestic violence among this population, we employed Aboriginal community development principles to conduct a scoping review of the relevant literature to explore the meanings and definitions, risk and protective factors, and prevention/intervention strategies within urban Aboriginal communities. Our study underscores that a number of domestic violence risk and protective factors are present in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. However, the multifaceted impacts of colonization, including residential school trauma is a key factor in understanding domestic violence in urban Aboriginal contexts. The limited available research on this topic highlights the need for Aboriginal-led research directed towards eliminating the legacy of violence for Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Keywords: *Aboriginal people, women, domestic violence, urban, risk, protective.*

Aboriginal women in Canada are at significantly higher risk than non-Aboriginal women for all forms of violence, including stranger-violence, spousal violence and spousal homicide (Brownridge, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2006, 2011). In 2009, approximately 13% of Aboriginal women stated that they experienced a violent crime within the preceding 12 months, which is three times higher than non-Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada, 2011). Approximately 80% of these incidents were committed by

males. This extreme level of violence against Aboriginal women is further underscored by over 1181¹ missing, murdered and stolen Aboriginal women in Canada over the past 35 years (Amnesty International, 2004; Native Women's Association of Canada [NWAC], 2013; RCMP, 2014).

Aboriginal women have elevated rates of spousal violence from either a current or previous marital or common-law partner compared to non-Aboriginal women (15% vs. 6%) (Statistics Canada, 2011). They are also much more likely than non-Aboriginal women to have been sexually assaulted, to sustain injuries as a result of domestic violence, or to live in fear of their partners (Statistics Canada, 2011). These findings correspond with other regional contexts; for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are two to five times more likely to experience violence than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Willis, 2011). The severity of violence against Aboriginal women around the globe has been described as far outweighing that of non-Aboriginal women (Deardren & Jones, 2008; Virueda & Payne, 2010).

Effective preventative measures are necessary to address the prevalence and severity of domestic violence against Aboriginal women. Yet, there is paucity of research that focuses on Aboriginal domestic violence from a primary prevention perspective. A systematic review of 506 articles on domestic violence in Aboriginal communities published before 2009, yielded very few with a focus on primary prevention, leading the authors to conclude that they “could not identify quantitative evidence of primary prevention” (Shea, Nahwegahbow, & Andersson, 2010, p. 53).

In Canada, Aboriginal peoples comprise a significant population. According to the Constitution Act, 1982 S.35(2), Aboriginal peoples include “the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.” Of the three Aboriginal groups, North American Indians (698,025) comprise the largest population, followed by Métis (389,780), and Inuit (50,480) (Statistics Canada, 2008). According to the 2006 Canadian census, nearly 1.2 million people reported Aboriginal ancestry, which represents an increase in growth of over 46% from the 1996 Census data (Statistics Canada, 2006). Despite a common misconception that Aboriginal peoples in Canada live primarily on reserves, they increasingly reside in urban areas. While comparisons between on-reserve and urban Aboriginal populations are hampered by inaccurate population statistics (Place, 2012), data from 2006 indicates that 54% of Aboriginal peoples live in urban environments, including large cities and smaller urban centers (Statistics Canada, 2006); this represents a 75% increase from 1996. Further, urban Aboriginal peoples in Canada are “geographically distributed, culturally and linguistically diverse in which many members retain strong links to rural and reserve communities” (Newhouse & Peters, 2001, p. 12). However, the Canadian Federal Government's focus on reserve issues and problems has left urban Aboriginal concerns on the margins of funding and public policy (Enviroics Institute, 2010).

In spite of increasing urbanization, there is a dearth of literature that centers on domestic violence among Aboriginal people living in urban centers, with two notable exceptions. A review of four community-based surveys with urban American Aboriginal women by Oetzel and Duran (2004), uncovered victimization rates ranging from 46% to 91%, compared to 7% to 51% for non-Aboriginal women. A second urban study with American Indian women ($N=112$) living in New York City found that

¹ The number of missing and murdered women is considered much higher by a number of human rights advocates.

65% had experienced some form of domestic violence, with 40% reporting multiple victimizations (Evans-Campbell, Lindhorst, Huang, & Walters, 2006). Diverse approaches to defining domestic violence in these studies, however, create barriers to comparative analyses. This obstacle can be generalized to other domestic violence literature, limiting the ability to obtain a comprehensive understanding of domestic violence within this population; thus compromising the knowledge from which to develop effective preventative strategies.

Understanding domestic violence from an Aboriginal perspective is imperative. Further, prevention approaches to domestic violence must account for Aboriginal people living in urban centers. Aboriginal-focused research recognizes the multidimensional and complex nature of domestic violence in Aboriginal communities (Brownridge, 2008; Proulx & Perrault, 2000) and can contribute to our understanding of urban Aboriginal women in particular (Evans-Campbell et al., 2006). The prevalence and severity of domestic violence within Aboriginal communities and against Aboriginal women in particular, and the increasing numbers of Aboriginal peoples living in urban centers created the impetus for this research. The study seeks to address the following research question: How does the current literature inform meanings and definitions, risk and protective factors, and prevention intervention strategies for domestic violence in urban Aboriginal communities? Given that urban Aboriginal concerns have been on the margins of funding and public policy, this study has implications for academics, policy makers and practitioners interested in domestic violence prevention within urban Aboriginal communities.

Methodology

Approach

As this research was exploratory in nature, we conducted a scoping literature review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) to “*rapidly* map the key concepts underpinning [our] research area and the main sources and types of evidence available” (Mays, Roberts, & Popay, 2001, p. 194). Canadian, American and Australian literature were included to determine Aboriginal-specific domestic violence definitions, risk and protective factors, and approaches to primary prevention and healing. We adopted Morrissette, McKenzie and Morrissette’s (1993) Aboriginal community development principals as a theoretical framework for our study: 1) recognition of a distinct Aboriginal worldview; 2) recognition of the impacts of colonialism on Aboriginal communities; 3) the use of cultural knowledge and traditions as an active component to retain an Aboriginal perspective in the community development process, and; 4) the use of community empowerment as a method of practice.

We identified peer-reviewed literature through academic database searches, and grey literature was accessed through Internet searches. Search terms included: those specific to setting- *urban*; population- *Aboriginal, Métis, First Nations, and Indigenous*; violence- *trauma, and historical trauma*, and risk and protective factors- *risk factors, root causes, protective factors, residential schools, historical impacts, intergenerational, oppression, racism, discrimination, and violence*. A total of 89 articles related to the research topic were identified, retrieved and reviewed, leading to the selection of 23 articles for this study. The selected articles were then sorted into three main categories based on the research question (i.e., definitions, root causes and risk factors, and protective factors). Within each category, open

coding, axial coding, and selective coding of articles were utilized to develop the themes discussed in the presentation of results (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Results

Meanings and Definitions of Domestic Violence: Role of Colonization and Residential School Experience

Under the category of definitions, *colonization and residential schools* were two primary themes found in the literature (see Table 1). The fundamental role of colonization and in particular, residential school experience, which was the systematic and legislated removal of children from their families to be placed in residential schools (Hawkeye Robertson, 2006), was consistently identified in the literature on Aboriginal domestic violence. Colonizing policies and practices had numerous detrimental effects on Aboriginal peoples and caused a complex array of intergenerational trauma symptoms (Assembly of First Nations, 1994). This context is foundational in contributing to the current experiences of Aboriginal peoples and communities. Consequently, domestic violence cannot be understood unless contextualized within the historical experiences of Aboriginal peoples. Historical knowledge is critical in order to understand definitions, risk and protective factors, and develop effective strategies for intervention and prevention of domestic violence within Aboriginal communities (Bopp, Bopp & Lane, 2003; New Brunswick Advisory Committee on Violence Against Aboriginal Women, 2008; VicHealth, 2007).

Table 1. Definitions and meanings

Definitions	Key themes	Implication
<p>“A social syndrome based on and comprised of multiple facets, and not simply an undesirable behaviour, that resides within Aboriginal communities, families and individuals as well as within social and political dynamics” (Bopp et al., 2003, p. ix). Emphasis is that this syndrome is maintained through a constellation of social problems that operate together. Historical, social and economic conditions are intertwined.</p>	<p>Colonization</p>	<p>Domestic violence cannot be understood unless contextualized within the historical experiences of Aboriginal peoples.</p>
<p>“A serious abuse of power within the family, trust or dependency relationships” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p. 54). The report goes on to identify the distinction to Aboriginal family violence, in that: 1) it has invaded whole communities, cannot be considered a problem of a particular couple or an individual household; 2) can be traced in many cases to interventions of the state deliberately introduced to disrupt or displace the Aboriginal family, and; 3) is fostered and sustained by a racist social environment that promulgates demeaning stereotypes of Aboriginal women</p>	<p>Residential School Experience</p>	

<p>and men and seeks to diminish their value as human beings and their right to be treated with dignity (pp. 54-56).</p>		
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The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996) defined domestic or family violence as “a serious abuse of power within the family, trust or dependency relationships” (p. 54). RCAP further noted the systemic nature of domestic violence:

The pattern of family violence experienced by Aboriginal people shares many features with violence in mainstream society, [however] it also has a distinctive face that is important to recognize as we search for understanding of causes and identify solutions. First, Aboriginal family violence is distinct in that it has invaded whole communities and cannot be considered a problem of a particular couple or an individual household. Second, the failure in family functioning can be traced in many cases to interventions of the state deliberately introduced to disrupt or displace the Aboriginal family. Third, violence within Aboriginal communities is fostered and sustained by a racist social environment that promulgates demeaning stereotypes of Aboriginal women and men and seeks to diminish their value as human beings and their right to be treated with dignity. (pp. 54-56)

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation contextualized Aboriginal family violence as “a social syndrome based on and comprised of multiple facets, and not simply an undesirable behaviour, that resides within Aboriginal communities, families and individuals as well as within social and political dynamics” (Bopp et al., 2003, p. ix). They emphasized that this syndrome is maintained through a constellation of social problems that operate together, and at higher frequencies than demographics would dictate, such as higher than expected levels of poverty, substance misuse and child welfare involvement. These social problems, they further suggest, work together to create an environment that produces the necessary conditions to maintain and elevate abuse at the individual, family and community level.

While many factors that exacerbate domestic violence exist in non-Aboriginal communities, the scope and nature of domestic violence within Aboriginal communities is critical. Domestic violence is an issue of entire communities and Nations of people; it exists within and between generations, and is intertwined with a myriad of historical, social and economic conditions (New Brunswick Advisory Committee on Violence Against Aboriginal Women, 2008; Proulx & Perrault, 2000).

Risk Factors for Aboriginal Domestic Violence

The following seven risk factors were associated most directly as precursors to domestic violence in Aboriginal communities within the reviewed literature: gender, socio-economic status, age, diminished cultural identity, residential school experience, racism and discrimination, and substance abuse (see Table 2). These risk factors can be placed within four levels of influence, as suggested by the World Health Organization (WHO and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2010). These four levels are: 1) individual (biological and personal history factors that increase someone’s risk of being a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence; 2) interpersonal or relational (factors that increase risk as a result of relationships with peers, intimate partners and family members); 3) community (contexts in which individuals and relationships are embedded, such as schools, workplaces and neighborhoods), and; 4)

societal/policy (societal norms, attitudes and policies that create gaps and tensions between groups of people).

Table 2. Individual, community and interpersonal and societal/policy risk factors

Level	Risk Factor	General or Aboriginal Specific	Defining Feature
Individual	Gender	General	Aboriginal women more likely to experience domestic violence than men.
	Socio-economic status	General	Aboriginal women may be more vulnerable to economic dependency on an abusive partner.
	Age	General	More young Aboriginal women may be at risk for domestic violence victimization in urban Aboriginal populations than non-Aboriginal populations.
	Substance misuse	General	Research on substance misuse in Aboriginal communities must consider historical trauma and the impact of residential schools; to negate these issues heightens the risk of perpetuating stigma and discrimination.
Community and Interpersonal	Residential school experience	Aboriginal Specific	Forced participation of Aboriginal children and youth in residential schools over multiple generations was noted as a risk factor for domestic violence that is unique to Aboriginal communities.
Societal/Policy	Discrimination and racism	Aboriginal Specific	Aboriginal women in Canada encounter unique obstacles and complexities as compared to non-Aboriginal women including racial discrimination, profiling and marginalization, which further contribute to the risk of domestic violence victimization.
	Diminished cultural identity	Aboriginal Specific	Urban Aboriginal women specifically struggle to maintain an Aboriginal identity while attempting to live in a non-Aboriginal society.

Individual level risk factors

Gender, socio-economic status, age and substance abuse were identified as individual level risk factors for domestic violence within both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities (Mann, 2005; Rennison, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2011). Gender is a primary risk factor; although Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal men experience domestic violence, women are a primary target for domestic violence and are more likely to suffer from serious injury or death as a result (Statistics Canada, 2011; Ursel, Tutty, & LeMaistre, 2008). Oetzel and Duran (2004) suggest that Aboriginal women are five to eight times more likely to experience domestic violence than Aboriginal men.

Another risk factor for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women is socio-economic status (under-employment, lower income levels and minimal formal education). While both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women can experience financial constraints that impact their ability to leave an abusive relationship, higher rates of unemployment and underemployment are more common for Aboriginal women than other women in Canada, leaving them more frequently vulnerable to economic dependency on an abusive partner (Brownridge, 2008). Socio-economic status is a profound risk factor for urban Aboriginal women, given that rates of lone-parent families are higher than in non-Aboriginal populations, and most Aboriginal single parents are women (Place, 2012).

Age is also a risk factor for domestic violence, with younger women (ages 20-24) being more likely to experience domestic and sexual violence (Catalano, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2013). This is an important consideration, considering that the urban Aboriginal population, compared to the non-Aboriginal population, is much younger (Hanselman, 2001; Hull, 2006). Given that there are higher numbers of urban Aboriginal women, and that the urban Aboriginal population is generally younger, more young Aboriginal women may be at risk for domestic violence victimization in urban Aboriginal populations than non-Aboriginal populations.

Substance misuse is an additional risk factor for domestic violence in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal intimate relationships. Abused Aboriginal women, however, are more likely to report that their partner had been drinking prior to an assault compared to non-Aboriginal women (Brownridge, 2008). Unfortunately, there are no data available for urban Aboriginal substance use rates, making it difficult to understand how this risk factor for domestic violence interacts with urban status (Place, 2012). It is important to note that research on substance misuse in Aboriginal communities must consider historical trauma and the impact of residential schools; to negate these issues heightens the risk of perpetuating stigma and discrimination.

Interpersonal, community and societal/policy level risk factors

In addition to the individual level risk factors identified in the literature, residential school experience, diminished cultural identity, and discrimination and racism were three additional risk factors for domestic violence uniquely relevant to Aboriginal populations. Due to the intersecting nature of these risk factors, they are cross-categorized within interpersonal, community and policy levels of influence.

Residential school experience was identified in the literature as both a risk factor and a defining feature or root cause of domestic violence within Aboriginal communities. Importantly, the forced participation of Aboriginal children and youth in residential schools over multiple generations was noted as a risk factor for domestic violence unique to Aboriginal communities.

Diminished cultural identity, which includes a lack of self-identification as an Aboriginal person or a negative perception of Aboriginal culture, was underscored as a second distinctive risk factor for domestic violence in Aboriginal communities (Puchala et al., 2010). The literature further highlights that

urban Aboriginal women specifically struggle to maintain an Aboriginal identity while attempting to live in non-Aboriginal society (Brownridge, 2008; Puchala et al., 2010).

Aboriginal people in Canada have been subjected to long-standing, historical negative stereotypes, discrimination and racism; these experiences create a third unique vulnerability for domestic violence in Aboriginal communities. A survey of urban Aboriginal peoples (N=2,614), for instance, found that 18% of individuals have negative experiences such “as exposure to racism and discrimination, shame, lower self-confidence and self-esteem, and hiding their identity as an Aboriginal person” (Enviroics Institute, 2010, p. 80). Puchala et al. (2010) emphasize that Aboriginal women in Canada encounter unique obstacles and complexities as compared to non-Aboriginal women including racial discrimination, profiling and marginalization, which further contribute to the risk of domestic violence victimization. This assertion is confirmed by studies that examine racism and discrimination and its impacts on Aboriginal women, men and children (Brownridge, 2008; Homel, Lincoln, & Herd, 1999; New Brunswick Advisory Committee on Violence Against Aboriginal Women, 2008).

According to the literature, risk factors for domestic violence within Aboriginal communities are situated within and between *interpersonal*, *community* and *policy* levels. Bopp et al. (2003) defined the interpersonal determinant level as “interactions between couples, families or groups of affiliation” (p. 63). Community experiences of domestic violence implicate gender constructs and perceptions of Aboriginal women’s roles and status, and rights between couples and within families. For instance, while gendered roles that value male dominance have been adopted through decades of assimilationist policies, this was not the nature of Aboriginal communities prior to European contact (Lucashenko & Best, 1995; Puchala et al., 2010). In a study of urban Aboriginal Australians, Lucashenko and Best (1995) argue that the violation of Aboriginal women has become a norm, which they suggest, can be traced back to the breakdown of traditional Aboriginal law which was then replaced by, “white norms of sexist behaviour in communities already made dysfunctional by colonization” (p. 20).

Children are both highly vulnerable to violence victimization and to adopting and carrying abusive behaviours into the next generation (Bopp et al., 2003). Within closed systems, such as nuclear or extended families that are socially isolated or erect dysfunctional coping strategies to avoid outside attention or influence, cycles of violence are intergenerational-- repeated from grandparent to parent to child, as a response to multiple historical and present day experiences of violence (Lederman, 1999; New Brunswick Advisory Committee on Violence Against Aboriginal Women, 2008). Adults, who were raised as children with violence in residential schools, often have no other framework to support positive parenting, and consequently may respond to children with violence. The devaluation of Aboriginal parents is further reinforced in daily experiences of stereotyping, racism and discrimination by the mainstream, which makes any change in parental approaches difficult to institute (Lederman, 1999).

The *community determinant level* as articulated by Bopp et al. (2003) “focuses on the current or historical relationships of members of a cultural or affinity group” (p. 51). According to the literature, colonization, and its lasting effects is a risk factor that operates in the community or societal level. Prior to European contact, there was little documented domestic violence in Aboriginal communities, and what existed was severely sanctioned (Bohn, 2003). Rapid colonization which imposed patriarchy, individual versus communal worldviews, the banning of Aboriginal spiritual and religious practices, cultural imperialism and the removal of massive numbers of children to boarding or residential schools, produced

cataclysmic impacts on entire Nations (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Hawkeye Robertson, 2006). These factors both introduced and normalized abusive behaviours, with impacts that include a lasting, multi-generational, historical and unresolved trauma at a communal level, as well as post-traumatic stress that is both individual and multi-generational (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014; Hawkeye Robertson, 2006; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004). Current social environments within Aboriginal communities have been implicated in the violence perpetuated against Aboriginal women. Systematic oppression occurring over several generations has been internalized, creating a vicious cycle of behaviours, feelings and internalized oppression at the community level (Bopp et al., 2003).

Oetzl and Duran (2004) identify the *public policy determinant level* as “federal, provincial and Nation-based law which impacts domestic violence” (p. 60). The recent release of *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015), a five-hundred and twenty-seven page account of Canada’s cultural genocide, documents a long history of public policy misuse. The report demonstrates the extent to which public policy was used with the intent that Aboriginal peoples “cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada” (TRC, 2015, p. 1). One recent example of public policy (2011) that continues to marginalize Aboriginal women in Canada is Bill C-3, *Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act* (New Brunswick Advisory Committee on Violence Against Aboriginal Women, 2008; NWAC, 1991). This bill amends provisions of the *Indian Act* that the Court of Appeal for British Columbia found to be unconstitutional in the case of *McIvor v. Canada*. The intention of the Bill was to ensure that eligible grand-children of women who lost status as a result of marrying non-Aboriginal men would become entitled to registration (Indian status); however the fix was incomplete.

Bill C-31 reinstated women and children who had lost status because of sex discrimination to a second-class status category, in section 6(1)(c). While the intent of Bill C-3 may have been to promote gender equity in Aboriginal registration, it does not ensure that women and their descendants will be treated the same as men and their descendants in determining Indian status. The implication of this reinstated status is in the future: Indians who never lost status still confer status to their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, while reinstated Indians can only confer status to their children, but not to their grandchildren or great-grandchildren. Bill C-31, while intending to promote gender equity in Aboriginal registration, continues to deny women and their descendants equal treatment to men and their descendants in determining Indian status. Demonstrated by this example, present day policy and legislative changes continue to rob Aboriginal women of control over their own destinies and identity (Puchala et al., 2010). Given that loss of identity has been identified as a risk factor for domestic violence, the legislative implications of Bill C-31 perpetuates this risk factor.

Protective Factors for Aboriginal Domestic Violence

The literature suggests a holistic approach is required to assess resilience within an Aboriginal context, focusing on individuals, families and communities (see Table 3). Three resilience or protective factors were identified, *traditional knowledge*, *family strength and support networks*, and *positive self-identity* (Homel et al., 1999; Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003; Shea et al., 2010).

Table 3. Protective factors

Level	Protective Factor	General or Aboriginal Specific	Defining Feature
Individual	Positive self-identity	General	Aboriginal people who have re-built or re-discovered their Aboriginal identity through a de-colonizing lens have greater resilience.
Interpersonal	Family connections and supports	General, but may be more important for Aboriginal populations	Aboriginal peoples continue to recognize that personhood is defined by a “web of relationships that include... the extended family, kin and clan” (Kirmayer, 2003, p. 18), which positions them as part of a larger network.
Community	Traditional knowledge and practices	Aboriginal Specific	Increased degree of knowledge and participation in ceremony and spirituality and the (re)learning of cultural practices, norms and worldviews, are powerful sources of strength and healing.

Traditional knowledge and practices, which includes spirituality, knowledge and use of Elders, and knowledge of oral traditions, are strongly cited as a protective factor against domestic violence. An increased degree of knowledge and participation in ceremony and spirituality and the (re)learning of cultural practices, norms and worldviews, were consistently identified as powerful sources of strength and healing (Homel et al., 1999; Kirmayer et al., 2003; Shea et al., 2010). Knowledge of and use of Elders as a form of traditional knowledge was also emphasized in the literature as a protective factor. As keepers of the culture, healthy Elders are viewed as those who can transmit messages both to individuals and through organized programs that allow participants to re-build a positive connection to traditional values and ways of life (Heavy Runner & Marshal, 2003). The passing down of oral traditions was cited as an additional protective element against violence. Oral traditions contain valuable lessons about sacred teachings as well as the lifestyles, values and roles of both men and women as equally contributing to the health of the community prior to contact (Heavy Runner & Marshal, 2003). Access to traditional healing practices, in particular, are perhaps more important than access to mainstream preventative health services for the majority of urban Aboriginal people (Place, 2012).

Family connections and supports were cited as a key domestic violence protective factor. Homel et al. (1999) note that support which emerges from within Aboriginal families, in times of crisis, often provides invisible resources to those in greatest need, due to the comfort of shared identity, history and coping strategies. Kirmayer et al. (2003) emphasize that “cultural continuity” and a common history are strengths for many Aboriginal families who are impacted by domestic violence. Specifically, they assert that Aboriginal peoples continue to recognize that personhood is defined by a “web of relationships that include... the extended family, kin and clan” (p. 18), which positions them as part of a larger network.

The final protective factor noted in the literature is *positive self-identity*. The development of a positive self-identity is linked to a greater sense of self-esteem and self-value (Shea et al., 2010). Place (2012) suggests an association between positive self-identity and the use of traditional healing practices. As strength of Aboriginal identity increases, so does the perceived importance of access to traditional healing (Place, 2012). For Aboriginal peoples, creating a positive self-identity may be a challenging task amidst negative and damaging social messages steeped in racism, and lack of understanding of colonial history. Other structural barriers, such as the unequal position of women, were noted (Shea et al., 2010). Individuals who are able to re-build or discover their Aboriginal identity through a de-colonizing lens have greater resilience in times of stress (Heavy Runner & Marshal, 2003).

Discussion

Despite the widely held view that Aboriginal peoples have been over-researched, literature that addresses the nature of urban Aboriginal domestic violence is extremely limited (National Association of Friendship Centres, 2013; Place, 2012). Given that violence intersects with so many other determinants of health and health outcomes, considering its impact in urban contexts is crucial. Further research is thus necessary, and should be driven by the needs of Aboriginal peoples. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers should collaborate directly and meaningfully with Aboriginal people impacted by domestic violence and those tasked with providing services and designing policies and programming to address this important issue.

This review suggests that domestic violence in urban Aboriginal communities is underpinned by many of the same definitional, risk and protective factors as non-Aboriginal society. The literature also underscores unique risk factors for Aboriginal people, and suggests that all risk factors may disproportionately target urban Aboriginal populations over non-Aboriginal populations living in urban contexts. Specifically, that National Association of Friendship Centres (2013) states that age, gender and socio-economic status are three risk factors, which collectively, may place urban Aboriginal communities at higher risk of domestic violence. Importantly, findings from this study highlight the legacy of the colonial system and over 150 years of residential school policies and practices as foundational in developing an understanding of domestic violence in Aboriginal communities. Resultantly, the profound and persistent damages of what has been labeled Canada's 'cultural genocide' (TRC, 2015) impede ongoing and significant efforts of Aboriginal communities to heal, address systemic oppression, rebuild and regenerate entire Nations and communities.

However entrenched the social syndrome of domestic violence may be within Aboriginal communities, findings from our review also suggest that there are several protective factors which can interrupt and replace the current context. Specifically, traditional knowledge and community-centered practices have been cited and effective approaches. Building on the limited body of prevention-focused research, Brownridge (2008) emphasizes that further study is required to understand the relationship between colonization and domestic violence. Andersson & Nahwegahbow (2010) specifically call for research that reaches upstream into cultural origins, building upon the resilience found there to prevent domestic violence.

Access to appropriate and responsive primary prevention services has been identified as critical to improving health status among Aboriginal populations (Browne et al., 2009). Considering that domestic

violence is perhaps the most pressing health concern of Aboriginal women (Centre's for Excellence Women's Health, 2002), the need for accessible and appropriate domestic violence prevention strategies is critical (Browne et al., 2009). Studies on primary care and preventative care services have consistently shown that mainstream models have not been sufficient in serving urban Aboriginal populations (Browne et al., 2009; Place, 2012). As greater numbers of Aboriginal people move from reserves to urban centers, the need for quality prevention programming will increase. From a policy perspective, greater funding needs to be allocated towards evaluating and identifying evidence-based prevention programming in the area of domestic violence in order to ensure that violence prevention outcomes are being achieved.

Finally, findings from this review highlight the critical need for further research on Aboriginal domestic violence within the urban context, particularly from a primary prevention standpoint. Responding to a critique by the National Association of Friendship Centres (2013) that current research does not reflect urban Aboriginal women's needs or priorities, future efforts should be intentionally community-led, beneficial to Aboriginal communities and directed towards eliminating the legacy of violence against Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

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An Interdisciplinary Journal

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

Odeminiwin: Understanding and Supporting Childhood Stimulation in an Algonquin Community

Rebecca Marian Thorne,¹ Mary Ellen Macdonald,² Christine Thivierge,³ Georgina Whiteduck⁴ and Serge Vignola³

¹ Faculty of Nursing, McGill University, Québec, Canada

² Faculty of Dentistry, McGill University, Québec, Canada

³ Health Canada, Québec, Canada

⁴ Rapid Lake Community, Québec, Canada

Corresponding author: Mary Ellen Macdonald, mary.macdonald@mcgill.ca, 514-398-7203

Abstract

Legacies of colonialism have been associated with risk factors for delayed childhood development in Aboriginal communities in Canada. In the Algonquin community of Rapid Lake (Québec, Canada), the maternal-child nurse carries out regular screening for developmental delay in children (0-66 months) using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). The aim of this project was to explore parenting practices and cultural traditions regarding childhood stimulation in this community as well as primary caregivers' perceptions of the use of the ASQ. Using a Community Based Participatory Research framework, we conducted a focused ethnography over four months, which included 28 participants. Outcomes of our research included the development of a stimulation activity for families involving all generations in the community, incorporating traditional parenting practices and language, and promoting a safe learning environment. Results can be used to support efforts towards community-driven childhood development services in other Aboriginal communities.

Keywords: *childhood development, Aboriginal, parenting practices, cultural traditions, ASQ, stimulation*

Introduction

Stimulating relationships are fundamental to healthy development in infancy and early childhood (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Primary caregivers play a crucial role in providing stimulation through parenting practices deeply engrained within cultural traditions (Bornstein, Haynes, Pascual, Painter, & Galperin, 1999; McCain, Mustard & Shanker, 2007). Where stimulation is not sufficient in early childhood, development may be delayed resulting in long-term health effects. Regular assessments using screening tools to identify developmental delays through infancy and childhood, as well as early

interventions such as stimulation activities to correct these delays are the ‘gold standard’ across Canada (Williams & Clinton, 2011). Despite this standard, there is a lack of understanding regarding how different cultural groups perceive the implementation of these evaluation tools and activities within their communities. The project presented in this paper explores community perceptions regarding the use and adaptation of one childhood development tool and stimulation activity in the Algonquin community of Rapid Lake, Québec, Canada.

Background

Childhood Development and Stimulation

Early childhood development is defined as a child’s neurological and physical development that provides a stable foundation upon which lifelong learning, behavior and physical and mental health can be built (McCain et al., 2007). From infancy, children have an innate curiosity to explore and learn about their environments, for which the caregiver-child relationship plays a fundamental role. Through stimulation in the form of play, verbal and non-verbal communication, and the demonstration of daily activities and routines, caregivers provide a secure and interactive environment to support this child-driven learning. The form stimulation takes is not a universal practice, it is unique to each cultural group and their child-rearing beliefs and practices (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Low socioeconomic status, lack of community programs for infants and children, and unstable home environments are risk factors for delayed childhood development. Unstable home environments are characterized by violence in the household and community, poor caregiver mental health and wellbeing, substance abuse and depression (Keating & Hertzman, 1999; McCain & Mustard, 2002; Willms, 2002).

Childhood Development in Aboriginal Populations

Aboriginal communities in Canada have both protective factors against, and risk factors for, childhood developmental delay. Cultural continuity is one protective factor important to Aboriginal conceptions of health, contributing to wellbeing, self-identity and self-esteem. A means of promoting cultural continuity is through the support of young families by community programs that facilitate the transmission of traditional language, values, beliefs and customs (Ball, 2012; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Greenwood, 2006).

Importantly, the prevalence of risk factors for delayed childhood development is higher in Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal communities in Canada. In 2009, 15% of Aboriginal women compared to 6% of non-Aboriginal women with a spouse or common-law partner reported that they had experienced spousal violence in the previous five years (O’Donnell & Wallace, 2015). Between 1997 and 2000, the rate of homicide for Aboriginal women was 5.4 per 100,000 and 12.2 per 100,000 for men versus 0.8 per 100,000 for non-Aboriginal women and 1.8 for non-Aboriginal men (O’Donnell & Wallace, 2015). A national survey by Health Canada of First Nations communities between 2008 and 2010 reported the three top challenges to community wellness were identified as alcohol and drug abuse (82.6% of respondents), housing (70.7%) and employment (65.9%) (Health Canada, 2011). These statistics are indicative of violence, mental health status, drug use and unstable home environments in Aboriginal communities, which alongside historical trauma and ongoing colonial incursions, can impact the rate of

developmental delays in children in these communities (Ball, 2012; McCain & Mustard, 2002; Willms, 2002).

Selecting Developmental Screening Tools for use with Aboriginal Populations

Guidelines provided by the Canadian Pediatric Society recommend healthcare professionals complete regular developmental assessments throughout infancy and childhood, with the goal of identifying and minimizing developmental delays through the provision of early intervention (Williams & Clinton, 2011; Elbers, Macnab, McLeod & Gagnon, 2007). The most widely used developmental screening tools and stimulation supports in Canada are the Nipissing District Developmental Screen (NDDS), Parent's Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) and PEDS: Developmental Milestones (PEDS: DM), and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) (Williams & Clinton, 2011).

While none of the above standardized tools have been specifically adapted for any First Nations populations (Dion-Stout & Jodoin, 2006), the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada has identified the ASQ as a culturally-appropriate tool for use in First Nations communities since it “can be readily adapted to...many different populations, including First Nations” (Dionne, McKinnon & Squires, 2010; Dion-Stout & Jodoin, 2006). In Canada, studies exploring the use of the ASQ in First Nations communities have identified the tool as “appropriate for use,” but also support further research (Dionne et al., 2010; Dionne, McKinnon, Squires & Clifford, 2014). Despite these recommendations, it is not clear what adaptations are required to make this tool “culturally appropriate” for a community or whether adapting the tool will impact the validity of its results (Dionne et al., 2014).

Supporting Childhood Stimulation in Aboriginal Communities

Following the identification of developmental delays in children, culturally-adapted programs must be in place in order to minimize the long-term consequences of these delays (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Williams & Clinton, 2011; Elbers et al., 2007). Many provincial parenting programs and services offered across Canada are not available in First Nations communities (Ball, 2008). The Aboriginal Head Start program, a federally funded preschool program, is one service dedicated to community controlled and operated curriculum to promote Aboriginal child health and development (Ball, 2008; Ball, 2012; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Greenwood, 2006).

Notwithstanding the important contributions of Aboriginal Head Start, a recent study involving children of Aboriginal heritage suggests that preschool age is not early enough for the introduction of developmental activities (Benzies, Tough, Edwards, Mychasiuk, & Donnelly, 2011). The use of development assessment tools can fill an important gap prior to the enrollment of a child in Aboriginal Head Start, where more formalized services are lacking. The ASQ is one tool already being used in First Nations communities (Dionne et al., 2014). The ASQ is a caregiver or healthcare professional-completed screening and stimulation tool that includes questionnaires to be completed in the home setting at prescribed intervals from 1 month to 66 months of age. Upon completion of each questionnaire, a score is produced which falls on either side of a cutoff value (Squires, Bricker, & Potter, 1997). When children score below this cutoff, their primary caregivers are provided with an ASQ activity sheet with 20 age-specific activities to complete at home in order to stimulate the child's development (Squires et al., 1997).

Setting

Rapid Lake is a semi-isolated community in Québec, home to the Algonquins of Barrière Lake. The community is located 400 km north of Montreal, Québec and has a population of 400. The community includes a daycare, elementary school, volunteer fire department, and a federal government-run Nursing Station, the Kitiganik Health Centre, which includes a Day Centre with a kitchen designed for community activities. There is no high school and thus students must billet two hours away in order to continue their education. At the time of this study, the Kitiganik Health Centre employed four non-Aboriginal advance practice nurses, an Algonquin community-health representative (CHR) and an Algonquin maternal-child health worker. In order to ensure cultural sensitivity, the CHR and maternal-child health worker liaise between the nurses and the community when providing care and designing programs. Due to the physical isolation of this community and lack of employment opportunities, the rate of unemployment is estimated at 80-90%, dependent on the season. Most community members receive monthly social assistance and live in low quality housing in crowded conditions (Lang, Macdonald, Carnevale, Levesque, & Decoursay, 2010).

Conflict has impacted this community both internally, through leadership crises, and externally with disputes between the provincial and federal governments over political and financial matters. The effects of colonization and assimilation are still evident in this community today, including the legacy of the reservation system, the Indian Act of 1876, and residential schools (Lepage, 2009; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The residential school system purposefully removed Aboriginal children from their families and prohibited them from speaking their own languages or engaging in activities related to their culture (Ing, 2006). Negligence, abuse, physical and sexual violence have been reported to be common occurrences in these schools, and have affected subsequent parenting practices due to the reduced transmission of language, culture and identity to younger generations (Ing, 2006; Lepage, 2009).

Despite this colonial history, the Rapid Lake community remains resilient through the preservation of their culture. Many Rapid Lake families continue to live a traditional lifestyle practicing cultural activities such as beading, sewing, hunting, fishing and trapping. Community members are also active in efforts to maintain control over their land and local governance, and many speak Algonquin and teach this to their children as their primary language (Sherman, Macdonald, Carnevale, & Vignola, 2011). These elements of resilience are important protective factors for healthy childhood development within this community.

In this community, one of the advanced practice nurses - the maternal-child nurse, has specific training in obstetrics and pediatrics and follows the care of women throughout pregnancy, delivery and the school-aged years of their child's life. Prior to our study upon implementation of the ASQ, this nurse felt a resistance from caregivers as many reported either losing activity sheets given to them or simply not completing the suggested activities at home. This nurse's experience prompted our study: she was compelled to better understand how the community members felt about the ASQ.

Methodology

This project is the result of the joint effort between the Ingram School of Nursing of McGill University and the Kitiganik Health Centre. Team members included the lead researcher, her supervisor,

the head nurse and maternal-child nurse from the nursing station and the Algonquin maternal-child health worker. This project was designed and completed as part of a four-month Masters in Nursing research project and clinical placement. During this time, the lead researcher lived in the community.

There were three objectives of this project. The first was to gain an understanding of parenting practices and cultural traditions regarding childhood stimulation in the community. The second objective was to gain an understanding of how the use of the ASQ tool and activities were perceived by primary caregivers in the community. The third objective was to work with caregivers to develop a locally-adapted child stimulation activity.

This project was exploratory in nature, designed with a focused ethnographic methodology (Roper & Shapira, 2000). Whereas classical ethnography seeks to understand an entire cultural group through extensive fieldwork, focused ethnographies use many of the same data collection methods over a shorter time period, with a more focused topic of investigation (Polit & Beck, 2008; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Focused ethnographies are increasingly implemented in nursing research as a way of adapting nursing practice to a community's beliefs and social context (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Roper & Shapira, 2000).

Classical ethnography and the early social ethnographers come out of a colonial history in which Indigenous peoples' experiences were framed via Eurocentric models (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Tuhiwai Smith, 2001). Ethnographic engagement has since developed to promote research that is respectful, ethical and useful; the Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) framework used in this project is one such way to adapt this methodology to fit with indigenous priorities (NAHO, 2012; Tuhiwai Smith, 2001). CBPR is a collaborative approach to research that addresses the inequalities and negative impact of research grounded in European values and Western scientific principles within Aboriginal communities (NAHO, 2012). This framework involves equal contributions from all partners through a community-identified research topic, community consultation, participation and indigenous ways of knowing in all stages of the research project in order to ensure community ownership of the resulting suggestions for nursing practice (NAHO, 2012).

Data Collection

The project was divided into four phases of data collection, each directed by the lead researcher: key informant interviews, a focus group, a pilot activity and a community presentation of the results. The key informant interviews and the focus group were audio-recorded with the exception of one interview at the request of the key informant. The lead researcher transcribed audio-recordings; the non audio-recorded interview was hand-noted as closely to verbatim as possible. Participant observation, an essential element of ethnography, was implemented during all four phases; further, the immersion of the lead researcher in the community over four months greatly facilitated her familiarity with local narratives and cultural practices regarding early childhood development (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2008; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Participant-observation data took the form of methodological, analytical and descriptive field notes documenting interactions of individuals within their social community and environment (Creswell, 2003; Polit & Beck, 2008). The researcher also recorded reflective field notes which included continuous self-critique and self-appraisal as the embedded ethnographer (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In order to be eligible for participation in this project, participants had to be self-identified community members, 18 years or older, able to communicate in English, French or Algonquin (via an interpreter) and willing to provide written or verbal consent (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014). Primary caregivers - someone who self identifies as the individual responsible for a child's care - were required to have a child three years old or younger. This age group was selected because no community programs exist to promote stimulation and development for children of this age beyond the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. Participants were selected using convenience sampling and were recruited in person by the maternal-child nurse and maternal-child health worker, based on their extensive experience with caregivers in the community (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Phase One included six key informant interviews. A key informant was defined as an individual knowledgeable in parenting practices and cultural traditions related to childhood development. The six key informants included three health workers, one mother, one grandmother and one educational professional; four were Algonquin, two were non-Aboriginal.

Phase Two involved one focus group with five primary caregivers, using an interview guide developed from the findings from Phase One. To encourage participation from additional community members, participants in this phase had not participated in Phase One.

Phase Three drew upon the data derived from Phases One and Two to develop a stimulation activity for caregivers. The activity consisted of an *Odeminiwin*, a playgroup for caregivers and their children in which they completed activities in a group setting. Caregivers were given a reformatted ASQ activity sheet tailored to the group activity for use at home. Nine children ranging from two months to six years old and eight adults including five mothers, one uncle, one grandmother and one father attended the pilot activity. Participants from Phases One and Two were invited and four attended this phase. Verbal feedback regarding the design of the activity was collected.

A presentation of overall findings to the community took place in Phase Four. All members of the community were invited to attend and offer feedback through posters and word of mouth. The presentation was attended by four adult community members, including two participants from Phase One.

Data Analysis

In accordance with the reflective nature of ethnography, data analysis was ongoing throughout the project (Bernard, 2002). During Phases One and Two, individual transcripts were analyzed using open coding during multiple closed readings. Each interview was read using immersive line-by-line memo writing and analysis in order to create preliminary codes identifying salient categories represented in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Descriptive, methodological and analytic notes were documented in order to support this process (Bernard, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Walker & Myrick, 2006). Following the preliminary coding of each interview, a constant comparison approach analysis was used to compare emerging codes with those of previous interviews in order to identify both recurrent and novel codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Upon completion, axial coding was implemented to identify the relationships between preliminary codes, building broader themes. Selective coding was then used to integrate these themes into core codes that tell the story of the data (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003; Strauss & Corbin,

1990). After delivering the pilot activity in Phase Three, oral feedback and observations were triangulated with previously identified themes (Creswell, 2003; McWilliam, 2000). These themes were presented to the community in Phase Four.

Methodological Rigor

Methodological rigor was maintained via prolonged engagement in the field, member-checking with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants, and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2003; Maggs-Rappart, 2001; McWilliam, 2000). During Phase Three four key informants (three Algonquin, one non Algonquin) were given segments of interview transcripts along with preliminary themes. Participants were all in agreement with the preliminary interpretations, and thus this member checking verified the preliminary analyses of the data leading to the development of the pilot activity. Peer debriefing was a critical component of this project, taking place weekly between the lead researcher and her supervisor. These sessions ensured critical feedback regarding data collection and analyses and produced an audit trail ensuring credibility and confirmability of the analytic process (Ingleton & Seymour, 2001; McWilliam, 2000). Thick descriptions of the setting, participants and data collection procedure were also developed in order to ensure the transferability of these findings to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maggs-Rappart, 2001; McWilliam, 2000; Polit & Beck, 2008). The proposal for this research received ethical approval by the Institutional Review Board of McGill University prior to its initiation.

Results

The following presentation of results outlines the five broad themes that emerged from our analysis. As is consonant with ethnographic analysis, both empirical evidence and Aboriginal history have helped us to better understand parenting practices within this community, including the challenges caregivers of young children face and their perceptions of the utility of a non-Aboriginal tool for their families.

1. Historical trauma: "Something is broken"

When asked about traditional parenting practices, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants struggled to provide examples. One mother explained that traditions for promoting the development of infants and young children are not clear: "We haven't been taught anything about development." Other community participants supported this statement, explaining they were not sure why they did not know examples of parenting traditions. The health care workers observe many parents are not confident in parenting, and attribute this to the intergenerational legacy of colonization and residential schools explaining that when it comes to parenting, "something is broken."

When asked what the greatest challenge parents face in Rapid Lake, one mother answered: "Drugs and alcohol." She then explained: "If the mother stops, the husband doesn't stop; if the husband stops, the mother doesn't stop... they both go on the same road...to 'misery land'...and the kid doesn't have nothing after." Parenting within the frame of historical trauma and the realities of addiction, poverty and violence means that many parents don't have the physical or emotional reserves beyond their family's basic needs to devote to parenting.. A community member agreed, explaining that these realities significantly impact parent-child relationships: "Raising a child is hard when you feel good. Imagine when

you feel bad.” Childhood stimulation through play and activities is therefore not a priority for these families.

2. *Stimulation through participation*

While many parents struggle with these challenges, childhood development is still a concept primary caregivers are aware of and assess as their children grow. In contrast, childhood stimulation was not as familiar. A mother and a grandmother both explained that parents generally do not think explicitly about ‘stimulating’ their children to develop and said that childhood stimulation is not a topic parents discuss in this community. The grandmother elaborated by explaining that in the Algonquin tradition, there is “not really” a practice of stimulating babies to develop. According to her, stimulation takes place more passively, for example when children participate in household routines with their families, mimic caregivers and play alone or with siblings and other children. An educational professional supported this explanation, saying: “Kids learn things on their own” and grow up on their own. According to her, parents do not have to play a directing role in their child’s development because young children learn new skills and games through independent outdoor play. This play includes learning how to fish, skate and play seasonal sports. Children in this community are independent from a very young age, as one community member explained: “We just throw the kids outside, that is their stimulation to develop.” Thus, parent-child activities explicitly targeting stimulation are not a common practice in this community.

3. *“The land takes care of the kids”*

Spending time in the bush is an important part of life for many community members. Participants explained that time spent on their traditional land allows them to take part in cultural traditions such as hunting, trapping and fishing. Traditional parenting practices are more evident in the bush, they said, and parents are more involved in the stimulation of their young children there. As a mother explained, families spend more time together when they are in the bush because it provides more of a routine for young children. This routine includes going to bed early, waking up early and playing in the yard near the house between mealtimes. Another mother elaborated, explaining that children learn more about their traditions in the bush because parents teach them about the animals and “What we are supposed to do (in the bush).” This teaching begins during infancy: “Some (parents)...when they go hunting, they take their kids and they go ‘oh look, there’s a fish!’ and they make them touch the fish.” Community members explained that time spent in the bush is also important for adults, as the bush is a much healthier environment than their community, supporting a healthier and more active lifestyle.

A health care professional explained that nature is a protective factor: “This is their land and the land takes care of the kids.” This same health care professional explained that this can be difficult for people from outside of the community to understand because nature is often seen as a danger to children in cultures that do not have such a strong relationship with it.

4. *ASQ: a tool or a test?*

The ASQ was described as a negative intervention by many primary caregivers as the assessment and scoring process made them feel judged. According to a community member: “They (parents) don’t want to participate, they think that we’re saying their kids aren’t smart enough, they’re not

taking care of them ... the parents feel judged about their kids.” A health care professional illustrated this point by explaining that parents see the ASQ as a test, not a tool, and therefore feel it is their fault if their child does not “do well.” As a result, the activity sheet that accompanies the ASQ is seen as a treatment and only when something is wrong do parents seek help to promote development. One mother explained: “They’re (parents are) just going to look at it (the activity sheet) and put it on top of their fridge and just be like ‘there’s nothing wrong with my kid’.” An educational professional described that it was difficult to broach the topic of developmental delay without offending parents as many associate it with drug and alcohol use during pregnancy. Thus the judgment felt during scoring and the social stigma make it difficult to discuss the topic of childhood development.

5. *Fostering community support*

Participants were asked what they thought a useful stimulation activity could look like. A group activity, such as a playgroup, was the most common suggestion. An educational professional explained: “I find it works better when they’re (parents are) in a group, they have more fun and it’s more interesting for them (than doing an activity at home by themselves).” A playgroup also acts as a support group, allowing caregivers to share their experiences about parenthood and act as role models for each other. One mother shared: “When I was a new mom, I wanted somebody to tell me: ‘You can do this with your new baby,’ or ‘You can feed her this at this age’.” In addition to a group activity, participants agreed on the need for a reformatted activity sheet by reducing the writing to only five or six words per activity, including only simple activities parents would be comfortable doing at home, and adding pictures and colours. All participants agreed that some of the activities already included were a good fit such as stacking household items, scribbling and container games such as placing socks in a basket, and that some were already doing these activities at home. One mother explained that it was important to continue to use the activity sheet because it acts as an “extra push” to “involve parents more in their kids’ lives.”

Community Outcomes

Odeminiwin

In discussing the pilot activity with local team members, it was decided an *Odeminiwin*, meaning playgroup in Algonquin, would address the needs of the community. In accordance with the developmental literature, this activity focused on the youngest children in the community to promote stimulation from an early age. To create this playgroup, we used the Aboriginal Infant Development Policy and Procedure Manual written by the British Columbia Infant Development Program as well as participant input. The principal recommendations set out in this manual include an emphasis on family-professional collaboration and the inclusion of culturally-appropriate activities and materials including food, furniture, music, language and games (Office of the Provincial Advisor for AIDP, 2005). Daycare and Head Start workers and several mothers and elders were invited to help organize and provide suggestions in order to promote community ownership over the playgroup.

The *Odeminiwin* activity focused on activities for children below 12 months old. Families with children in this age group were invited to attend and to bring any siblings or family members in recognition of the role they play in stimulation. The *Odeminiwin* was attended by nine children ranging

from two months to six years old, and eight adult family members, including five mothers, one uncle, one grandmother and one father, and three health care professionals including the maternal-child community health worker who facilitated the activity. It included three games selected from the ASQ activity sheet (by participants) focusing on all five areas of development outlined in the ASQ (communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal social). The games included bouncing balloons in the air, tracing the hands of family members on a piece of paper, and fitting ping pong balls into coffee cans through a hole in the lid. Food was provided at the end of the activity to promote discussion between the adults while the children continued to play. A reformatted ASQ activity sheet, including only five activities – one from each area of development – was given to participants. This version of the sheet was more colourful and with less writing as per participant suggestions.

Outcomes of the Odemiwin included families uniting around play, and primary caregivers with children of the same age socializing following the games. Participants and health care professionals were asked for feedback and responses were positive, with requests to continue meeting monthly. Importantly, all the health care workers agreed to stop using the ASQ. The Odemiwin will be implemented as a way of introducing conversations about childhood development into community health services using local knowledge and expertise.

Discussion

When used in different cultural settings, screening tools and activities make assumptions about parenting practices that may not be relevant to all communities. Given the inherent relationship between parenting practices and culture, we sought to explore how the use of the ASQ is perceived by primary caregivers within the Rapid Lake community, and how we could adapt a stimulation activity to locally-identified cultural traditions and parenting practices.

One of our principal findings was that although parents do think childhood development is important, they do not explicitly participate in stimulation through play while at home in Rapid Lake; during their time in the bush however, parenting traditions and roles in play are much more salient. This finding is consonant with development literature, which describes “child-directed activities” or independent play as paramount in stimulation and healthy development (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2004; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Consistent interactive relationships with a primary caregiver are required to promote healthy development in early childhood, with caregivers providing environmental supports necessary for child-directed play (Cappiello & Gahagan, 2009; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Prior to this project, formal childhood stimulation efforts in Rapid Lake focused on stimulation outside of the home, either at the daycare or the elementary school. The ASQ was implemented as a means of promoting awareness of the importance of childhood stimulation at home. Our project, however, demonstrates that caregivers feel judged by this assessment process and stigmatized when their child is identified to have a developmental delay. These findings demonstrate that the ASQ had negative consequences such that primary caregivers no longer wanted to participate.

Our pilot activity, Odemiwin, therefore aimed to adapt the ASQ activities to the needs of the community. One way we approached this goal was by focusing on Algonquin conceptions of health in structuring the activity. The Algonquins of Barrière Lake define health more broadly than the absence of

illness and use the term *minimadizuin* to conceptualize health as involving mental, emotional, spiritual and physical components (Wakani, Macdonald, Carnevale, Bernier & Wawatie, 2013). *Minimadizuin* involves caring for oneself, one's family and one's community (Wakani et al., 2013). Another concept of health used in this community is *minododazin*, a term for self-respect which extends beyond respecting the individual to include family, community and the environment (Kooiman et al. 2012). In recognition of these concepts, the healthy development of a child cannot be separated from the health of their family and community. Odeminiwin therefore aims to provide a more sustainable activity through community-wide involvement in childhood stimulation and play (Ball, 2012).

This study had two main challenges. First, the time frame in which the study was completed was only four months. Secondly, in ethnographic research the researcher has the dual role of collecting and analyzing data; while this can introduce biases into the research, such bias can be both controlled and used as a strength through member checking, peer debriefing and reflective fieldnotes (Polit & Beck, 2008).

The findings and outcomes of the project were shared with the community through a presentation held at the Day Centre and later shared with the McGill community. Through this process, the health care staff in Rapid Lake were able to learn about local parenting practices and incorporate this knowledge into their practice.

Conclusions

The legacy of historical trauma on parenting practices in Rapid Lake compounds the high prevalence of socioeconomic risk factors for delayed childhood development in Aboriginal communities. These realities highlight the need for community supports to promote healthy childhood development. This project explored the perceptions of primary caregivers regarding the use of the ASQ. When negative experiences of judgment, stigma and blame were identified, a community based participatory approach was used to drive the adaptation of a community driven activity to promote stimulation through play for families while they are in Rapid Lake, when the cultural traditions of the bush are not available.

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

Aboriginal Graduate Student and a Non-Aboriginal Faculty Supervisor: A Relationship Examined

Danica Lee and John Poulsen

Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Corresponding author: Danica Lee, danica.lee@uleth.ca

Abstract

This article investigates and shares the elements of a successful working relationship between an Aboriginal graduate student and a non-Aboriginal faculty supervisor. In order to explore the emerging relationship, each author reflected on the experience by recording weekly journal entries and examining supporting literature. Through examination of the literature and their own metacognition, the authors came to the realization that theirs' was a productive and enjoyable relationship due in large part to mutual respect and consistent back and forth feedback.

Introduction

This article connects relevant literature with the authors' personal reflections to examine the components of a supportive relationship between an Aboriginal graduate student and a non-Aboriginal faculty supervisor. In post-secondary environments, Aboriginal graduate students have particular parameters to deal with. Socio-cultural factors may include that "[m]any Aboriginal students do not see themselves or their culture reflected in the typical Canadian university setting" (Holmes, 2006). Aboriginal graduate students can also experience specific challenges with regard to formal mentorship opportunities, especially when Aboriginal faculty is not readily available to serve as mentors.

The purpose of this article is to put forward how an Aboriginal graduate student and a non-Aboriginal university faculty were able to work successfully together. The rationale for this article is that small steps may be a part of the answer to a larger issue. That is, this example may add to the literature regarding Aboriginal graduate student success.

This article focuses on the relationship between an Aboriginal student (Master of Counselling) and a non-Aboriginal professor at the University of Lethbridge (Faculty of Education). Danica, an Aboriginal student, is of mixed-blood ancestry. She has European ancestry on her father's side and Cree ancestry from Peguis First Nation on her mother's side. Due to the impacts of colonization, she was born and raised off-reserve and disconnected from her community and cultural identity. Since her early adolescence, she has been on a path of discovering who she is as an Aboriginal woman and is proud of her heritage. John, the non-Aboriginal faculty supervisor, is an immigrant from Denmark who is interested in

and would like to consider himself an ally of Aboriginal concerns and issues. Over the course of an assigned research assistantship, the pair examined what was required and necessary for their healthy, productive, and creative working relationship. Each party recorded weekly journal entries over a two-month period to reflect on the relationship and meaningful elements worth discussing with regards to their emerging partnership. The decision to record journal entries was made to honour their emerging working partnership. At the time of deciding to record journal entries, the backgrounds of one another were not known. This unfolded as the relationship deepened. It must be admitted that a rationale for the recording of journal entries was somewhat serendipitous in that when it was decided to begin journaling, there was only a sense that something of interest might emerge.

For the purpose of this article, the term “Aboriginal” will be used to describe First Nations (status and non-status), Inuit, and Métis people (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2012). The authors also acknowledge the use of the term ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Indigenous’ by people of other countries who claim original residence and a harmonious relationship with their environment. The authors of this article understand that Aboriginal people and cultures are diverse and the ideas shared here represent the experience of one Aboriginal graduate student and one non-Aboriginal faculty member.

The theoretical framework that the authors are working from starts with an acknowledgement that this document is intended to be an examination of a journey to success of an Aboriginal graduate student and non-Aboriginal faculty member through a mutual examination of their own journey. This study, in a small way, fits within the larger idea that, “[h]igher education offers great potential for reconciliation and a renewed relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada” (Universities Canada, 2015). As Pidgeon and Hardy Cox (2002) stated, “[r]esearchers must be sensitive to their own approach to research to ensure that inherent assumptions and guiding principles of research methodology do not increase the divide of understanding and learning from Aboriginal peoples to address collectively Aboriginal concerns and issues” (p. 97). From the beginning of the partnership, journaling, as demonstrated by the quote below, was used to help each party explore his/her experience:

I just spoke with my graduate assistantship coordinator on the phone. This is the third time we have spoken over the phone and so far this has been our only method of communication other than email. Today we spoke about changing the focus of our work. Based on some of the preliminary work done, we decided to focus on what makes a good relationship between graduate student assistants and the faculty coordinators. Surprisingly, I’m not as disappointed as I thought I would be about the change of plans. I am quite happy to explore a new option that fits better for us as I can directly relate to the topic area. Our discussions so far have been very respectful and the positive encouragement and feedback about my work to this point has helped me stay on top of the work and motivated. (D. Lee, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

Aboriginal Students and Graduate Studies

The experiences of Aboriginal students in post-secondary environments can be unique. Hutchinson, Mushquash, and Donaldson (2008) shared that the research specific to Aboriginal graduate students and their success is limited. Aboriginal students are often one of few in graduate programs or perhaps the only Aboriginal student in the entire faculty (Pidgeon, Archibald, & Hawkey, 2014). In social

work programs, Ives, Aitken, Loft, and Phillips (2007) stated that there continues to be an underrepresentation of Indigenous students in both undergraduate and graduate programs. This suggests that there may be a need for cultural practices within post-baccalaureate programs to honour the experiences of Aboriginal students. Some of the strategies that Hutchinson et al. (2008) suggested to enhance the success of Aboriginal graduate students were: knowing where one has come from and one's identity (both as an Aboriginal person and as a student) as well as getting to know faculty and their approaches to working with students. This journey mirrored much of what Hutchinson et al. (2008) suggested. The weekly communication allowed a slow yet continual sharing of one another's identity as well as an understanding of how each other worked effectively. Pidgeon et al. (2014) shared that self-accountability, by regular reflection on progress towards individual goals, was important to enhancing Aboriginal graduate student success. Accountability to each other and the project was an important element of this successful relationship.

In terms of mentorship with university faculty, Pidgeon et al. (2014) shared that many Aboriginal graduate students do not have formal mentorship opportunities from Indigenous faculty members or allies supportive of Indigenous ways and/or knowledge. It was suggested that culturally relevant policies, approaches, and strategies be in place within institutions in order to retain Aboriginal graduate students (Pidgeon et al., 2014). Pidgeon et al. (2014) continued that Aboriginal graduate students clearly identified the role of relationships with faculty and other students as vital to their positive experiences in graduate studies. The following quote demonstrates the level of respect early on in this emerging relationship:

When I think back to our first conversation, I am reminded of the feelings of relief that I experienced when I spoke with John on a human-to-human level. It was not how I had imagined or built up the experience to be. All of our interactions have been based on a level of mutual respect, not a hierarchy like I had anticipated. Some of the basic elements of this respectful relationship include having mutual understandings of the tasks to be completed, the open environment for questions, and an acknowledgement of schedules and commitments. This experience helped me understand that this dynamic is different than a "normal" student-teacher relationship. (D. Lee, personal communication, October 6, 2015)

Understanding Roles

Often relationships are built on a foundation of understanding roles and clarifying responsibilities. University faculty can fulfill different roles in relationships with graduate students, two of which include employer and agent of socialization (Lechuga, 2011). Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001) described mentoring relationships as involving work related activities, skill development, and social or emotional elements on a formal or informal basis. When faculty members are in the role of employer or supervisor, clear understandings are beneficial in relation to expected responsibilities of graduate students in order for the students to work under minimal supervision. In positive supervisor-graduate assistant relationships, Lechuga, (2011) stated that student independence, as well as student contributions, are valued.

It must be considered, however, that relationships between faculty and students involve varying power dynamics. This can go beyond job titles to include the dynamics of gender, race, or other

cultural affiliations. Although power dynamics are evident in faculty-student relationships, the way in which either party chooses to acknowledge these dynamics can strengthen the relationship. Respect and openness for the learning that can take place for either supervisor or student makes space for each party to receive gifts from the other as revealed by the reflection below:

I was hesitant to apply [for the grad assistantship] because I was worried about what would be expected and whether or not my abilities would suffice. I was worried about what it might be like to walk in that world and work with an academic. At times I was worried about whether or not my skills would be up to standard or if I even had the right vocabulary to hold an intelligent conversation over the phone. It is an interesting shift from sitting in a classroom and taking in lectures to working on a joint project together, sharing ideas, and providing each other with feedback. I was worried about the shift in power dynamics and I did not entirely know what to expect. (D. Lee, personal communication, October 3, 2015)

Building Relationship

In some cultural teachings, people have relationships with everything around them and those relationships need nourishment and respect. Pidgeon et al. (2014) shared that often the power of relationships to family, community, nations, and geographic locations, are noted by Aboriginal students as key elements of success and perseverance in education. Many of the same teachings can apply to graduate assistants and faculty supervisors. Once the foundational elements of getting to know each other are established, opportunities can be made for each party to share more about who he/she is. Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001) shared “o mentor well, it is also necessary to know one’s protégé” (p. 565). Sharing one’s cultural identity and affiliations can be considered a risk for some Aboriginal students based on previous, perhaps multigenerational, experiences of discrimination and racism. Some students are open about their cultures, and others choose to keep their identity private. Having the opportunity to decide when and how to broach the topic of culture is important for anyone considering disclosing a personal part of his/herself. Although this can be considered a risk for some students, it can also create opportunities for support and further relationship building with faculty.

By having knowledge of the cultural identity of the graduate student, mentors are welcomed to understand and explore values, behaviours, and attitudes that may contribute to the relationship (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001). As respect, trust, and openness build between faculty member and student, it becomes easier to share information with the other party knowing that it will be held in a good way. Hutchinson et al. (2008) shared “having a faculty member familiar with your community will allow a greater shared understanding of your background” (p. 276). Opening up the discussion around cultural identities can allow for self-disclosure of personal experiences as the following excerpt suggests:

I like that Danica has been sharing with me some important parts of her. This shows a bravery that I respect. She has indicated that she has an Aboriginal background and is proud of her heritage. I am pleased as there is a sense that she trusts me enough to share this important part of her. (J. Poulsen, personal communication, October 15, 2015)

In reference to mentoring relationships between two parties of different cultural backgrounds, Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001) described the importance of self-awareness and knowledge of one’s own feelings with regards to racial and ethnic issues. Sharing personal information about cultural

identities can place either party in a vulnerable place, especially when the relationship is still forming. A great level of trust is placed in the hands of the person now holding this information and the stories shared. Each party has a choice to make about how to go forward in the relationship knowing each new piece of information; and for the authors, this encouraged a degree of self-reflection and sharing as illustrated by the next two quotes:

Our conversation today was bright and fruitful again. I told the story of my experience at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Ottawa earlier this year. I was lucky enough to attend the opening ceremonies and experienced Justice Murray Sinclair's introduction at the Truth and Reconciliation finale in Ottawa last June 2015 and the subsequent standing ovation. I was blessed to be part of this enormous celebration, a celebration that I felt extended beyond Justice Sinclair and his important work. The celebration included his committee, the individuals who had testified across Canada, the First Nations community, and Canada itself. The peak of the experience was the ten-minute standing ovation for Justice Sinclair that culminated in the entire room dancing and clapping to the rhythm established by a group of drummers. We danced to acknowledge the power and growth of understanding, plus we danced to celebrate the work and important revelations that this commission had brought to light. (J. Poulsen, personal communication, October 20, 2015)

Because I am a counselling student, I've been thinking a lot about how respectful relationships between graduate assistants and faculty supervisors mirror, in a way, the therapeutic relationships with clients. Although the work that John and I are doing together is different than a therapeutic relationship, there are many similar elements and factors that help build that sense of safety. From a foundational point of view, the therapeutic relationship is strengthened when clients know about their rights from the outset of therapy through an informed consent process. This is similar to when John and I completed the contract to work together. We were both on the same page with our responsibilities to one another and each week we negotiated that arrangement. Another element to building rapport in counselling settings that parallels relationship building in a faculty-student relationship is getting to know each other in casual ways. John and I had the chance to meet over a coffee and talk about a few things that ventured outside of the realm of our project focus. This allowed us to get to know each other a little better. Although a counsellor wouldn't meet with a client in a setting like that, it represents that there are alternative ways to build rapport and invest in the relationship. John has been very positive, encouraging, and optimistic about the work. I am hoping that this is building a sense of safety for both of us so that when it comes time for more constructive feedback there is a net and history of genuine validation and care. (D. Lee, personal communication, October 27, 2015)

Knowledge Transfer

All mentoring or supervisory relationships involve a degree of knowledge transfer. Pidgeon et al. (2014) shared that mentoring relationships are reflective of the intergenerational approaches to teaching as demonstrated in Indigenous cultures. Poonwassie and Charter (2001) shared "[r]ole modeling, at either an individual or group level, is a powerful means of teaching and of helping others incorporate traditional values through transmission or traditional knowledge" (p.69). Lechuga (2011) explained that faculty members view their role as contributing to the development of graduate students, at

times in a master-apprentice relationship, with a respect for student autonomy in order to strategically encourage development. Austin (2002) shared a similar idea that students learn from observing and interacting with their faculty supervisors or mentors. These views of knowledge transfer and learning from observing are deeply rooted in Aboriginal culture. Overmars (2010) explained that modeling and storytelling was how children were traditionally taught and “education was conducted in a way that was integrated with daily life and emphasized relationships” (p. 91). Hart (2007) described that the transmission of knowledge from previous generations, as guided by Elders, to future generations is not unlike the training of an apprentice.

There is a level of safety and sense of security that must be present in order for students to take the next step and this is encouraged by the fundamental elements of the relationship mentioned above. Pidgeon et al. (2014) reported that the supportive elements of an Aboriginal graduate student-mentoring program fostered a sense of belonging for students and gave power to inter-generational relationships and learning. At times, cultural differences regarding values around knowledge transfer and creation can become barriers for Aboriginal students. Some of the cultural barriers identified for Aboriginal students completing graduate degrees were “accepted methods to inform knowledge creation” and “knowledge transfer between the student and the faculty” (Hutchinson et al., 2008, p. 270). With this knowledge, it is important that the faculty supervisor and graduate assistant have a mutual understanding about how knowledge transfer will work within the relationship and how knowledge is understood within the realms of the project. The reflection below shares a story about knowledge transfer as demonstrated through a cultural experience:

I had the opportunity to attend a pow wow recently. I sat behind a very powerful and strong drum group. I love sitting close to the drums and feeling the vibrations through my entire body. It is a beautiful experience. While watching this drum group, I was able to witness traditional teaching and learning practices. The young men around this drum circle were in their mid-twenties. There were a couple empty chairs amongst them and once in a while a few younger boys would join in with them. The younger boys would come and go as they pleased and joined in with the older drummers when they wanted to. As the young boys joined in, I noticed that one of the older drummers pointed to a young boy when it came time for the lead singing part of the song. The young boy looked back up at the older drummer for reassurance and the older drummer nodded. That was all the young boy needed for confirmation and away he went. This boy took on the lead singing role and shared a beautiful song with the world around him.

This story represents a certain form of mentorship which has been passed on for generations upon generations: the keepers of the knowledge spending time with inheritors of knowledge. This is the way that some traditional practices and teachings were passed on from generation to generation. When I think about mentorship in the sense of graduate assistant and faculty member, there are similar practices that take place in this knowledge transfer. In terms of my work with John, he has assigned tasks based on a certain level of confidence he had in my work. As we get to know each other better and he is more familiar with my abilities, he will be able to assign work that he feels I can handle while slightly pushing me out of my comfort zone. As a graduate student, I can trust that process and understand that I will be challenged within a particular zone of what is reasonable. (D. Lee, personal communication, October 20, 2015)

Respect

During the initial stages of building relationship, respect for each other allowed the relationship to move forward. Respect for this pair was seated in a strong admiration for one another especially in the areas of intelligence, courage, and thoughtfulness:

In thinking about respect and what it means to me, I am brought back to respect as a very essential cultural teaching in the Aboriginal world. It has many meanings for our people and seems to be at the base of all relationships, both with other humans as well as the world around us. Respect in this sense means that we are all equal in the wheel or circle. This idea acknowledges that we are each at different stages around the wheel based on where we are at in our lives and what experiences we have had. In terms of being humans with unique gifts to offer, we are equal. Having this understanding is very important in the academic world. It means that although there is a teacher and student relationship, there is both something to give and receive for each party. Respect in a cultural view to me also means that I deeply honour the fact that John has lots of teachings to offer me. As a mentee of his, I respect these gifts that he is sharing with me and use this knowledge in a good way. His willingness to share knowledge and offer his time as a mentor is invaluable for my growth and learning. This creates an environment of deep respect. When I think about what it means to be respected, I think about how even though I am at a different stage in my learning, I will still have contributions to offer. To be respected means to be included and collaborated with. (D. Lee, personal communication, October 3, 2015)

As explained in the above entry in reference to relationships, the Medicine Wheel teachings include all stages of life and the connections to each other (Poonwassie & Charter, 2001). Poonwassie and Charter (2001) explained that “[t]hese [Medicine Wheel] concepts are symbolic cyclical interpretations of life and universal connectedness which provides a means for individuals to make sense of their world” (p. 65). Hart (2010) explained that all life is considered equal in the Wheel, thus all life is respected in a reciprocal manner.

Respect from faculty has been identified as a key element of graduate assistant success (Brown-Wright, Dubick, & Newman, 1997). Pidgeon et al. (2014) referenced the following values as critical as either a support or an impediment to Aboriginal students transitioning to graduate studies: respect, responsibility, relevance, and relationships. Hutchinson et al. (2008) wrote “teachings on respect of diverse ways of knowing and coming to know are vital to realizing respect for Indigenous people and should be incorporated in all academic disciplines” (p. 274).

An opportunity to explore respect, relationships, and how cultural identities contribute to one’s understanding of the world, creates space for discussion of values that may differ between parties. Absolon (2010) wrote “we must respect who we are, what we know and where we come from” (p. 81). Knowing one another’s stories can prevent future misunderstandings. In reference to mentoring relationships with non-mainstream graduate students, including Native American students, Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001) noted that core value differences and similarities may be important to explore in early stages of the relationship. In cross-cultural mentoring or supervising situations, it is essential that both parties hold a respect for the uniqueness associated with each person’s culture in order to understand how and why tasks are completed in a certain way along with a level of flexibility and

adaptability (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001).

Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001) also stated that in some situations, in order to appreciate the opinions, behaviours, and attitudes of mentors or protégés, time and patience in investigating one another's culture is key. This allows the pair to revise any expectations with regards to behaviour (professionally or personally) and priorities while simultaneously allowing space for each party to self-reflect on any habits or characteristics of both personal culture and graduate school culture (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001).

The review of the pertinent literature informed this pair's interpersonal interactions. Davidson and Foster-Johnson's (2001) statement regarding "time and patience" resonated with them both. The next sessions after reading about the need for time and patience had more pauses in the conversation as both made sure that there was time and space to speak and listen.

Faculty and students must also navigate the level of closeness or personal boundaries with each other and at times, cultural norms may be different in this regard between both parties (Lechuga, 2011). The expectation that faculty and students should have clear boundaries with regards to relationships is one that is commonly held by many individuals and universities. Although this is typically ethically in place for the safety of either party, there are times when cultural considerations must be made and these boundaries must be explored. In sharing a personal experience of getting to know students outside of the classroom, Faith (2007) wrote that through sharing "our personal lives, a deep bond was established, a bond that transcended our differences" (p. 10). The space created for this type of sharing allowed for a new level of depth to develop in this relationship based on the foundation of great respect for one another.

Feedback

Along with the theme of respect, feedback focused on performance and personal growth emerged in the literature as an important element of effective mentoring and supervisory relationships. Feedback in any type of relationship can be challenging, thus it is important that it comes from a foundation of respect. Austin (2002) shared that graduate students reported a desire for explicit feedback from faculty regarding their progress in their various roles associated with being a graduate student. It was also shared that positive feedback, along with respectful gestures, was identified as an influence of motivation by graduate students (Christensen & Menzel, 1998, as cited in Lechuga, 2011). Similarly, international students identified a lack of feedback as a potential source of conflict between themselves and their faculty supervisors (Adrian-Taylor, Noels, & Tischler, 2007). Not only is feedback required from faculty to students regarding student performance, faculty also appreciate receiving feedback from their mentees with reference to their performance as a mentor and what may be necessary to address in order to make positive changes (Cesa & Fraser, 1989).

A culture of reciprocal and respectful feedback allows for each party to contribute to the work in a meaningful way and show support for one another. Johnson (2013) explained "reflecting on how teachings and learning experiences build upon each other, helps to guide Indigenous understanding about how each past event, experience, thought, dream, conversation, ceremony and prayer is necessary, and purposeful" (p. 82-83). In the authors' case, weekly feedback through reviewing one another's journal

entries and openly discussing, not only the work, but also the relationship as it developed was profound. Journaling and weekly discussions provided for opportunities for accountability to each other, oneself, and the work.

Journaling became the basis for internal feedback about the developing relationship and an opportunity to process the experience. Faith (2007) shared that the practice of reflective journaling can facilitate both the “learning and unlearning” (p. 10) in the development as an educator as it allows space to explore incongruent beliefs, examine self-talk, and question commonly held beliefs about what academia “should” be. The experience of reflection provided through the journaling exercise contributed to the authors’ growing relationship as is evidenced in the following journal entries:

Feedback is probably best delivered in a trusting atmosphere. If there is trust then feedback is more easily accepted. There is probably a correlation between trust and ease of feedback; the greater the trust between individuals then the easier it is to give constructive feedback. Constructive feedback can have a negative tone as it is often dealing with a situation where a person has not met the standards. If there is trust then suggestions for improvement are more often met with an open heart and willingness to change. Trust suggests that the person receiving the suggestions believes the person giving the suggestions have their best interests in mind. (J. Poulsen, personal communication, October 7, 2015)

In terms of giving feedback, this is in area that I struggle with. Giving feedback to someone who is in a supervisory role seems awkward to me. I am not sure what is expected in this regard and I am respectful of power dynamics that are present in each relationship. I am cautious to not step on someone’s toes in this respect. I’m realizing that it is important for me to hear about how the work is standing up against expectations in order to know where I am at and what the expectations actually are. In thinking about myself and my own personality, I tend to be generally unsure of myself and lack confidence in my work. What I have noticed about myself is that I generally work better after receiving some sort of feedback, both positive and constructive. This helps me know that I am on the right track with regards to what is expected of me, but it also seems to provide me with motivation to continue or improve. (D. Lee, personal communication, October 10, 2015)

Conclusion

Ultimately positive and supportive relationships, or mentorships, between university faculty and graduate students can be profound and meaningful to the overall experience for both parties. For Aboriginal graduate students, the experience of having a supportive mentor or supervisor can be culturally significant. For non-Aboriginal faculty having an Aboriginal graduate student can allow for self-reflection, growth, and an opportunity to learn something new. The authors found that their relationship required a degree of safety rooted in foundations of respect and feedback in order for them to thrive in their roles. The stories shared above, as captured through journal entries, outlined the importance of the necessary elements of meaningful and healthy work relationships. Creating a relationship on these foundations can provide reciprocal learning opportunities for both faculty and student that transcend typical supervisory relationships by honouring the power of one another’s experience and story.

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

More Than a Social Justice Project: The Continued Road Towards Truth and Reconciliation

Sarah Burm

Faculty of Education, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada

Contact: sburm@uwo.ca, 519-615-3730

Author Note

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Abstract

*This community story describes one committee's experiences in reconciliation after the planning and hosting of an education conference entitled *It Matters to Us: Transforming the Legacy of Residential School at Western University's Faculty of Education*. The objective in hosting this conference was to provide educational opportunities that foster dialogue, reconciliation, and relationship building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This conference sought to increase knowledge, enhance self-awareness and strengthen the skills of those who work both directly and indirectly with Indigenous peoples. Outlined throughout the story are both the lessons learned and challenges experienced when a group of individuals from diverse individual, familial, and communal backgrounds come together to engage in a process of reconciliation.*

Keywords: *community, reconciliation, education, residential school system, Indigenous peoples*

The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek. There are no shortcuts. When it comes to truth and reconciliation, we are all forced to go the distance.

– Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, to the Canadian Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, September 28, 2010

Working in the area of Indigenous education, I have come to understand the challenges involved in trying to engage both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in critical conversation and reflection about the residential school system. I recognize the effort and preparation that is required to engage others in conversation around such a heavy and sensitive topic. I know, too, how isolating, even debilitating, it can feel to do this work, feeling as though you are having to compete with myriad other issues and voices that deserve equal attention. Experiences like these led me to wonder whether others involved in this work shared similar experiences. I was curious to know whether others felt the tension of being involved in a field of work that can be equally difficult and fulfilling. At a time in Canadian history when both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are being encouraged to participate in reconciliation efforts related to the residential school system in Canada, myself, along with a committee of driven and compassionate individuals, saw an opportunity to engage with others in study and reflection about what it means to create a new understanding of our shared past, present, and future.

On March 10-11, 2015, the London Area Truth and Reconciliation Committee, in collaboration with local educational and community partners throughout the Southwestern Ontario region hosted an education conference entitled *It Matters to Us: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools* held at Western University's Faculty of Education in London, Ontario. This conference sought to increase knowledge, enhance self-awareness, and strengthen the skills of those who work both directly and indirectly with Indigenous peoples. The desire to organize an education conference addressing the legacy of residential schools evolved from a review of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's 2012 interim report and many discussions with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples representing local leadership, educational stakeholders, and faith leaders around what truth and reconciliation could look like in our local context. Local supporters acknowledged that now was the time for meaningful, impactful action and activity.

Rethinking the Relationship

The purpose of this conference was to strengthen relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples throughout our local communities so that together, we could raise awareness about the legacy of residential schools and its continued impact on how we live and understand one another. A history of a systemic attempt to eradicate Indigenous peoples, their cultures, languages, perspectives, and knowledge has been embedded in our national history and its effects are ongoing. This can't be ignored or denied. For our committee, moving forward meant understanding this oppression, how it came about, how it continues to be held in place, and what it means to raise consciousness and promote opportunities for healing. We wanted to build people's capacity to respond to the learning and cultural needs of Indigenous youth and community members. We wanted to foster direct community-to-community engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in our local educational communities. Drawing on the TRC's mandate to acknowledge the injustices and harms experienced by Indigenous peoples and the need for continual healing, this conference focused on providing attendees with opportunities to network with other professionals and community partners who have an interest in supporting projects that foster dialogue, reconciliation, and relationship building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Our work invited educational stakeholders to join forces with residential school survivors, social agency representatives, and community members to demonstrate their commitment toward addressing local priorities that promote healing and wellness in the educational system.

The organization of this conference, spanning close to two years, brought together nearly 500 people from all over the province of Ontario. While many of the attendees worked in public education, other participants worked in non-education related fields such as health, correctional services, and child and family services. The two day event was kicked off with inspiring performances by Sisters of All Nations and Inuk singer-songwriter Susan Aglukark. We were honoured to have Dan and Mary Lou Smoke, well-respected and involved community members in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities of London, open and close our conference. The Smokes shared with attendees their knowledge of First Nations faith, history, and culture through prayer, storytelling, and song. The conference keynote address was given by Indigenous advocate Wab Kinew, who shared through story his personal experiences of reconciliation. Attendees had the opportunity to listen to and learn from residential school survivors, who bravely shared their stories of truth, survival, and healing. Attendees were also able to attend experiential workshops that focused on increasing one's cultural competency and creating safe spaces for dialogue and reflection.



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While an emotional couple of days for many, the conference equally (re)ignited a fire in many of us on the importance of listening to and learning from one another. Responses from attendees were overwhelmingly positive; participants described the conference as “powerful”, “emotional”, and “contributing to the continued road to reconciliation.” For many of the participants, this conference was the first time they were able to critically engage in discussion and reflection around the impact of the residential school system. Standing in front of them were survivors, inviting attendees to walk in their shoes for a brief moment, sharing through story and photographs their individual experiences of what it was like to be forcibly removed from their homes and communities, a topic that can be difficult for some people to grasp.

Attendees were excited to go back to their professional networks and share with colleagues their new learning. The planning of this conference involved many people, who brought to the table

experiences, knowledge, and expertise that collectively led us to this exciting moment in time.

As a committee, we were grateful to finally see our hard work come to fruition. Nevertheless, we know this conference was only the first step in our local journey of reconciliation based learning and engagement.

Bumps in the Road

Soon after the conference was over, an incident was reported to us that a residential school survivor was denied a take-home educational resource kit by a non-Indigenous person because “he was not a teacher”. There was great concern that the refusal of this package led the survivor to being traumatized, which was ironic given the theme of the conference. As a committee we discussed this incident in great depth because both this incident and its lasting impact demonstrates both the places and spaces where reconciliation still needs to happen. While receiving such devastating news was certainly not a moment our committee was proud of, the incident allowed us to become more aware of the dynamics of structural racism. What became evident to us was the lack of cultural competency training and preparation our non-Indigenous staff and volunteers received prior to the conference. Ideally that moment of being asked for a resource was a time to recognize the person asking, a residential school survivor, and to recognize it was a time to offer respect and assistance, and be strong enough to step outside a prescribed role and say something like... “Yes, please give me a minute to check and I want you to know I respect your request.”



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The Continued Road towards Truth and Reconciliation

We recognize from our participation in this work that a single education conference does not eradicate the inequities and incidences of structural racism and misunderstanding that continue to run rampant throughout our schools, organizations and workplaces. A single education conference does not destroy the painful presumptions that weigh heavily on how we come to relate with one another. A single education conference does not erase the human rights violations against Indigenous peoples that have spanned over a century and continue to impact Indigenous youth through the ongoing effects of colonization. However, it is a good place to begin. This conference served as an invitation for all individuals, regardless of race, age, gender, cultural background or socio-economic status, to come together in solidarity and seize the opportunity to learn what it means to be a good human being. This conference was more than a social justice project; it was an opportunity to allow humanity to win out over inhumanity; to show what reconciliation can look like when we push the conversation, not only with our words, but with our actions. Since the conference, a number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples have partnered together to head start their own initiatives. One of the residential school survivors who presented at the conference, Ms. Grace Smallboy, continues to visit local schools in the area, sharing with students her story of strength and survival. Knowing this conference may have prompted individuals

within the local London area to reconsider their beliefs and perspectives about what it means to work towards truth and reconciliation alongside one another is encouraging. Does that mean the journey unfolding in London, Ontario is close to over? Not at all. There are no short-cuts to doing this work. To peel back the layers of our country's history will take time. Notions of superiority, assimilation, and subordination continue to wreak havoc throughout our local communities. Nonetheless, it is time for everyone to understand reconciliation in this country, so we can do right by Indigenous peoples and develop a new relationship based on mutual respect and reciprocity. Take a moment to share the incident above with your family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours. Listen. Talk. Listen. Reflect. Listen. Share. Ignorance and complacency is no longer an option.

The challenge in doing this kind of work is charting the journey. Why does truth and reconciliation matter? What does moving forward look like in Canada? How does society change the story they have been telling/living? The answers to these questions are different for everyone involved and it is no one's place to tell someone how to reconcile or forgive. For some, moving forward is validation, knowing your story or experience is being heard and recognized. For others, it is equitable treatment and access to support services that foster deeper, substantive opportunities for healing and wellness. For me, moving forward means engaging in conversations that are difficult but necessary to have; it is about cooperation versus competition; it is about taking up a position of responsibility versus hiding in the shadows of doubt and discomfort. It is up to each person to decide why reconciliation matters. However difficult the journey may be, trust that the answers to these questions will come to light in their own time, in their own way. Patience and trust become important in one's journey for truth and reconciliation.



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