First Peoples
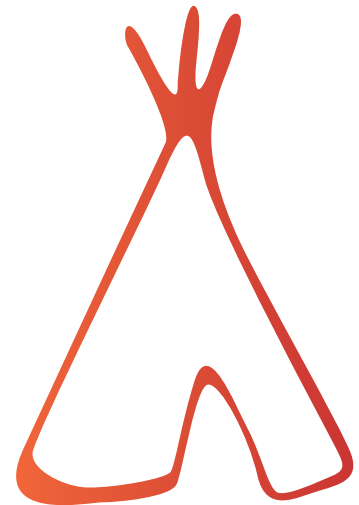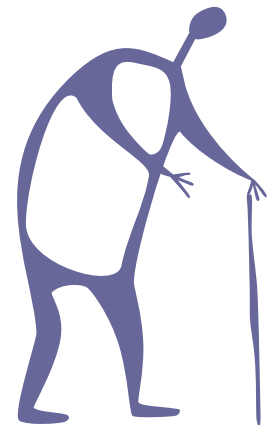## Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honouring the Voices, Perspectives, and Knowledges of First Peoples

First Peoples
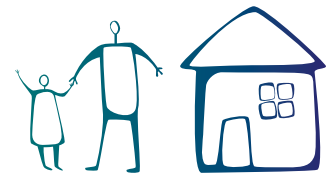## Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honouring the Voices, Perspectives, and Knowledges of First Peoples

Contents

Foreword

Brittany Mathews

Coordinating Editor of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review*

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It is with great pleasure that we bring you Volume 15, Issue 1 of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review*. Although this issue was not guided by a particular theme, the articles are connected by a common narrative of rights and responsibilities. The articles remind us that we all have a right to participate in matters that affect us and a responsibility to uphold that right for everyone. This includes the right to participate in society and its institutions equitably and in a manner that is relevant to the individual and/or group. The right to participate is codified in Article 25 of the *United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. It is further enshrined in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which codifies that Indigenous peoples have a right to participate in a manner that is culturally, politically, and socially relevant. The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* also protects the rights of children to participate in matters that affect them and to express their views.

In equal measure to the right to participate exists the responsibility of Canada and all citizens to uphold these rights in a manner consistent with the group or individual. The right to participate requires respect for freedom of assembly, association, and expression. When we consider what these freedoms mean in the context of Indigenous children, families, and communities, it includes the freedom for all peoples to come together to non-violently defend and promote their collective rights, including the right to self-determination. We all have a responsibility to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate safely and free from discrimination, and to be heard in a manner that is culturally, politically, and socially relevant to us. This issue of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* reminds us how we can promote and uphold the right to participate in meaningful ways, as children, families, researchers, and service providers. Now, more than ever, as Canadians are increasingly engaged in what it means to be in reconciliation with Indigenous children, families, and communities, it is important to once again affirm our responsibilities to uphold and protect the right to participate.

In "Connecting Myself to Indian Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop," authors Salazar and Crowe-Salazar demonstrate the importance of children participating in matters that affect them and the right to be heard. Together, the authors explore ways that family experiences in the Indian

Residential School system and the Sixties Scoop are connected to their contemporary experiences, concluding that, "Residential schools may be over, but that pain remains forever." This reflection demonstrates the power of upholding a child's right to participate and be heard, and transforming that into an opportunity for learning.

In "Exploring the Effectiveness of Métis Women's Research Methodology and Methods: Promising Wellness Research Practices," authors Gaudet el al. discuss ways that researchers should ensure that Métis women participation in research is culturally relevant. Indeed, the article points out how the contributions, roles, and responsibilities of Métis women, both historically and contemporarily, are not well understood by researchers. Their research methodology centres Métis women's ways of knowing and being, thus, furthering understanding of Métis kinship roles and responsibilities as Aunties.

Chambers and Saddleman authored, "Moving Towards a Language Nest: Stories and Insights from nĸ́maplqs," which offers a way forward in Indigenous language revitalization. The authors discuss the challenges and successes of developing a language nest as an early language learning program for Syilx children with the intention of being "at home in the language." The article presents themes of the right to participation, namely, how Indigenous children have a right to participate in language revitalization. The authors argue that language nests offer a way to place children at the heart of "kinship networks and knowledge systems" after being deliberately disrupted for generations through colonial policies.

In "Cree Relationship Mapping: *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk*–How We Are Related," by Makokis et al., the authors engage in a process of "re-vealing" concepts and teachings that formed the foundation of *nêhiyaw* family and community relationships. By challenging the Western-based concepts of child development and understandings of children and families, and centring *nêhiyaw* teachings and worldviews, the article shares culturally appropriate ways that service providers can work with Indigenous children and families. Central throughout the article is the core right that Indigenous children and families have to engage with service providers in a manner that is culturally relevant.

In "Familial Attendance at Indian Residential School and Subsequent Involvement in the Child Welfare System Among Indigenous Adults Born During the Sixties Scoop era," authors Bombay et al. provide research that is one of the first to quantitatively link intergenerational cycles of risk between the Indian Residential School system and Sixties Scoop. The article supports what has been well-documented qualitatively: The overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system is linked to intergenerational cycles of risk initiated by the Indian Residential School system. Ultimately, the findings support the need for increased investment in Indigenous-led and culturally relevant interventions to address intergenerational trauma and to make the required systemic changes to the child welfare system so that all Indigenous children and families can live in dignity and respect.

Nagy et al. authored "Human Trafficking in Northeastern Ontario: Collaborative Responses" as a critical anti-human-trafficking response to the lack of information and resources – in addition to such factors as remoteness and systemic underservicing of communities in Northeastern Ontario – in an effort to develop a service mapping toolkit. With a particular focus on Indigenous persons, the authors argue that upholding self-determination and human dignity is key to supporting trafficked persons.

Together, the articles in this issue of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* remind us of the myriad ways that we must promote and uphold the right to meaningful participation. Indigenous children, families, and communities have a right to participate in a manner that is culturally, socially, and politically relevant. All of us – as children, families, community members, researchers, and service providers – have a responsibility to uphold this right in ways that are safe, non-discriminatory, and honour the self-determination and dignity of Indigenous children and families.

In good spirit,
Brittany Mathews
Coordinating Editor
First Peoples Child & Family Review

Connecting Myself to Indian Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop

Alexa Salazar and Noela Crowe-Salazar[1]

Cowessess First Nation

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Abstract

This is a joint work between my Mom and I. It begins with a story passed down to my Mom about my grandfather's experience at an Indian Residential School. My Mom asks me questions about the story and I respond, learning more as we talk. We ended up writing back and forth to one another over a few days to complete this. I found it very emotional and hard to talk about.

We share this story fully acknowledging it is only one story, and it is shared with the intent for learning. I have heard many people say Residential Schools happened a long time ago. My mom started to share this story several years ago with primarily non-Indigenous social work students to demonstrate how Residential School and the Sixties Scoop impacted the five generations she speaks of in the story. My brother's first day of school became a much bigger moment for her and my Mushum.

We share this story with deep respect for all the families who were impacted by Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop. We stand with you and support all of your voices and recognize many of you have lost far more than we have. For all our non-Indigenous family and friends, we share this with respect for you as well, and to foster better understanding and as a step towards reconciliation. This is our truth.

Keywords: Residential School, Sixties Scoop, storytelling

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1   Authors' note: Alexa Salazar attends high school at Campbell Collegiate and is a flourishing ballet dancer. She is an accomplished pianist. Noela Salazar MSW is a private consultant and she trains and teaches social work classes at the University of Regina and Dalhousie. Alexa and Noela acknowledge Alexa's brother Skyler, and Mushum Noel Crowe, who have consented for their stories to be shared this way.

Introduction

My name is Alexa Crowe-Salazar. I am currently in Grade 10 and I am 14 years old. In Grade 9 I was asked to complete an assignment in my social studies class that I found difficult to complete. I disagreed with what was asked because I felt strongly it did not reflect my understanding of our history and experience. Instead of completing that assignment I did this work with my mom, and I explored more about my own family history. I learned a lot, and learned I can write about it, but I cannot talk about it as easily. My Mom's name is Noela Crowe-Salazar.

In preparation for this work I watched videos about the Sixties Scoop (CBC, 2016; Sinclair, 2016). In addition, I attended a screening of *nîpawistamâwin*: *We Will Stand Up,* a documentary by Tasha Hubbard about Colten Boushie (Hubbard, 2019). Colten's family was at the screening in Regina and they did a panel after the documentary.

A Story From My Mom

This story is told from my mother's perspective.

The history of residential schools and the impact on the people who attended the schools and their families was profound and has extended through to present day generations. On June 11, 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada offered the following apology:

> Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm and has no place in our country .... To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all families and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering from the same experience, and for this we are sorry. The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a government, and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system to ever again prevail. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey. The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks for forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008).

This apology stands central to reconciliation. I watched this apology with another Indigenous colleague at the Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services. It was a surreal setting and we were surrounded by the non-Indigenous policy and program staff of Social Services who were all working on tasks. We were the only ones in the office who watched the live stream of the apology. It was surreal given the number of Indigenous children in care and the setting where we watched the apology. I was adopted in the Sixties Scoop, and to hear the words "we apologize for having done this" was indescribable. I situated the apology via an "other" lens until the words "all families" was included. In a second, I became a living part of my father's history that I had previously been removed from.

My father is now 85 years old. He attended Lebret Residential School. Dad says he is not traditional, and he doesn't believe in the church or so-called "Indian ways." He says this is due to being in residential school. Despite this, how he talks to me and the way he shares stories is very traditional in oral storytelling and aspects of communication. Sometimes he will discipline or correct me as an adult, and it is not like anything in western culture. His tone is a fraction different, and he will not look at me. I know then to not look at him, and I will look down and listen. He will then talk, and if he is telling me something to correct me as an adult, he will talk at length. We left his house one day, and I commented to my son on how harshly I was corrected. My son was around 10 years old. He had not even noticed. It is subtle but very effective. When Dad does that I feel remorse, I think of what I have done, and I want to change how I acted. When he is done, he will look at me and then talk of something else: He will call me "my girl," which is a straightforward but deeply caring sentiment that many Indigenous parents use. He always ends with being caring to me and gentle in words. While I have never asked Dad about this, I have watched other Indigenous parents of his generation do the same thing.

Dad was taken to Lebret Residential School when he was four years old. He was the eldest child in his family, and he said his Kokum thought it was good for him to go, and he was a big child, so they sent him. He recounted the story of the day he was taken to me while we sat at Treaty Four powwow. The powwow is held annually in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan in September. It is in a valley east of Regina. The leaves were changing, and it was a warm, sunny afternoon. My children were small and were quietly playing at our feet. We watched the powwow dancers, and he started to tell me with great detail about the day.

I thought he was telling me about the day we were in. I looked at him, and he was looking down. I looked to the valley foliage and listened to his memory of the day he was taken to Residential School. His description was so rich in detail; I felt I was there with him. He shared how he felt, the sound of the wagon wheels on the ground, the smells, how the air felt. He talked about arriving and the days following and not being able to speak Cree. His description of the deep loneliness for his parents was very profound. I felt like I was sitting beside him at the school. He saw his parents again at Christmas briefly, and then in June the following year. He spoke briefly of the abuse he endured and that he witnessed. His words were heavy.

At the end of the story, we sat quietly. Dad let me sit with it for several minutes. I felt his remorse, and his pain and I knew the story was much more purposeful: it was to add me to his history,

and so I understood why I was never a part of his life until my later adult years. It also helped me understand why I had been adopted in the Sixties Scoop. After letting me sit with it for several minutes, he looked to my children who were still at our feet playing. He asked me how old my son was right now; it seemed like an odd question because I knew he knew how old he was. I told him, "He is four." Dad was quiet, and only then, he told me, "I was four when they took me." As a parent, there was no way not to feel that deep anguish and pain, to see my son sitting at my feet made me think, "What if my son was taken from me right now and I couldn't see him until Christmas?" The finesse and expertise of oral storytelling is very sacred to Indigenous cultures, it has a richness that is not describable, and there are no words to be written that could equal oral tradition.

Dad told me the story, and two years later, I took my son for his first day of grade one. I walked with him and watched him line up and go into the school. I came home and called my Dad. I asked him if his grandfather also went to Residential School. He did. I told my Dad I had just walked my son to school, and I would walk back and get him at the end of the day. I would bring him home and feed him and talk to him about his day, and I would put him to bed later that night. I told my Dad; my son is the first child in five generations who will get to come home to his parents after his first day of school. I could hear my Dad's happiness in his voice and his tears. It was finally over; the cycle of children being removed from our family. It was 2008.

A Conversation With My Mom

After taking a few moments to reflect upon her story and the videos that I watched in preparation for my school assignment, my Mom and I discussed what I had learned. We found it was not easy for me to talk about. We both write. The following is our written conversation back and forth. This took place over a few days and has been edited for clarity.

Mom: Alexa, how do you feel after watching and reading these things?

Alexa: After reading and listening to information that holds many emotions for many different people, I'm not entirely aware of what I feel. Some of the information I've heard before and have known for many years. I remember being younger and learning the basic knowledge about this topic from you and feeling sad about it. Even at a younger age than now, my instant reaction was to feel sorrow. If you're a human aware of this basic information, feeling the sorrow of this topic is natural. It's when you really start to learn more about the truth and pain behind this history that you begin to be overcome by all the emotions of thousands of people. Feelings of anger, fear, guilt, pain, and sorrow come to my mind. With the new knowledge, I continue to learn, and I always start with the feeling of sadness that comes with any tragedy. I'm still unaware of the first-hand trauma and feelings of the thousands of people that are affected by this topic more than I to this day.

Mom: What do you think of my experience of being adopted in the Sixties Scoop? Do you understand it is about systems? Systems are how the hospitals work, or how it works when you go to the doctor. Legislation and policy built the systems that created Indian Residential Schools, in particular, the *Indian Act*. Policies such as the peasant farming policy disallowed us to compete in agriculture. We

were only allowed two acres and a cow, and that occurred in 1880 when the First Nations by North Battleford were successfully farming. They were more successful with crops than the settler farmers at market. This success led to complaints from the settler farmers stating in a letter to Ottawa, "They [First Nations] sold this land." Due to this, the peasant farming policy was implemented. It was set up for First Nations to fail at being successful farmers, and then the failure was used to validate the creation of the *Indian Act* and residential schools. It also added to many stereotypes that still prevail today. In the claim the settler farmers made, it is notable to state, the land was never sold. This is from an article I have talked to you about called *Two Acres and a Cow* (Carter, 1989). By review and research of the oral histories and accounts of the treaty negotiations, from Treaty 1 through 7, there was never any documented account of ceding of land. The language used stated the land would be shared to the depth of a plough. This is evidenced in a book called *No Surrender, the Land Remains Indigenous* (Krasowski, 2019). I went to the book launch and talked to you about it afterward. Do you understand what I mean by systems? It is important you understand it because people now get positional or feel resentment; both Indigenous and settlers can feel this way. Unfortunately, this stops reconciliation, and the fact is that systems are the problem, and while people create systems, they often are not aware of how far-reaching those systems can be.

Alexa: I don't think I'll ever fully understand what you would've felt going through a system like that. I'm still learning about the Sixties Scoop, and even though this happened to someone very close to me, I still have questions about it. I was told briefly when I was younger that you had been adopted. When I was smaller, I thought nothing of it because I hadn't learned much about the time period when it had happened. Now, I've learned that First Nations children were taken from their birth families. I've heard stories of where it was done forcibly, and I question now, were you taken without the choice of your guardian? With the stories of force, my instant thought is this isn't right. It definitely was not right. I struggle to understand how something like this could've happened. I often think I'm lucky for being alive during a different time because back then this could've happened to me. The fact is it shouldn't have happened at all, and it's sad I even have to think these things.

Mom: On June 11, 2008 Steven Harper made an historic apology. What part stands out to you or makes you have questions?

Alexa: What first stood out to me was the date the apology was made. The question that came with this was, why did it take so long? Why did it take so long for a group of educated people to finally realize that taking children away from their families and child rights was wrong? I think it's good that somebody finally apologized, but with so much trauma brought from the many years of abuse, it's not as easy as an apology. Personally, I don't think any apology counts until actions are done to make many situations that happen now never happen again. In the present time, there are still people dying and being murdered that have many connections and have a trail to what has happened in the past. Instead of apologizing, a change should be made. I know many people are working to fix things; to fix the future.

Mom: Your view on what is an apology is correct, Alexa. Pamela Palmater is an Indigenous lawyer and educator. She spoke at a lecture at the university last year (P. Palmater, personal

communication, February 21, 2018), and I told you about what she said. Pamela shared that a real apology is the kind your Kokum gave you when you were young and you took another child's toy. You apologized, but you also made sure you would never do it again. To make it real you gave the child something back that was very important to you, maybe your lunch with all your favourite things. Even then, it was not over. You then became like a brother or a sister to the other child, and you personally were there for them going forward. This is a real apology. It is another important lesson that Elders teach and is part of Indigenous families, systems, and ways of living.

Mom: Tell me what you learned about the Sixties Scoop that you did not know before.

Alexa: Recently, I learned some new information about the Sixties Scoop that really opened my eyes. In school, we don't learn a lot about the details of the Sixties Scoop. New things I learned were the system of the Sixties Scoop and the impact it had on people around me. Before, I'd somehow thought that the children taken from their families during the Sixties Scoop were all given up by choice. To later learn that kids were taken and put into a system was a bit shocking, as that's not how I imagined it. To now know that children and their families were treated like animals disgusts me.

Mom: Some children adopted in the Sixties Scoop had worse experiences. The AIM program in Saskatchewan was not a part of the Scoop, in that the children put in that program were already apprehended. It is debatable on the intent to apprehend to put into the program though. My adoption record from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services clearly outlined the plan to have me be adopted; I was an infant. My siblings were not adopted. In the end, it's not about my personal story so much, Alexa, as it is about the systems and the policies and legislation. Those are the changeable things that can be done now. For us, you and me, it is important you know what my experience was because it is important it stops. You are truth and reconciliation. Senator Murray Sinclair (2015) clearly stated that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and work were done for you, Alexa. It was done for all the young Indigenous people across the country so you can change things going forward. How you speak out is important.

Mom: What are your reflections on the story I told you about Mushum going to Residential School and your brother's first day of school?

Alexa: Last night, I read this story for the first time. I sat in a room reading it by myself, and when I was only three sentences in, I felt a lump in my throat. A sudden emotion came from nowhere, and I'm not sure why. When reading about personal experiences that somehow relate to me, I become very emotional. The story had not been told to me or directed to me. After generations of this story, I can feel the pain just through writing, as if it happened to me. The last part of the story where you had told Mushum that my older brother, Skyler, was the first in our family's many generations to come home every day really stuck with me. Residential schools may be over, but that pain remains forever.

Mom: It is a hard story, Alexa. You know the personal impacts it has, and it is not my intention that we share our personal story, but you know the impacts. It was with a good intention on how you responded to this question, and you did it in a very respectful way. Kinanaskomitin (thank you), Alexa. I appreciate that you did this work and for you this is important learning. Love, Mom.

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Exploring the Effectiveness of Métis Women's Research Methodology and Methods: Promising Wellness Research Practices

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Abstract

In this article, we share our experience conducting research with Métis women as Métis women researchers. We engaged in promising research practices through visiting, ceremony, and creative methods of art and writing embedded in what we identify as a learning-by-doing practice. Through collaborative and Indigenous relational methodology, we sought to support a culturally safe, nurturing space where Métis women could learn from one another and express Métis knowledge about the specific roles and responsibilities of Métis Aunties within our respective kinship system. This inquiry into the roles of Métis Aunties included a creative art and writing dialogue event in the Métis river community of St. Louis in Saskatchewan, attended by women who were Métis Aunties or nieces. The purpose of the event was to learn more about our Métis Aunties, building on Dr. Kim Anderson's (2016) extensive research on women's roles in the governance, care, and wellness of our healthy/balanced kinship systems. We chose this specific region because of its historical significance to Métis people as a river place, and our own personal connections to Métis families in this area. We share our processes in learning with and from other Métis women in order to contribute to the growing literature on relational approaches to research.

Keywords: Métis women, Métis Aunties, Indigenous relational methodology, kinship systems

Promising Research Practices

Indigenous methodologies in research are governed by a "value-guided approach that comes from Indigenous beliefs, values, cultural protocols and ethics, community, story and oracy, and conceptualizing and sharing" (Kovach, 2019). Although Indigenous methodologies is emergent in academia, Kovach (2005, 2009) reminded us that such an approach is an ancient, living practice reflected in Indigenous-centred protocols in and with our communities and our land. Practices based on respectful protocols and ethics, such as gifting, food, visiting, prayer, and situating ourselves, are done because "we value relationship" (Kovach, 2019). We too believe that relationality is at the heart of our work, which draws attention to Indigenous women's contributions to family, land, and community wellbeing (Absolon, 2011). Too often undervalued, this contribution inspires a research methodology that considers holism, complexity, creativity, identity, gender, process, generosity, responsibility, space, kinship, and relational accountability. As part of our effort to better understand our kinship roles and responsibilities, we wanted to learn more about Métis Aunties and their contribution to Métis kinship systems[1]. To do this, we (Gaudet and Dorion) co-facilitated a creative dialogue event in the historical Métis community of St. Louis, Saskatchewan, chosen because of our relationship to this land and its people. In this article, we share our methodological process and the research methods that, for us, reflect Métis women's ways of knowing and being.

This article also brings attention to decolonial approaches to research. By decolonial, we mean what Shawn Wilson (2008) called *research as ceremony*, based on a set of kinship relationships and accountability for each other's wellbeing. The research presented in *Keetsahnak, Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters* (Anderson et al., 2018) has also inspired us to consider and enact Beverly Jacobs' view of decolonization, which is, "at a very practical level … taking our power back" (p. 32). These understandings of decoloniality have brought us, as researchers, back to our own communities and to Métis women's stories, with an epistemological grounding in learning from our Aunties.

We came together to learn alongside other Métis women using particular learning-by-doing methods and methodology. Coming from different communities in Saskatchewan, we recognize the differences stemming from our own individual histories, social influences, teachings, languages, and kinship systems. We agree with fellow Métis scholars who have expressed, in reference to their methodological process, that Métis identity is complex and fluid, and that "there is not one Métis identity, thus, not one Métis methodology" (LaVallee et al., 2016, p. 170). This recognition extends to the community of diverse Métis women with whom we worked through visiting, art, creative writing, and circle methods as part of the creative dialogue event to learn about our kinship roles and responsibilities as Métis Aunties and nieces.

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1   We acknowledge that not all Métis people apply an accent to the word Métis. Given the diversity of French Métis, Scottish Halfbreed Métis, and Métis-Cree involved in this project, we recognize our stance in this particular community. We are using an accent on Métis to acknowledge its use in the St. Louis community, and we recognize that we do not speak for all Métis.

Our research process incorporates our individual gifts, working with and learning from Elders, and practicing cultural protocols and community responsibilities. The methodology of the *visiting way*, known also as *keeoukaywin*, (Anderson, 2011; Flaminio, 2018; Gaudet, 2019; Kermoal, 2016; Makokis et al., 2010; Simpson, 2014), situates our research as ceremony (Wilson, 2008). In this article, we share our experiences of this process to present the intentional efforts of a Métis visiting methodology that allows us to engage with each other as researchers and community. Intentional, because our shared purpose is to work towards "*mino-pimatisiwin … holistic health and wellness*" (Anderson, 2011, p. 7). We want to foster wellness in ourselves, as Métis women, but also in our families and extended kinship.

Situating the Research

The village of St. Louis, Saskatchewan is a historical Métis community on the South Saskatchewan River with deep roots in the Red River settlements. It is located northeast of the Métis community of Batoche and the site of the 1885 Northwest Resistance. The settlement layout of St. Louis was based on the river lot system, which reinforced a Métis way of life, as the long, narrow lots allowed close proximity to family and kin in addition to providing water and lumber access for each family (Payment, 2009).

In the late 19th century, "three families, the Bouchers, Bremners and Boyers" (St. Louis Local History Committee, 1980, p. 53) established the first river lots in the St. Louis area "in the customary manner" practiced in Red River (Mailhot & Sprague, 1985, p. 8). They were soon joined by other families from Red River, all of whom would have travelled by Red River carts. At the time, Métis were fleeing their homes in Manitoba to seek refuge and resources because of increasing racial prejudice and the loss of their land resulting from changes to the *Manitoba Act*. The transfer of Rupert's Land to Canada fueled the Métis people's fight for political, cultural, and land rights, and led to the displacement of Métis families, some of whom would make a new home in the community of St. Louis. There has been little contemporary research about the strength of kinship systems in this area.

While our research is focused on St. Louis, the local Elders speak of their important relationship to small, nearby Métis kinship-based settlements along the river, including Boucherville, Lepine Flats, LeCoq, St. Laurent, Batoche, Coulee des Touronds, and Petite Ville. North of the river, the Anglo-Métis settlements of Halcro and Red Deer Hill created a community (Code, 2008). St. Louis and the surrounding area are embedded with knowledge gathered from numerous river crossings, through which flowed diverse people engaged in trading, hunting, gathering, and visiting. The Métis communities are connected through kinship relations and geographical proximity.

The social and economic contributions of women in their traditional position of authority have received little attention in the dominant narratives about the Métis. Recent scholarship, however, has begun to address the absence of women's voices, stories, and experiences (Adese, 2014; Anderson, 2011, 2016; Anderson et al., 2018; Dorion, 2010; Fiola, 2015; Flaminio, 2013, 2018;

Kermoal, 2006, 2016; Leclair & Nicholson, 2003; Macdougall, 2010). Leclair and Nicholson (2003) described the "damaging misconceptions and stereotypes, especially for women" who identify as Métis (p. 57). Macdougall (2010) noted that women have often been absent from stories of the Métis trade economy, and that, when present, they are usually portrayed as "assistants" who helped process hides or simply helped the men. Her research highlighted women's crucial contribution to the functioning and wellbeing of Métis society and its economy. Anderson's (2016) work in the reconstruction of Native womanhood delved into women's traditional role in politics and their spiritual power. Our own research aims to add to this conversation by sharing our methodological approach as well as some of the creative work of the women who took part in the event. In the next section, we situate ourselves, and describe our relationships to each other and to the community of women who participated in this research. We aim to give voice to our stories as Métis women researchers coming together to navigate the colonial terrain.

Situating Ourselves as Métis Women Researchers

As important as it is to describe the location of our collaborative research, it is equally important to situate ourselves in relationship to this place and to each other as Métis women.

Janice Cindy Gaudet: My interest in learning more about Métis women's knowledge has brought me back home to Saskatchewan. The St. Louis area has been home to four generations of my Métis lineage and to my extended kinship relatives. It is good to be back in Saskatchewan, working with other Métis women and grassroots movers and shakers. For this project, I offered Leah tobacco as a way to ensure an ongoing relationship of reciprocity, respect, and caring through this particular collaboration. We initiated our research in ceremony. We recognized that we did not have these Auntie teachings in our own families and communities, and had felt this absence in our own lives as women. With a home base and relatives in St. Louis, my friendship with Anna has also grown over the years through the *way of visiting*. We both lived in Ontario, working on our doctorate program, and now our research has brought us together to invest in Métis women's wellness.

Leah Marie Dorion: I acknowledge myself as River Métis with roots in the historic Métis community of Cumberland House, located in the Saskatchewan River Delta. I come from a Métis family with strong matriarchal leadership, and I have witnessed the challenges involved in keeping our family members connected to our Elders, cultural traditions, teachings, and extensive kinship system. I have personally turned to the Aunties in my life for guidance, spiritual support, and teachings about how to carry out the various roles in my family system such as a cousin, Auntie, and mother. Living in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and being connected to the St. Louis Métis people all my life, I embraced this opportunity to connect with women from another branch of the Saskatchewan River system. In recent years, I have worked with Métis communities across Saskatchewan using creative arts, poetry, oral storytelling, and learning-by-doing models to spark conscious conversation about what it means to be Métis in contemporary society.

Anna Corrigal Flaminio: I locate myself in my mother's Métis community of St. Louis, Saskatchewan, and I was raised in the city of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. I have worked with many Indigenous communities in the areas of law, health, and justice, but I am happy to be once again living near the South Saskatchewan River. I am honoured to have known my two co-authors for a number of years. I met Cindy at a special Métis community event and we recognized our common kinship connection to the local Métis community, as well as our common research goal to highlight Indigenous knowledge, including Métis ways of wellness and visiting. I met Leah as a high school student in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. I have maintained a connection with her, and followed her career as a Métis educator, scholar, and nationally recognized visual artist. I was honoured to learn from these two Métis teachers as they co-facilitated the unique Auntie event in St. Louis, and I continue to learn from them in our joint Indigenous health research on the topic of Métis women's wellness in the St. Louis/St. Laurent/Batoche areas.

Stories of Aunties in the Literature

In this section, we focus on research by female Indigenous scholars as part of our decolonizing approach. It is often claimed, and is being increasingly shown through research, that "Indigenous women are the unrecognized backbone of our communities, who build social support networks and keep our culture intact through their … relevant educational institutions and keep our languages alive" (Settee, 2011, p. v). One of the less recognized roles of women is that of Auntie, though it is well-known in many Indigenous communities, including Métis communities. In making Aunties more visible, we hope to draw attention to relationality in Indigenous women's complex kinship roles. Coming to know by remembering Métis Auntie knowledge is an epistemological foundation that guides us in how to live with each other. Anderson (2011) explained, "As a member of an urban Indigenous community, I also try to find ways that I can be a good 'auntie' to the families of the heart that we create in these settings" (p. 178). Her extensive research on life-stage teachings and traditional kinship systems spoke of women's roles and responsibilities in each life stage. Through her work with Elders, in which she refers to them as "aunties" and "uncles," we learn that they "carry responsibilities for teaching me and helping me learn what I need to know" (Anderson, 2011, p. 32). She refered to the uncles and aunties as an *interpreter generation* because they had a relationship with land-based ways of knowing, and could translate this into a contemporary context (Anderson, 2011). Simpson (2014) explained how in Nishnaabe epistemology, coming to know "takes place in the context of family, community, and relations" (p. 7). In this context, it becomes natural to once again call on our Aunties or grandparents when we face a problem (Simpson, 2014).

McKenzie (2011) credited her two Aunties for saving her life by listening deeply, without interfering or offering advice: "They were just there to listen to me, and after I finished sharing, Auntie started laughing, she said something funny, and we ended up laughing. You know, I didn't even think about suicide after that" (p. 93). Campbell's (1973) autobiographical *Half-Breed* described the strong and

resilient women who helped her, including Aunt Qua Chich, who would bring strong horses to help plow the fields. Alex Wilson (Anderson et al., 2018) spoke of her Auntie's support under changing life circumstances: "When it was time for me to leave our community to go to university, my aunt led the ceremony to see me off" (p. 163). Wilson's Auntie provided her with a bundle that she could draw upon for strength. "Ceremony formalized what I had grown up knowing: That I was loved, that I was a spiritual being, and that I was important to this world" (p. 163).

McAdam (2015) demonstrated how kinship connections are embedded in *Nêhiyaw* laws, and asserts that "the role of *nêhiyaw* women needs to be revitalized," (p. 58) as it is "connected to the lands and waters; they are protectors, defenders, and teachers as well as knowledge keepers" (p. 58). Campbell (2017) discussed the importance of returning to *wahkotowin* principles—our responsibilities and obligations to our relations, both human and non-human. Our shared aim through our own research is to promote what Settee (2011) described as "the heart of the concept of *wakohtowin*, the betterment of all our relations" (p. iv). Our research methodology of visiting with each other and with other Métis women, Elders, and the community strengthened our experience of living within what Shawn Wilson (2008) referred to as *a set of relationships*, and more specifically, a set of women-centred relationships.

Our Research Methods

Our research approach, based on relationality, flowed naturally, intentionally, and intuitively. Our process was grounded in our relationships with one another and with other Métis women in the community. We did not plan each step and phase in advance; the process unfolded organically as we knew and trusted each other. We understood our own roles and responsibilities as ethical researchers, and our place in the community. There was no interfering, shaming, or imposing of values and beliefs on one another. We all understood that when tobacco is laid and prayers are made, the work begins. We already trusted in these ethical ways of practicing research as ceremony, and valued the methodology known as *the visiting way* (Gaudet, 2019). We also understood the layers of oppressive systems that have harmed our families, communities, and lands, so we wanted to assure and to model safety and strength in our ways of being and doing. We shared a concern for the loss of Métis women's knowledge. And we recognized that culturally appropriate space is important, as is working with local community knowledge and highlighting their strengths and long-standing community efforts.

In order to ensure a culturally appropriate space for the project, we worked with a local Métis artist and entrepreneur, Christine Tienkamp. Christine and her husband's leadership with the emerging Métis cultural centre in St. Louis and their community-based approach in hosting, planning, and producing the yearly River Road Festival have brought people together to celebrate the vibrancy of the Métis community. Christine opened the centre to host our first Métis Women's Relations Art and Writing event to honour our connection to Aunties and *Mataants* (the term for Auntie in the Michif language of the St. Louis region). The purpose of the River Road Festival is to celebrate and transfer Métis culture, so the spirit of the space was inviting, already lively and loving. The space had

received local Métis community members, artists, Elders, teachers, entrepreneurs, and their kin and friends. The grounds, well-tended by Christine's mother, Louise Tournier, greeted us as we walked into this once abandoned building. Physical space is an important consideration. Gardens, flowers, and beauty greet us before we enter our homes to be with one another. We recognize this as a Métis women's method of caring. We believe that this space set a high standard of integrity and respect. The old, common, lingering memory of feeling inadequate and ashamed as a Métis person could not permeate this space. Christine and her family have created a welcoming visiting space for the celebration and sharing of Métis culture.

A team of five Métis women generously rolled up their sleeves to take on unique roles and responsibilities for the half-day Auntie event, part of a broader Métis Relations research project. Christine took on an administrative role, promoted the event through Facebook, and created a poster that was printed in the local newspaper. The event was also promoted among our own relations who lived in the area. Elders who did not have Internet access were contacted in person and invited to attend.

A circle of 12 Métis women from different family, community, and spiritual/religious backgrounds came together, representing both Aunties and nieces. Métis diversity was apparent, and was respected. The women came from families who identified as Métis, French-Métis, English Halfbreeds, and Métis-Cree, with diverse faiths—Catholic, Anglican, and what is often referred to as Traditional. Their ages ranged from 35 to 81. No specific age requirements were put forward, but upon reflection, we see the need for future events to be more focused on young women because they can provide a contemporary perspective on the role of nieces as well as the responsibilities involved in younger women becoming Aunties.

The minimal $2,000 budget covered space rental, Elder and artist honorariums, gifts, art supplies, and home-made food prepared by a local Métis couple. We were transparent with the community as to how the funds were being distributed. The three researchers shared responsibilities and divided tasks according to each of our skills. Tools for documenting the event included an intake questionnaire, a final evaluation form, and consent forms. We began by reviewing and discussing the informed consent process and asking whether participants wanted their art, poetry, and names used in publication. We explained that this project is connected to a potential research grant to highlight the importance of Métis women's knowledge and stories. The women were patient and generous, and helped each other in filling out the cumbersome consent forms that are required for university-led research. We also shared with the participants how this process would be valuable as a way to consult with local Métis women on potential future research interests.

The guests were welcomed with gift bundles made by local artists. The circle included a designated Elder, who was an Auntie of one of the researchers. The multi-use space was filled with Métis culture in the form of art, music, and dance that reflected a Métis kitchen-feel. This space connected all of us, and offered a relaxed and fun atmosphere. We felt an ease and safety that enabled us to remember and to share what being an Auntie meant, and what our Aunties meant to us. We recorded our shared learnings as a way to document our research.

Learning-by-Doing Methods

We believe that learning-by-doing as an Indigenous methodology and pedagogy exemplifies our sovereign expression as Métis women. By this, we mean activating our Métis self-determination by engaging our hearts, bodies, voices, and minds, visiting with and learning from each other, and sharing our stories. Other Indigenous scholars have discussed the significance of a learning-by-doing approach to research as inter-related with Indigenous pedagogy (Absolon, 2011; Restoule & Chaw-win-is, 2017; Wilson, 2008). Symbolic art and creative writing highlight the strength of Indigenous understandings of kinship, love, and family responsibility. These methods offer a way to generate meaning that is inclusive of the s*elf-in-relation* (Absolon, 2011). As Simpson and other researchers who apply Indigenous methodologies have shown, "the self is women throughout the process, linking self to methods" (Absolon, 2011, p. 70).

Lavallée (2009) described her method of Anishnaabe symbol-based reflection as an arts-based method grounded in Indigenous values and beliefs. She highlighted the relational elements that guide her method, a holistic approach that is fluid and intentional, and can advance Indigenous ways of knowing in research. Similarly, we kept our creative process open-ended in order to honour Métis women's ways of meaning-making, their experiences, memories, and vantage points. Many of the women had never participated in learning-by-doing methods through creative writing and art as a way of expressing their experiences. As a result, we had several beautifully composed pieces that were as diverse as the women themselves. Each piece prompted storytelling about food, family, faith, relationships, healing, and resurgence, as in the following examples:

Faith

My Faith keeps me honest.
My Faith is simple.
My Faith is great.
My Faith supports me.

Future Aunties

Don't go missing.
Dance with those you love.
Live with your sisters.
Freedom is yours.
Take it and offer it.
This is your generosity.

Back to the Fire

Through trauma and pain of generations family once lost, is found again.
New strength and courage to bring our Aunties back home, to the ancestral fire,
That still burns with a healing flame.

Each woman produced a creative writing piece guided by a layered approach: First, the participants were instructed to list 20 words that reflected our knowledge of Aunties. We were then asked to choose ten of these words and list them on another page. From these ten words, we chose the five that most spoke to us. From the five, we created sentences, and gave titles to our poems. Next, we transformed our poems into visual storytelling through painting. Some of the poems were shared

in the circle, and we reflected together on the meaning of being an Auntie or niece. For a second arts-based activity, paints and canvases were provided, and we were invited to reflect on symbolic images that represented *Auntie* from our own vantage point. Because many of the women were not experienced with painting, poetry served as an excellent warm-up before transitioning into visual expression. As an instructor of visual art, I (Leah) know how to promote a sense of ease when playing with art materials. Playfulness, laughter, fun, and risk-taking are part of the process, and all the women helped each other. The paintings seemed to offer another layer of knowledge about our Aunties. Together, we remembered the importance of *Auntie*, a role that is often overlooked within families because of the predominance of the nuclear family structure. We discovered how the role of Auntie is connected to other family members as the women shared stories about themselves as Aunties and nieces. We recognized the interconnection of Aunties to others within Métis kinship systems, and the unrecognized and unseen work of Aunties in caring for Métis families. We have included several of the women's illustrations to complement our description of research methods (Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3).

Figure 1
Painting by Christine Tienkamp, St. Louis, Saskatchewan. September 15, 2017

Figure 2
Painting by Louise Tournier, St. Louis, Saskatchewan. September 15, 2017

Figure 3
Painting by Joan Sinclair, Fiske, Saskatchewan. September 15, 2017

In our debriefing, we (Cindy and Leah) concluded that community-engaged research needs to be done, as mentioned above, using a layered approach. This involves learning in steps, learning by modeling, teaching in layers, talking with one another, and learning from one another. This layered approach would have been a methodology and pedagogy used by our Elders when *keeoukaywin,* or Métis visiting ways, were still at the heart of the teaching and learning of life stage roles and responsibilities. Many of us are relearning our Métis cultural knowledge, so layered approaches help us to avoid reproducing shame-based systems of learning and misrepresented knowledge, which disconnect us from our lands, our hearts, and from each other. Using learning-by-doing methods, the women shared and received skills and techniques for self-expression using artistic materials, and employed these methods within a Métis social context. The circle method further supported our aim of giving voice to Aunties, as each participant was given space and time to share their personal experiences based on their own stories as Métis community members from their respective family context.

The Circle Method

Figure 4
Setting up for a Circle at the River Road Festival, St. Louis, Saskatchewan.
September 15, 2017

The circle method allowed us to begin our process in prayer, to introduce ourselves, and to set a foundation for the exploration of *Auntie*. We woke our senses with a turtle rattle talking stick, a sacred ceremonial tool. The circle provided an uninterrupted space where we could reconvene after each creative learning-by-doing activity, to share and to prepare for the next step (Figure 4). As Leclair and Nicholson (2003) explained, "our circle works hard to recreate our individual and collective Métis women's authorities" (p. 63). Elders, they pointed out, teach that the circle works to remind us of our responsibility to share and preserve our stories for the next generation. Lavallée (2009) described her use of *Sharing Circles and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection* in her research in order to foster a sense of belonging and community. Absolon (2011) spoke of the *learning circle* as a part of her methodology for sharing and exchanging ideas and experiences, in addition to being a gesture of reciprocity in research. For our own project, the circle brought us together as Métis women from six different communities, reflecting the diversity of Métis identities and histories.

Final Reflections

Although we discuss our process throughout this article, we want to finish by highlighting how important it was for us as Métis women researchers to be with other Métis women, some of them our own relations. Our comfort and ease with one another extended to comfort, safety, and trust in sharing our vulnerability as being, ourselves, subjects in the research. We learned that, having endured so much difficulty for generations, Métis women's ability to maintain traditional knowledge and wisdom is a testament to their resilience and strength in the face of adversity. By strengthening our relationships with other Métis women through ceremony, we have begun to better understand our familial matriarchal role models, and, just as important, to identify our own lives with theirs. Placing value on Métis Aunties helped us to recognize the complex set of dynamics and systems needed to uphold healthy and loving relationships.

It was important to acknowledge the contribution of the women. We mailed thank you cards and photos to the participants, as well as a newsletter that highlighted their poetry and featured a photo montage, reflections on the day's events, and a biography and image of the too often unrecognized Métis matriarch from the community, Caroline l'Espérance (1842-1900). To assure historical accuracy, this article was reviewed with Christine from the Métis cultural centre in St. Louis in addition to two community Elders, also respected Aunties.

This project came out of our visiting work, which brought attention to the role of Auntie as a form of Métis women's knowledge. This began a conversation about exploring Métis kinship roles, more specifically, Aunties. The project has resulted in a furthering of Métis kinship from a women's perspective. By gathering as Métis women and listening to each other, we have revalued women's ways of knowing and doing. This has helped us to see the value of research from Métis women's perspectives, and to build on the strengths of existing community wellness practices.

The women expressed the importance of learning about Métis adoption practices, traditional songs and food practices, ways in which Aunties take care of themselves, the impact of intermarriage on our communities, and Métis laws and ethics of visiting. We recognize as a result of this preliminary research that it is quite likely that Aunties have played a significant role in the wellbeing of our Métis families and communities, but that more research is needed to better understand the life stage roles and responsibilities of Aunties.

Creative and ceremonial research is designed to slow us down, and to allow us time to reflect and be grateful for the beautiful Métis women in our lives, past and present. In co-writing this article, we (Cindy and Leah) came together in a comfortable environment for a writing retreat that was detached from daily responsibilities. We asked our community of women to pray for us to do things in a good way. We enlisted two local St. Louis Elders to examine our presentation of historical and contemporary community context for accuracy. Taking this time was essential to ensure that we continue to live the methodology of reflexivity, prayer, visiting, and centring ourselves in a spirit of relation with the Métis community.

We recognize the importance of multiple-use spaces from the beginning of the project to the writing of this article—the land, the community space, our home spaces, and the retreat space. Space is a co-creator in this process because when we learn-by-doing, we draw strength from our environment. Our Métis-specific methodology and pedagogy gave voice to Métis women, and assisted us creatively—visually and through words—to learn and share about our kinship roles and responsibilities as Métis Aunties and nieces. Our collaborative research as Métis women reflects a methodology that respects our unique gifts, histories, and creative epistemologies. Our hope is to continue to create spaces for sharing Métis women's knowledge and caring ways in order to inform efforts in community-building, health, and wellness for our families and communities.

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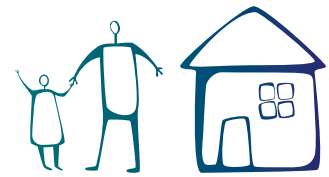
Moving Towards a Language Nest: Stories and Insights from nk̓maplqs

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Abstract

A language nest is an early language learning program for young children from infancy to five years of age. Language nests have the potential to reconnect young Indigenous children to their languages and cultures within the heart of their communities. The first author, a settler scholar and mother and grandmother of language nest children, shares some insights and experiences from her doctoral research with community members who have been involved in developing a language nest in nk̓maplqs, the Head of the Lake Okanagan Indian Band community in Vernon, British Columbia. The second author, an Okanagan Indian Band community member and Language and Culture Lead for her community, describes the language nest in the present day. We offer these stories and words of language nest development to encourage other Indigenous communities who are engaged in their own journeys of reclamation.[1] [2]

Keywords: Indigenous language revitalization, language nests, Indigenous families.

Introduction

In many regions of the world, Indigenous early language learning programs for children from birth to five years of age are commonly known as *language nests* (First Peoples' Cultural Council [FPCC], 2014). Language nests have been well established in New Zealand and Hawai'i since the 1980s. By contrast, in British Columbia (BC) in Canada, the concept is not commonly known and in 2018 there were just 10 language nest programs serving 119 children across 203 communities (FPCC, 2018). Over the past 10 years, we have been involved in supporting the development of a language nest in one of these communities in nk̓maplqs in Syilx Okanagan territory in the interior of BC. In keeping with Syilx Okanagan ways, we begin by sharing who we are and our kinship relationships to the nk̓maplqs community.

Danielle: way̓ x̌ast sx̌lx̌alt, iskʷíst x̌iyálnxʷ. kn tí̓ nk̓maplqs ul kn səxʷkʷuím kl nsilxcn. inmistm twi Albert Saddleman, naʔl mistm Gene Joe, naʔl intum Mabel Saddleman, naʔl Sandra Saddleman. Hello, my Okanagan name translates to Sun, and my English name is Danielle Saddleman. I am from the northern end of Okanagan Lake, and a member of the Okanagan Indian Band. My father is the late Chief Albert Saddleman, and my mother is Mabel Saddleman. I come from a blended family, and my co-parents are Sandra Saddleman and Gene Joe. My partner is Shane Miller, and we have three beautiful children.

For the past year, I have worked as the Language and Culture Lead for my community. Prior to this I worked for four years as a Coordinator for our Language Nest. My 13-year-old son attended our language nest when he was a baby in the Infant/Toddler room at our daycare, and later when he was five years old. Both of my children attended nk̓maplqs i snmamayatn ikl sqilxwtet, the Okanagan Indian Band's Cultural Immersion elementary school from Grades 1 to 7. In Grade≈7, both of my children shared their language with the language nest program through our school Buddy Program. My son continues to take language in the public high school in town and he continues to be mentored in the language and culture in his role as a Language and Culture Youth Worker in our community. As a family, we continue to encourage using and having fun with the language in our home on a daily basis.

Over the past five years, I have been harvesting local foods, plants, and medicines. I first began working for my community as a Cultural Assistant to support our traditional foods program. I have continued this work in my roles at the language nest and as a Language and Culture Lead. We harvest our foods in the spring and summer months and share the food with our children in the language nest. Being on the land and harvesting, I am reminded of and I am grateful for the Four Food Chiefs: Chief skmxist, Black Bear; Chief siyaʔ, Saskatoon Berry; Chief spiƛ̓əm, Bitterroot; and Chief ntitiyix, Spring Salmon.

I have always been inspired by our sqilxʷ[3] ways, and even more so after attending the University of British Columbia Okanagan, where I obtained an undergraduate degree in Indigenous Studies and

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3 Sqilxʷ means human in the nsyilxcən language. Cohen (2001) has also described the conceptual meaning of sqilxʷ as "the

History. While there, I had the opportunity to learn from three local sqilxʷ scholars, Dr. Jeannette Armstrong, Dr. Bill Cohen, and Dr. Marlowe Sam, whose teachings widened and deepened my lens on our sqilxʷ worldviews. While taking their courses, I learned the oral story *How Food Was Given*, and the knowledge of the teachings that are embedded in the story. The story tells how Black Bear, Chief for all creatures on the land, gave his life for the coming People.

> All of Creation gathered and sang songs to bring him back to life. That was how they helped heal each other in the world. They all took turns singing, but the bear did not come back to life. Finally, it came to Fly. He sang, "You laid your body down. You laid your life down." His song was powerful. Bear came back to life. (Okanagan Tribal Council, 2004)[4]

How Food Was Given is one of my favourite captikʷł (oral stories). It reminds me, in my work as Language and Cultural Lead, that we all have gifts, skills, and perspectives, and that all of our voices are needed for us to help one another. The story also reminds me of our natural laws and responsibilities as Syilx peoples to the tmixʷ[5]. As a passionate leader for language and culture, I will continue to learn and to pass on the teachings to our future generations.

Natalie: wayʾ x̌ast sx̌lx̌alt, iskʷíst Natalie Chambers. Hello, my name is Natalie Chambers. I am a first-generation immigrant and a settler scholar. I have lived in Syilx communities with my partner, Syilx educator Bill Cohen, and our blended family for the past 19 years. I am a parent of two sons who have attended language nest programs in nk̓maplqs. My 13-year-old son attended the language nest for two years when he was a baby in the Infant/Toddler room in the community daycare, and when he was in kindergarten he attended a small stand-alone nest that was operated for six months in a trailer beside the elementary school. Now that he is in Grade 7 at nk̓maplqs i snmamayatn ikl sqilxwtet, the Okanagan Indian Band's Cultural Immersion elementary school, he visits the language nest to share stories and to play in the language with the younger children as a part of the Buddy Program. My 10-year-old attended the language nest for two years between the ages of three and five when the program began operating out of its present location in a small home in the community.

In 2009, I was in the first year of my doctoral studies when the first language nest program in Snc'c'amalta?tn Early Childhood Education Centre ended prematurely. I was disappointed that our youngest child, who had just been born, would not have the opportunity to be immersed in the language of fluent Elders during his early years. I wanted to learn more about language nests in Canada, but at that time the only information that I could find was in Dr. Onowa McIvor's master's thesis (2005). I wanted to learn how language nest programs feel, sound, and look through the eyes of fund administrators, language nest coordinators, fluent Elders, nest staff, and parents, so that

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dream in a spiral," and "the dream or vision unravelling, coming to be" (p. 141).

4   Dr. Jeannette Armstrong included a translation of the oral story told by Martin Louie, along with this children's book version by Okanagan Tribal Council, in her doctoral dissertation on Syilx Okanagan oraliture (2009).

5   Armstrong (2009) stated that captikʷł expresses tmixʷ as "life-force" (p. 2).

perhaps we could develop another language nest in the community. It was for this reason that I decided to focus my doctoral research on Indigenous language nests in the early years of program development and in children's earliest years of life.

In the spring of 2012, I received approval from the Chief and Council of the Okanagan Indian Band and the Research Ethics Review Board at the University of British Columbia Okanagan to start my research. Over the next two years, I engaged community members in conversations about their visions for a language nest, and their perspectives on the successes, challenges, promising practices, and lessons learned in program development. All of the participants included in this paper were contacted to confirm their continuing consent in my work. I am thankful for all of the encouragement and time that was shared by each and every person who contributed to my doctoral research, and I share their voices and perspectives here so that other communities may benefit from their insights and experiences.

In the present day, I continue to support fund development for our language nest. In 2018, our grandson was the first baby to attend the language nest program. His mom visited the language nest during her pregnancy, and over the next few months, his baby brother will join the nest. Having grandchildren in the language nest gives me a new lens through which to appreciate this program, and the dedication and work of everyone whose contributions have made it what it is today. limləmt.

The Emergence of the Language Nests in the Interior of British Columbia

The Syilx Nation is made up of seven communities in Canada and one in northern Washington in the United States (Okanagan Nation Alliance [ONA], 2018). nsyilxcən, an Interior Salish language, is the language of the Syilx peoples. According to the First Peoples' Cultural Council's (FPCC) Framework for Defining and Measuring Language Vitality, nsyilxcən is "severely endangered" (FPCC, 2014, p. 14). This criterion describes languages that are "very rarely/never learned as mother tongue by children," are primarily "spoken as mother tongue by the grandparent generation and up," and are "not normally spoken by adults and children except for those who are learning" (FPCC, 2014, p. 14). In 2020, the youngest fluent speaker of nsyilxcən is in the 60+ age range (Ragoonaden et al., 2009).

Severe or critically endangered languages correspond with Stages 5 to 8 of Fishman's Reversing Language Shift (RLS) and the Graded Intergenerational Dislocation Scale (GIDS) (Hinton, 2001). According to Fishman (1998), reversing language shift at these stages of endangerment requires a focus on language acquisition in schools, intergenerational home-family-neighbourhood transmission, adult acquisition, and, in some cases, language reconstruction. In British Columbia, developing an Indigenous intergenerational home-based total immersion language nest for young children led by fluent speakers and adult learners invariably entails attempting all of Fishman's suggested activities simultaneously.

Developing a language nest presents a significant number of challenges for endangered language communities who have very few remaining fluent speakers. To put this in the context of the Syilx Nation, the number of fluent speakers of nsyilxcən has dramatically decreased by 52% in the past eight years (FPCC, 2018). In 2018, the seven communities in BC reported that there were just 132 fluent speakers remaining (FPCC, 2018), which is a sharp decline from the 194 fluent speakers reported in 2014 (FPCC, 2014), and 255 in 2010. In 2018, fluent speakers comprised 2.3%, semi-speakers 1.1%, and active learners 12.2% of the total reported population of 5,717 (FPCC, 2018).

In the present day, there are now three language nests in the eight Syilx communities in BC and the United States. Since 2012, the nk̓maplqs language nest has been located in a small home in the community and serves 10 children. Prior to this, two language nest projects ran from 2011-2012 and 2007-2009. In Spokane, Washington, Sƛ̓x̌atkʷ Nsəlx̌čin̓ Sn̓ma?máya?tn̓ (Salish School of Spokane) opened its doors in September 2010 with six students. The program now serves 63 students, aged 1 to 17 years. The lead founder is n?iy̓síta?kʷ (LaRae Wiley – snˤay̓čkstx), and her co-founders were Danica Parkin (snˤay̓čkstx), Stevey Seymour (snˤay̓čkstx), Michelle Wiley-Bunting (snˤay̓čkstx), and the late Trina Ray (sm!qmix; ˤAn̓n̓ Christopher Parkin, personal communication, February 2020). In 2019, Krista Lindley and

s?ímla?xʷ (Michelle Johnson) also opened a language nest in the Westbank First Nation community that serves a group of four children of adult language learners (st'a7qwalqs Hailey Causton, personal communication, February 2020). In addition to these three language nest programs, young children in the seven communities in BC are receiving approximately four hours of language instruction per week through early childhood education programs and Head Start (FPCC, 2018).

The language nest in nk̓maplqs was inspired by Kyé7e̓s House language nest in the Secwépemc Nation in Adams Lake, BC and the Te Kōhanga Reo in New Zealand. Dr. Kathryn Michel (2012) decided to move home to her community in Adams Lake to develop a language nest after she witnessed a delegation of Māori share the successes of Te Kōhanga Reo at a conference in Vancouver, BC. She founded the Secwépemc Ka language nest in 1987 with Dr. Janice Dick Billy. The nest recently changed its name after participating nest children repeatedly referred to the program as Kyé7e̓s House (Kathryn Michel, personal communication, February 2020). In the present day, Kyé7e̓s House is the longest running language nest program in BC.

Although there are now language nests all over the world, the majority of the published literature on language nest development has emerged from the Te Kōhanga Reo in New Zealand (Fleras, 1987; Hohepa & Smith, 1982; King, 2001; Lee et al., 2013; McClutchie, 2007; Reedy, 2000; Ritchie & Rau, 2006; Stiles, 1997) and Pūnana Leo in Hawai'i (Cowell, 2012; Iokepa-Guerrero & de France, 2007; Kimura, n.d.; Stiles, 1997; Wilson & Kamana, 2008; Yamauchi & Ceppi, 2006). Both movements began in the 1980s (Chambers, 2015).

The Māori language is the only Indigenous language in New Zealand. When a National Māori Language Survey conducted in the 1970s reported that there were just 70,000 remaining fluent Māori speakers, the Te Kōhanga Reo concept was developed shortly afterwards in response to the growing awareness that the language was in decline and that the majority of fluent speakers were between the ages of 40 to 80 (King, 2001). Over the next 15 years, the movement exploded and 767 language nest programs were developed in home environments, large daycare centres, and other spaces (King, 2001). By 2001, Te Kōhanga Reo was reported to be "the most popular early-childhood care option for Māori children" (King, 2001, p. 122).

Just one generation following the start of the Te Kōhanga Reo movement, the evidence suggests that the total immersion language nests and schools have been successful in arresting the decline of the Māori language (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). In the 2001 Survey on the Health of the Māori Language, higher proficiency language skills were more common among the youngest age group, who ranged in age from 15 to 24 years, than the next group, aged 24 to 34 years (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). More recently, the Māori language appears to be undergoing "a state of renewed decline" (p. 6) as the number of children attending Te Kōhanga Reo has reportedly declined by one third, and the number of fluent speakers has dropped to 3% of the population (Te Puni Kōkiri Ministry of Māori Development, 2018). Consequently, the Māori language is at Stage 6b on Fishman's graded scale and is still considered to be in trouble (Te Puni Kōkiri Ministry of Māori Development, 2018).

In 1987, Fleras commented on the potential for the language nest concept to be replicated in Canada "were more aboriginal leaders aware of this experiment in language retention" (p. 23). Indeed, Dr. Kathryn Michel noted a lack of awareness of the language nest model as a barrier in her initial efforts to develop Kyé7e̓s House in Adams Lake over 30 years ago (Chambers, 2015). However, many other challenges exist in efforts to explore Māori and Hawaiian language revitalization movements in Indigenous communities in North America. In particular, Māori and Hawaiian peoples comprise a significant proportion of the population in the respective colonial nation states of New Zealand and the United States. As a result they have greater access to government representation, funding, resources, and higher numbers of fluent speakers than many Indigenous endangered language communities across Canada and the mainland United States (Cowell, 2012; Stiles, 1997).

British Columbia is home to 203 Indigenous communities and 34 Indigenous languages (FPCC, 2018). In 2007, the FPCC, a First Nations-run Crown corporation in BC, launched a competitive multi-year funding opportunity to support the development of language nest programs. Informed by the successes of Te Kōhanga Reo in New Zealand and Pūnana Leo in Hawai'i, the ambitious goal of the new Pre-School Language Nest funding program was for participating nests in BC to reach 100% full immersion within one year of operations. FPCC launched their pilot program by funding seven language nest projects, one of which was for a pilot in the Infant/Toddler and Head Start rooms in Snc'c'amala?tn Early Childhood Education Centre in nk̓maplqs. Seven years later, in 2014, only three additional language nests were funded, bringing the total of funded programs to 10. By 2018,

the number of participating programs grew to 21 nests. In 2019, increased federal and provincial government funding for Indigenous language revitalization doubled FPCC's funding capacity and they planned to support an additional 19 language nests. However, only 33 communities applied for the funding. The slow uptake in applications for the Pre-School Language Nest funding stream suggested that communities may have required more time to engage in strategic planning and to build the capacity for program delivery (A. Parker, personal communication, June 21, 2019). The sheer diversity of Indigenous languages in BC presents unique challenges related to "economies of scale" (Cowell, 2012, p. 176), including limited access to economic infrastructure and human resources.

Instead of being deterred by these many challenges, it may benefit small endangered language communities to consider language nest development from a more holistic perspective in relation to community wellbeing, resilience, and cultural continuity. Indeed, in BC the development of a language nests involves reclaiming intergenerational home, family, and community relationships that have been deliberately disrupted by four generations of colonial policies that were intended to separate children from the heart of their kinship networks and knowledge systems.

Looking Back, Looking Forwards in nk̓maplqs

The roles and responsibilities of Syilx families and communities in caring for children have shifted dramatically over the past seven generations in the Syilx Nation. In the mid 1800s, the arrival of the fur trade and the gold rush in the Interior region brought socio-economic and political changes, followed by the smallpox epidemic that devastated Syilx families and communities. In the 1880s, extended families began moving out of large pit houses into smaller log cabins (ONA, 2014). Nonetheless, families remained large, with couples having eight to 12 children, and siblings and cousins of all ages would gather in the homes of grandparents, aunties, uncles, and other older family members, while their younger parents worked to support their families (ONA, 2018).

In the 1920s, more dramatic changes began to impact Syilx family and kinship relationships when the Canadian government mandated the removal of children from their families and transported them across large distances to spend nine to 12 months of the year at St. Eugene Residential School in Cranbrook or Kamloops Indian Residential School (KIRS) in Kamloops. Three or four generations of Syilx children attended the Indian residential schools where they were prohibited from speaking their mother tongue and punished if they were caught doing. Many survivors have shared their experiences of mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual abuse at the schools (Baptiste, 2000; ONA, 2018; SCES, 2000). Fifty survivors and intergenerational survivors of St. Eugene and KIRS have shared their testimonies in *Take the Indian Out of the Child: Syilx Okanagan Experiences in the Violent and Forced Assimilation of Indian Residential Schools*, a book that was written and published by the Okanagan Nation Alliance to ensure that "the darkest chapter in our collective story [will be] rooted in our Syilx collective memory" (ONA, 2018, p. 23). Some survivors also shared their stories in *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School,* published by Secwépemc Cultural Education Society (2000).

By the 1950s, the Indian residential school system began to lose the support of senior officials in Indian Affairs who considered continued operations to be too costly given the failure of the schools to achieve the complete erasure of language and cultural identity and to facilitate assimilation into Canadian society (Miller, 2001). As a result, Indian Affairs was tasked with responding to the recommendations of a special joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate to integrate children with Indian status into the public school system (Miller, 2001; Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], 2015). These developments led the Department of Indian Affairs to temporarily expand the Indian day school system (TRC, 2015). Similar to Indian residential school policies, parents who refused to send their children to the day schools were penalized (ONA, 2018). Indigenous languages were also prohibited in the day schools and many families stopped speaking nsyilxcən to their children as a way to protect them (ONA, 2018). With the 1960s, a new wave of child abductions brought Syilx children into the child welfare system. In the 1970s, St. Eugene and KIRS finally closed their doors. However, by this time many families were "heartbroken for losing their reason for living" (p. 35) and the schools had created destructive personal cycles and relationships within families and communities (ONA, 2018).

In sharing this dark history, it is important to remember the resilience and resistance of Syilx peoples. Some families managed to keep their children out of the Indian residential and day school systems, and against all odds, to raise their children in the language. Syilx scholar Cohen (2001) reminded us that "Indigenous reality is one of resilience, refusal to disappear; It is a reflection of the strength and beauty of peoples who have lived here since humans existed on this land, and will continue to be so" (p. 147).

In the 1990s, the roles of older extended family members shifted once again with the launch of the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative that created 6,000 new childcare spaces in Indigenous communities (Greenwood et al., 2007). The development of early childhood education centres and daycares in Indigenous communities shifted the care of young children from older men and women to classroom spaces where infants, toddlers, and young children are separated by age group, and are cared for by a younger generation of adults, often younger women (Chambers, 2014). In 1998, the Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve (Head Start) program in British Columbia was implemented (Terbasket & Greenwood, 2007). The Head Start program was based on six program components that were intended to reclaim a holistic approach to early learning for Indigenous children including "culture and language, education, health promotion, nutrition, parent and family involvement, and social support" (Terbasket & Greenwood, 2007, p. 75). Cohen (2001) has described the reclaiming of children's education by Syilx peoples as "an act of love" (p. 144) that creates hope for the survival of sqəlxʷɬcawt or *the Indian way*, "the dream way in a spiral way, the coming to pass or realization of dreams or visions" (p. 144). Indeed, in the 1990s, the development of the Snc'c'amalaʔtn Early Childhood Education Centre and the Aboriginal Head Start program were bold acts of love and reclamation.

Developing a Language Nest in nk̓maplqs: The Early Years

A Language Nest in the Daycare

When Syilx educator Bill Cohen visited the Te Kōhanga Reo in Aotearoa as a part of his Master's in Education program at Simon Fraser University, he noted the wide diversity of approaches that were taken to program delivery.

> Some of them were like our daycare, except the whole staff was speaking in immersion. Some of them were in people's garages with a little playground outside. Some were little language nests where the staff was not fluent but they were doing their best. (B. Cohen, personal communication, August 27, 2013 in Chambers, 2014, p. 103)

Visiting Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori (Total Immersion Schools) and Chief Atahm School and learning about the successes of Indigenous language renewal initiatives sparked Cohen's dream of developing language immersion schooling in his home community in nk̓maplqs.

Ramona Wilson, a Syilx early childhood educator who worked in the Snc'c'amalaʔtn Daycare in nk̓maplqs, had a similar experience after she visited the Kyé7eʼs House language nest in Adams Lake, BC (Chambers, 2014). In 2007, FPCC's launch of the Pre-School Language Nest funding program created an opportunity to start a language nest, and Cohen wrote a proposal for the Okanagan Indian Band to support a pilot language nest project in the Infant/Toddler room in which Wilson was a supervisor. The project had the full support of the manager, Lorraine Ladan, who had also visited the Kyé7eʼs House language nest in Adams Lake.

Full language immersion turned out to be an incredibly challenging and overambitious vision for everyone involved in Snc'c'amalaʔtn Early Education Childhood Centre. The early childhood educators who staffed the program were busy caring for the children, and the additional expectation that they would learn nsyilxcən alongside the children while doing their jobs was an overwhelming and unrealistic goal. The large physical space and large numbers of children, combined with supporting the participation of older fluent Elders with health and mobility challenges, created obstacles that were difficult to navigate. Consequently, after two years of dedicated efforts, Laden made the very difficult decision to inform FPCC that they would not continue with the project.

A Kindergarten Language Nest

In spring 2010, the author (Chambers) was one amongst a group of parents who applied to FPCC for funding to create a stand-alone language nest project in nk̓maplqs. Late in August 2011, FPCC informed us that a small amount of funding had become available to support us to run a language nest project until March 2012. Suddenly our small group of nest advocates were tasked with finding a space in which to run a nest, and individuals who were available to work for just five months. Seeking inspiration and ideas on how to move forward, a small group of us visited Kyé7eʼs House language nest.

Since a whole year had lapsed between the original application and the funding opportunity, the children of parents who had supported the nest proposal were already attending kindergarten by the time the program opened its doors in November 2011. Our children were five years old and had fully developed verbal skills in English. The rapid start up and delivery of the program resulted in the team being unsure of the program goals and their roles and responsibilities, and had the unfortunate effect of negatively impacting the kindergarten program (Chambers, 2014).

A portable classroom on the school grounds next to nk̓maplqs i snmamayatn ikl sqilxwtet Cultural Immersion School was the only physical space that was available to run the nest project. Since funding was so limited, there was no time for team meetings or lesson planning, and no adult language learning supports were available for staff. As the coordinator, Rachel Marchand drew from her training in early childhood education to create a program that would support our kindergarten-aged children to adjust to the partial language immersion program at the Cultural Immersion School and to become familiar with the school setting (Chambers, 2014). To support this goal, Marchand arranged for school *buddies* from nk̓maplqs i snmamayatn ikl sqilxwtet Cultural Immersion School to pair up with and mentor the young children during their play time (Chambers, 2014).

Activities were led primarily by younger workers, with the fluent Elders in a support role that entailed them sharing words and phrases with staff and correcting their pronunciation. Within the four months that the project ran, all three staff members described the children learning and speaking the language, growing in confidence, and feeling excited about attending the program. The younger women engaged the children in activities that were enjoyable and stimulating, such as storytelling, circle time, and games. Language nest worker sʔímlaʔxʷ Dr. Michele K. Johnson depicted her storytelling circle in a drawing that is shared below (Figure 1).

Figure 1

x̌astsalx lʔ captikʷt : snk̓lip naʔt kakw̓p

Note. Illustration courtesy of sʔímlaʔxʷ Dr. Michele K. Johnson (Chambers, 2014).

Goals for the program were to maintain total immersion in the language for the duration of the three-hour sessions, to use nsyilxcən names for children, staff, and fluent Elders in the nest, to support the children to learn more language, and to prepare the children to transition to the nk̓maplqs i snmamayatn ikl sqilxwtet Cultural Immersion School (Chambers, 2014). These ambitious goals were accomplished within four months as a result of the commitment and hard work of the staff.

At Home in the Language

Since 2012, the language nest has operated in a small rental house in the community that looks and feels like a regular home. Operating the nest in a homelike environment has enhanced the connections between the Elders and the children. In 2013-2014, the nest program consultant, Eric Mitchell, noticed that having fun, laughing, and singing with the children in the language nest had encouraged the Elders to "become gentle again" (Chambers, 2014, p. 126). The Elders also described enjoying their work in the nest. Fluent Elder k'i'səmtkʷ Pauline Archachan described being in the nest as good work: "It's a lot of work. It's good work. We feel good, we get tired, but we feel good after we leave from here. I do anyway. We have a good time with the kids" (personal communication, October 14, 2013 in Chambers, 2014, p. 125). Elders and staff also observed the children increasing in confidence, learning to relax, and beginning to understand the language within just a few months of going to the nest (Chambers, 2014).

In the present day, the language nest in nk̓maplqs operates three full days a week. Five infants and toddlers attend in the mornings, five preschool- and kindergarten-aged children attend in the afternoons. Offering two half-day sessions enables us to deliver a program to 10 children, as we have learned the children become disruptive and do not listen to the Elders and staff when there are more than five in one session. This arrangement also creates an opportunity to offer more advanced language and activities to the preschool and kindergarten children.

The language nest in nk̓maplqs is modeled on the extended family and the intergenerational sharing of language and culture. Over the past few years, our nest team has been comprised of fluent Elders, silent speakers[6] of a middle generation, younger workers, and sometimes, youth workers who are either alumni from nk̓maplqs i snmamayatn ikl sqilxwtet Cultural Immersion School or other youth from the community who know their language. We also continue to implement a program to bring children from nk̓maplqs i snmamayatn ikl sqilxwtet Cultural Immersion School to the nest to share their language through stories, drumming, and Total Physical Response activities.

The language nest home includes comfortable chairs for our Elders and a large table where the Elders eat with the children at meal times. The children engage in activities with the Elders during the sessions, and the Elders like to tell stories and talk to the children in fluent nsyilxcən. The nest workers are all adult language learners, and they work with the Elders to sing songs, do circle time, Total Physical Response activities, stretch, and do arts and crafts. The children also go outside every day.

Since 2015, the language nest has had multi-year funding which has enabled us to transition from the development phase into a stable and sustainable program. We provide adult language classes to nest workers and families, along with a supper and child minding to make it more accessible for them to attend. For those who cannot make it to class, we also offer online language learning.

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6   The FPCC describes a Silent Speaker as "someone who has a good understanding of a language but does not speak it" (Gessner, 2017, p. 2).

Our program makes an enormous effort to connect with the larger community. Our annual Baby Welcoming Ceremony enables us to reach out to new parents. We are also working with our Elders to create a Syilx name giving ceremony for the community. This is an opportunity to nurture relationships with the Elders and the younger generations, and to keep the old Syilx Okanagan names alive into the future.

Whenever possible, we support and inspire our staff and fluent Elders by creating opportunities for professional development. Over the years, the language nest team has traveled to many places, including the Salish School of Spokane in Washington and the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation on the West Coast of BC. These experiences were very inspiring for everyone involved as we were able to share our stories, language and culture, and our successes, challenges, and promising practices with one another. Opportunities such as this remind us that we are not alone on this revitalization journey.

Conclusions

Over the past eight years, the Language Nest program in nk̓maplqs has grown into a team of 17 dedicated and passionate staff and Elders who deliver a broad range of language and cultural programs. Our team includes a Language and Culture Lead, a Language Nest Coordinator, three Fluent Elders, two Language Nest workers, a Youth and an Adult Language Instructor and two Co-Teachers, two Language Technicians, and five Youth Workers. The enhanced capacity of our team means that we are now moving forward with supporting our youth and adult language learners, including our silent speakers, families of our nest children, and our youth alumni of nk̓maplqs i snmamayatn ikl sqilxwtet, the Okanagan Indian Band's Cultural Immersion elementary school. We are also moving forward with our long-term goal to provide our language workers with increased opportunities to progress in their own language learning. They currently receive two to three hours of Paul Creek Curriculum language instruction per week, with a goal of this increasing to four to six hours in the future. These new initiatives will support our nest children to use their language outside of the nest program in their homes and in the community. Building the capacity for intergenerational transmission of language in our homes, families, and communities means providing safe spaces and many avenues for learning and practicing language.

Our experiences of language nest development demonstrate Navarro's (2008) assertion that "there is no clearly defined roadmap to follow" (p. 155) when it comes to language immersion.

> Every tribe's native language situation is unique and what works for one group may not work for another. Simply stated, there is no one fool-proof method ... There are no pedagogical materials ready for purchase or trained language instructors who know how to create curriculum that is useful for teaching children a new language ... You start from scratch and work from there. You have to be creative and willing to adapt to whatever situation you find yourself in. Above all, one must be completely devoted. (Navarro, 2008, p. 155)

Indeed, we have been overcoming challenges, learning lessons, and moving towards a language nest since the first nest project in 2007.

In the early years of language nest development in nk̓maplqs, there was very little published research on language nests in BC or Canada. We were fortunate to receive guidance from Dr. Kathryn Michel, who generously hosted multiple visits to Kyé7e's House and answered many questions by e-mail and telephone. In addition, Language Program Coordinators at FPCC provided continued support and encouragement through site visits, e-mail correspondence, and telephone discussions. FPCC has since developed a *Language Nest Handbook* (2014), created a media resource with Dr Kathryn Michel (2014), hosted annual Language Nest training workshops, and, more recently, hired Language Nest Coaches to provide increased direct support.

Newer language nest programs have access to a marked increase in the academic literature on language nests. Researchers working in and with language nests have made many resources available to support language nest development in BC and Canada, including Dr. Kathryn Michel's doctoral research on the development of Chief Atahm School (Michel, 2012), as well as research on Tahltan language nests (Edōsi, 2012; Edōsi & Bourquin, 2016; Edōsi et al., 2018; Morris, 2017, 2018), Secwépemc language resource development in Little Fawn Nursery (Arnouse, 2007), case studies on SENĆOŦEN and Mohawk nests (Okura, 2017), and, more recently, research on language acquisition in Haida language nests (K'uyáang Young, 2019). On a global scale, research is now available on language nests in Estonia (Brown & Faster, 2019) and Finland (Okura, 2017; Olthuis et al., 2013). By sharing our own stories of language nest development in nk̓maplqs, we hope to contribute to this growing body of literature and to encourage other communities to keep moving forward on their own journeys of reclamation, reconnection, and renewal.
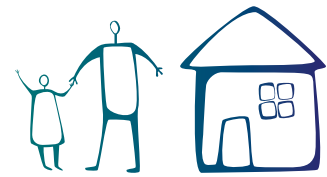
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Cree Relationship Mapping:
nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk – How We Are Related

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Abstract

nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk (how we are related) is a relationship mapping resource based in the *nêhiyaw* (Cree) language and worldview. The relationship map was developed incrementally through a five-year process of connecting *nêhiyaw* worldviews of child and family development with the wisdom and teachings from *nêhiyaw* knowledge-holders. Over time, in ceremony and with many consultations with wisdom-keepers, the authors began connecting the *nêhiyaw* teachings into a resource that would allow (mostly non-Indigenous) human service providers working with *nêhiyaw* children, families, and communities a means to understand and honour the relational worldview and teachings of the *nêhiyaw* people. This kinship map came to include *nêhiyaw* kinship terms and teachings on *wâhkomitowin* (all relations) in order to recognize all the sacred roles and responsibilities of family and community. In addition, the vital role of *isîhcikewin* (ceremony) and the Turtle Lodge Teachings (*nêhiyaw* stages of individual, family, and community development) became embedded within this resource, along with the foundational teachings that create balance and wellbeing that enable one to live *miyo pimâtisiwin* (the good life).

Keywords: wâhkohtowin, kinship, Indigenous child welfare

Introduction

What you are about to read here is not an article about "research" in the way the research process is generally understood within the context of mainstream academia or as portrayed in many research publications. The concepts and teachings shared here formed much of the foundation of *nêhiyaw* family and community relationships long before the first settlers arrived. We are more engaged in a process of re-vealing rather than re-searching.

In our work in relationship mapping, we have had two primary goals. Our first goal has been to challenge, and hopefully replace, Western-based concepts of child development and Western-based definitions of children and families with *nêhiyaw* teachings, language, and ceremonies that reflect a very different understanding of children and their journey in this world. Western-based assessment tools, when used as default assessment tools with Indigenous children and families, offer minimal cultural insights, blunt the potential to build healthy therapeutic relationships, and are, in many ways, a continuation of the process of colonization.

Our second goal has been to bring to the forefront the pre-contact *nêhiyaw* teachings and worldviews of children and families, and to support the understanding and use of those teachings in the services and supports that are offered to *nêhiyaw* families and children today. In the following pages, we will first share many of the fundamental teachings, followed by an exploration of language and its importance, and conclude with drawing the teachings, learnings, and concepts together into a model that reflects those connections and worldviews. Our intent is only to share the learnings that were shared with us–in the hope that *nêhiyaw* children, families, and communities can, in this one small area, encounter service providers that understand, honour, and incorporate distinct *nêhiyaw* worldviews and teachings into their practice.

The purpose of *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk* is to share foundational teachings on kinship, community, ceremony, development, and wellbeing in a method that is transferable to practice. The intention is to create a culturally appropriate and teaching-based process that supports the provision of culturally relevant supports and practice.

Kinship and Background

An emerging practice in Alberta Children's Services is the inclusion and support of kinship relationships throughout a family's involvement with child welfare. While the term *kinship* has often been understood as only connected to blood relatives, child welfare, in connection with the teachings and training provided in the model shared here, has begun to extend this definition beyond biological ties and to recognize Indigenous families' broad social and relational networks (Geen, 2004; Kang, 2007; McHugh, 2009). During the initial child welfare assessment, kinship is prioritized in order to identify both informal resources and existing natural supports within family systems as a means to identify various interventions (Garwood & Williams, 2015; Leon et al., 2016; McHugh, 2009). If out-

of-home placement is determined to be necessary, direct kinship care is often explored first in order to enhance child wellbeing and preserve family connection (Garwood & Williams, 2015; Geen,2004; Kang, 2007; Leon et al., 2016; McHugh, 2009). When kinship placements are not viable, concurrent planning occurs with the intent of retaining family input (Garwood & Williams, 2015; Leon et al., 2016; McHugh, 2009). As a consequence of these practices, concepts of what constitutes *kinship* or *relationships* are becoming integral to child welfare.

The precedence of kinship within child welfare is highly associated with the intention of maintaining lifelong connection for children and their families. Western legal constructs of guardianship within child welfare legislation are being deconstructed and now encompass the importance of sustained lifelong connections to family and community (Stangeland & Walsh, 2013). Relationships sought through kinship have been understood, from a Western perspective, through Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory and Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development, where secure attachments formed in early childhood are linked to positive identity formation in adulthood (de Finneya & diTomasso, 2015; Leon et al., 2016; Lindstrom & Choate, 2016; McHugh, 2009; Simard, 2019; Stangeland & Walsh, 2013). Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological theory captured the linkage of kinship to wider social and community relationships that foster belonging and wellbeing (Leon et al., 2016; McHugh, 2009; Stangeland & Walsh, 2013).

For *nêhiyaw* children and families, the framework for creating and maintaining lifelong culturally based connections is held within the Turtle Lodge Teachings explored below. These cultural connections are established through relationships with the family, kinship relations, and the community in order to maintain culture and identity (Bennett, 2015).

The process for determining and evaluating kinship connections is typically facilitated through the use of a genogram. Those unfamiliar with the term *genogram* may be more familiar with the use of similar ancestry diagrams that diagrammatically link, most often, a male (represented by a square) to a female (represented by a circle) with a horizontal line between the two. Any children from that relationship are usually indicated by vertical lines descending from the horizontal line–again with squares and circles indicating gender. While this is admittedly a very simplistic description of a genogram, genograms have certainly gained traction in child welfare practice, with some suggesting that they are one of the most popular tools used by social workers when conducting family assessments (Dore, 2012).

The genogram was first used in family and individual therapy and was guided by family systems theory. Kerr and Bowen (1988) explained that Murray Bowen began using what he called the *family diagram*, which included all the important information about one generation on one page in order to assess and gain a better understanding of his patients. Later, Bowen wrote that the family diagram was incorrectly considered the same as genealogy and therefore termed the genogram (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). While similar to genograms, genealogy has historically been used to track blood relation-based rights, privileges, hierarchical ascendancy, and, more recently, for religious

reasons and family interest. In an effort to improve cultural understanding, social workers and other practitioners have developed other assessment tools as enhancements or alternatives to the genogram–for example, the ecomap (Hartman, 1978) and the cultural genogram (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1995; Warde, 2012). While these tools were adapted with good intentions, they maintain Eurocentric, nuclear definitions of family and subdue the vitality of culture (Lindstrom & Choate, 2016; Simard, 2019). The majority of these tools have been developed from a specific cultural reality focused on Western, commonly accepted concepts of positive family values and often unspoken and unrecognized ideological underpinnings of "nuclear" families and independent community.

The use of cultural genograms or ecomaps often becomes an attempt to impose Western ideologies on Indigenous families through a "cultural lens" that is seldom based within the depth of Indigenous knowledge and worldview. This is a stark replication of colonialism when Indigenous beliefs and values are relegated as secondary to dominant Western understandings of attachment, development, family, and community. An Indigenous understanding of family, relationships, responsibilities, and connection to community and ancestors is vastly different than what the genogram and other Western assessments are able to capture (Lindstrom & Choate, 2016; Simard, 2019). These assessments are simply not designed for the task.

Western concepts of guardianship, attachment, and psychosocial development are being deconstructed to create room and recognition for Indigenous teachings on parenting and child, family, and community development (Bennet, 2015; de Finney & diTomasso, 2015; Lindstrom & Choate, 2016; Simard, 2019; Stangeland & Walsh, 2013). When Indigenous language, ceremony, protocol, and teachings are understood as essential to the development of Indigenous children, families, and communities, then Indigenous teachings on kinship and child-raising become vital to ensuring their individual and communal health and wellbeing–all of which constitute an Indigenous understanding of lifelong connections. These relational connections are much more complex than commonly used Western familial concepts of connection, which are primarily based on bloodline. Within the *nêhiyaw* worldview, concepts of connection are based on the roles that are played within the life of the child, family, and community.

As such, it has been proposed that new approaches must be created to replace the genogram and find meaningful ways to assess and ensure cultural connections (Lindstrom & Choate, 2016). *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk,* a Cree relationship mapping resource based in the *nêhiyaw* (Cree) language and worldview, was created to address this need and provides a way of understanding and relating to Indigenous children, families, and communities all within an Indigenous worldview.

Our Beginning Journey …

As mentioned previously, the development of the mapping resource occurred over an extended period of approximately five years of direct work–and a lifetime of teachings. A team comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, instructors, ceremony-holders, language-speakers,

Elders, wisdom-holders, service providers, and community members have been engaged, over the past 20 years, in teaching and training primarily social workers in culturally based practice. Many culturally based resources have been developed by this team, with only one being the relationship mapping resource. All of the resources have been developed within ceremony, with protocol, as much as possible in the language, and with multiple revisions based on Elders' and community members' responses.

The concepts and teachings included in *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk* represent a cumulative journey of learning in ceremony, language, and through teachings and practice-based evidence. In a *nêhiyaw* world, the process of *kiskinohâmakewin* reflects that learning and doing are not separated—to know is to do. This aligns with the understanding that practice-based evidence in Indigenous knowledge systems is based on experiencing or doing the learning (Abe et al., 2018; Naquin, 2008).

This learning/doing process, *kiskinohâmakewin,* has had a strong influence on the approach our team uses to share *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk* with service providers. The training we provide on *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk* is facilitated by an Elder, in ceremony, through the language, using the same practice-based evidence that guided our team. While we appreciate the opportunity to share *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk* in written form in this article, it is strongly advised that these teachings be shared and experienced in ways that honour the practice of *kiskinohâmakewin.*

It is also important to acknowledge that the concepts within *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk* and this article provide a basic understanding of *nêhiyaw* teachings on kinship and child, family, and community development. As a relational society, a full understanding of relationships and protocols becomes very complex. As indicated earlier, *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk* is situated within the *nêhiyaw* world-view and language. As such, it is not transferable to all Indigenous ways of knowing. As the concepts and teachings shared are foundational, there may be equivalent or similar teachings within other Indigenous worldviews. Service providers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, are encouraged to adapt the use of *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk,* if possible, in ways that honour their specific community.

Language

Before introducing *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk,* it is crucial to discuss the impact of language. Indigenous teachings of parenting, kinship, and child, family, and community development are vastly different than Western understandings of these concepts. Beginning to understand this difference is dependent on experiencing the depth of meaning that is contained within the *nêhiyaw* language. All *nêhiyaw* teachings and values are embedded in the language—it is through the language that relationships and connections to spirit and identity are truly understood (Makokis et al., 2010). In the context of relationship mapping, the sacred roles and responsibilities associated with child raising can only be understood through *nêhiyaw* kinship terms. When describing *nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk,* a variety of *nêhiyaw* kinship terms will be used and the root meaning will be shared in an attempt to convey these spiritual roles and responsibilities.

The dominance of Western worldviews and, with that, the pervasiveness of the English language, often leads to *nêhiyaw* terms being translated to an English equivalent (Makokis et al., 2010). Again, this further replicates the process of colonization, as meaning is lost when we attempt to fit *nêhiyaw* concepts into a Western paradigm. There is no possible way to find a direct translation between English and *nêhiyaw* terms given the difference in worldviews. The *nêhiyaw* language is primarily verb-based and emphasizes connection and relationship, whereas the English language is primarily noun-based and creates individuality and separation (Makokis et al., 2010). In beginning to understand relationship terms, it is important to remember that these are *nêhiyaw* verbs (or job descriptions) and thus lose vital meaning when we attempt to translate Indigenous verbs into Western nouns.

The *nêhiyaw* kinship terms that will be shared are relational words that connect relationship roles to their specific responsibilities and purpose. As the *nêhiyaw* language is verb/connection/relationship-based, kinship connections are determined by the individual who fulfills that role. Another consequence of Western, noun-based worldviews and languages is that biological relationships are often prioritized and assessed. As noted earlier, a Western genogram focuses on biological relatives and minimizes non-biologically connected individuals who may play a significant role in a child's life (Lindstrom & Choate, 2016). It is crucial to understand that concepts such as "step"-relationships (step-son, step-mother, for example) are Western-based and again, they are a means for differentiation and separation. In the *nêhiyaw* language, there is no term for "step" relatives as the language instead privileges roles, connections, and relationships. The concept of *tâpâhkohtowin* recognizes that the community has a shared responsibility to raise children, especially when additional support is required. In relationship mapping, this allows the person who fulfills a significant parenting or relationship role in a child's life to be honoured, regardless of genetic connections.

Another fundamental difference between the Western world and the *nêhiyaw* world is that the *nêhiyaw* language does not have gender-based pronouns. Rather, *nêhiyaw* worldviews organize connection in terms of animate or inanimate, a difference that has fundamental implications for relationship roles and responsibilities. Position and connection are not based within or differentiated primarily by gender, rather it is the role that is provided in connection to the child that prioritizes the relationship. In other words, animate beings that create and provide love and caring for small traveling spirits are not distinguished so much by gender but more by role. English gender-based terms, such as aunt or uncle, would not be relevant or appropriate in this context. This suggests that genograms, which are partly based on gender constructs, are even more inappropriate and inadequate for assessing Indigenous families. An "aunt" or "uncle," in *nêhiyaw,* would be someone who performs a sacred child-raising role to nurture the spirit of an *awâsis* (described below). The actual *nêhiyaw* kinship terms include the connection of that specific relationship role to the child, family, and community and gender is indicated within the description of that relationship.

To emphasize, *nêhiyaw* relationship terms convey a job description and the focus is on the role, relationship, and connection–the action and the verb. For example, unlike Western conventional genograms and familial concepts, an *awâsis* may have many aunties or grandmothers who may or may not be blood-related–their connection is determined by how they fulfill those roles in the life of the child. In addition, something that may be considered inanimate in a Western world may be understood as being animate in an Indigenous world.

In *nêhiyaw,* the term *awâsis* is often interpreted to mean "child," however, embedded in this word is the root word *awa,* meaning animate, and the suffix *sis,* which indicates smaller version of the root word. Consequently, the concept *awâsis* more directly implies "a small animate spirit" or "a small spirit engaged in a human journey." These terms are further embedded in the *nêhiyaw* concept of good child raising or *miyo ohpikinâwasowin*, where *miyo* means good, *ohpiki* means to grow, and *awasow* means to warm oneself over a fire. All of these concepts reflect the spiritual role of raising children and how one warms their own spirit so they can then nurture the spiritual fire of the *awâsis*.

Relationship Words and Concepts

The relationship terms listed below encompass many teachings on the roles and responsibilities animate beings play in nurturing a child or a small travelling spirit. Because these terms are verb-oriented, relational, and descriptive, the true depth of their meaning cannot be fully developed in a written, translated context, and as such, this article conveys only a basic understanding of these relational concepts. Additionally, we hope the readers will try, as best as they can, to remember that these relationship terms are verbs that entail action and responsibility.

While we wish we could share these terms without resorting to the closest English equivalents, we understand that this is necessary to the learning and explanation process. As we explain these relationship terms, our intention is to relay them in ways that are, hopefully, reflective of their verb-based nature. Despite our best attempts, the differences between *nêhiyaw* and Western language and worldviews will ultimately cause us to explain verbs through the use of nouns.

awâsis
An *awâsis,* as noted earlier, is a child or rather "a small animate being," "a small travelling spirit," or "a small spirit engaged on a human journey."

nikâwiy
The relationship term *nikâwiy* refers to "my mother." This term honours a child's relationship to their birth mother and it recognizes the sacred role a child's mother holds in bringing them into the human world and giving them the gift of life.

nohtâwiy
nohtâwiy is the relationship term for "my father." Similar to above, this term honours a child's relationship to their birth father.

nikâwîs

The relationship term *nikâwîs* is derived from *nikâwiy* and the suffix *sis* indicates small, meaning "my little mother." This is an animate being who shares the same roles and responsibilities as the mother in nurturing and raising an *awâsis*. In English, this is understood as an aunt, or "my mother's sister," but in a *nêhiyaw* context, this would be whoever fulfills that nurturing "little mother" role in a child's life regardless of biological ties. If an *awâsis* has a step-mother or someone who fulfills this parenting role, they would also be considered a *nikâwîs*.

nohcâwîs

The relationship term *nohcâwîs* stems from *nohtâwiy* and again, the suffix *sis* indicates small meaning "my little father." This is an animate being who shares the same roles and responsibilities as the father in nurturing and raising an *awâsis*. In English, this is understood as an uncle, or "my father's brother," but in a *nêhiyaw* context, this would be whoever fulfills that nurturing "little father" role in a child's life regardless of biological ties. If an *awâsis* has a step-father or someone who fulfills this parenting role, they would also be considered a *nohcâwîs*.

nôhkôm

nôhkôm refers to "my grandmother" and this definition extends beyond "my mother or father's mother." It includes "my grandmother's sisters" or "my great aunts," "my great uncle's spouse," and any "older animate female being" in the community who fulfills the nurturing role of a grandmother.

nimosôm

nimosôm refers to "my grandfather" and again, this definition extends beyond "my father or mother's father." It includes "my grandfather's brothers" or "my great uncles," "my great aunt's spouse," and any "older animate male being" in the community who fulfills the nurturing role of a grandfather.

nisikos

The relationship term *nisikos* refers to "my father's sister" and "my mother's brother's wife" or "my mother's sister-in-law" and "my mother-in-law." A child's *nisikos* fulfills a different, but equally valid and cherished role than the *nikawîs* (little mother). The *nisikos* is responsible for disciplining a child when required so this does not impact a child's relationship with their *nikâwîs* (little mother).

nisis

The relationship term *nisis* refers to "my mother's brother" and "my mother's sister's husband" or "my mother's brother-in-law" and "my father-in-law." A child's *nisis* fulfills a different, but equally valid and cherished role from the *nohcâwîs* (little father). The *nisis* is responsible for disciplining a child when required so this does not impact a child's relationship with their *nohcâwîs* (little father).

wâhkomitowin

This refers to any community member or "any animate human being" who is instrumental to nurturing the *awâsis*. This relationship term is broad and could include anyone, even a

social worker, better defined in *nêhiyaw* as "a good relationship worker," who is pivotal to a child's growth and development.

wâhkotowin

This recognizes the relationship the *awâsis* has to the land and Mother Earth. It is important that a child remains connected to the land and the community from which they come. In a *nêhiyaw* universe, the land and Mother Earth are understood as being animate–and play a vital role in the health and nurturing of the *awâsis*.

isîhcikewin

This refers to ceremony, but the root word *isîhycike* means "to organize and arrange." This represents that ceremony is central to all aspects of the *nêhiyaw* way of life. Across the lifespan, there are many ceremonies that are integral to one's mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical wellbeing so they can experience *miyo pimâtisiwin* on their human journey.

The Seven Turtle Lodge Teachings

The Turtle Lodge Teachings are a *nêhiyaw* parallel to Western theories mentioned earlier. The *nêhiyaw* Turtle Lodge Teachings entail key stages or rites of passage that are vital to practicing *miyo ohpikinâwasowin* or raising children spiritually well to ensure the healthy development of the child, family, and community. These rites of passage encompass many teachings, ceremonies, and celebrations that are essential to creating mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical wellbeing and living a good, balanced life–*miyo pimâtisiwin*.[1]

Each stage of development within the Turtle Lodge Teachings is represented by one of the seven willow branches that creates the frame for the *matotisân* (sweat lodge or Turtle Lodge). The term *matotisân* is derived from the word *mâto,* which means "to cry," symbolizing that this lodge is a place for mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical cleansing. The *matotisân* also represents our mother's womb, and it is where our birth and beginnings can be re-experienced to ground us in who we are. It is the responsibility of the parents, family, and community to ensure that children experience these stages of development in loving and nurturing ways. The understanding of an *awâsis* as a "small animate spirit" is embedded in the *nêhiyaw* preconception teachings on children, where they are seen as gifts loaned to us by the Creator. Children are prepared by the Spiritual Grandmothers to enter the human world bringing gifts, purpose, and teachings from the spirit world. The *awâsis* chooses their parents, family, and community to experience love on their human journey while being nurtured in ways that are honouring of their gifts so they can know their purpose.

miyawata (Happy Stage)

A child born into a healthy home, family, and community experiences happiness because their entire emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical needs are nurtured. The child is the focus of the

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1   The Seven Turtle Lodge Teachings presented in this article are interpreted by author, Leona Makokis

parents, family, and community. This stage grounds the child in a loving, caring, and nurturing environment. To help create this environment, a *wâspison* (moss bag) is used to keep the *awâsis* safe and secure while allowing them to be kept close to their mother's heart, replicating the environment of her womb. The *nohtâwiy* (father) takes on the responsibility of building a *wêwêpison* (swing) for the *awâsis*, so they can be gently rocked while being sung lullabies.

During this stage, an *awâsis* is welcomed into the world with a ceremonial song, inviting the spiritual grandmothers, grandfathers, and ancestors who prepared this "small animate spirit" to protect the *awâsis* on their human journey. The *mitisiy* (belly-button or umbilical cord) ceremony also takes place to honour the connection between the *awâsis* and their mother. The Elders put the *mitisiy* in a special place, such as an ant's nest, to ask that the *awâsis* will grow to be a strong, diligent worker. The *awâsis* also experiences a naming ceremony, where an Elder gifts the child with a spiritual name. This name reflects the gifts and purpose that the *awâsis* brings from the spirit world and is meant to guide and protect the *awâsis* on their human journey.

kayiwatisi (Fast Stage)

Children begin to walk and run, so they are building their physical selves. They are also discovering the world around them. Children develop physically, so they are less attached and are beginning a more independent state. At this time of a child's life, a Walking Out Ceremony occurs to honour when the *awâsis* begins walking and taking their first steps on Mother Earth. During this ceremony, the *awâsis* is provided with a sacred bundle to support them on their human journey. Additionally, everyone in the child's life, their parents, grandfathers, and the community, makes a commitment to supporting the spiritual growth and development of the *awâsis*.

ayahpatisi (Wondering Stage)

In this stage, children are developing their curiosity. They are wanting to know more about the world, so they are continually inquiring. Language development is critical at this time. As children find things to do, the family teaches them how to live in a good way. This is the stage where children learn how they are related to people and how to respect and listen.

tâpwewin (Truth Stage)

The truth stage is when children go through their own experiences and learn through observation. In this stage they go through their rites of passage. Boys make their first successful hunt and the sustenance provided is shared with the entire community. They are no longer a child and are accepted into having adult responsibilities as providers. Boys usually go through a vision quest– either through a fasting ceremony or a Sundance. Girls go through rites of passage when they experience their first moon-time. They are usually housed with Elderly ladies for four days, and during this time they are taught their responsibilities and how to have healthy relationships. They

are also taught about the importance of keeping the body in a balanced state and the importance of boundaries. At this stage, both boys and girls are taught protocols—how to treat other people, relationships, animals, plants, etc.

kîseyitamowin (Decision-Making Stage)

After learning from many people, experiences, and teachings, someone in the decision-making stage will be able to recognize their gifts. In this stage, we decide what we are going to do with our lives and how we can use the gifts we have been given to serve the community. We also would have been taught by the Grandmothers and the Elders the knowledge of what our purpose is in using our gifts. We are accountable to the community and know our protocols. This stage also includes determining who our spouse will be.

ayâwâwasowin (Planting Stage)

In this stage, adults get married, have children, and raise those children in the ways they have been taught with all the protocols, teachings and ceremonies. Stories, language, and culture are very important in this stage as they are passed from generation to generation.

kakehtawewin (Wisdom Stage)

Having gone through all the stages, we have gained experience and our role then is to share this with others. *kiseyiniw* refers to an old man who is caring and loving. *nôcikwesiw* refers to an old lady whose home is overflowing with so much love that she sits outside, beside the door, to make sure that it is protected. We honour the wisdom given to us over our journey, which means it is our duty to pass it along in a loving and caring way. It is not our knowledge to keep; the knowledge belongs to all of us. We become the storytellers to guide the next generation.

It is important to acknowledge that these are teachings and the list above is only that – a list, and does not contain the actual teachings. These must be received in ceremony, in the language, from an Elder. When supporting Indigenous families, it is vital that child welfare workers understand the Turtle Lodge Teachings so they can understand where a child (and the family) is at within these stages and support the family in asking for a specific ceremony, celebration, or rite of passage. It is also crucial to note that these teachings are not linear or defined by age—they are circular and relational. The developmental stage of the *awâsis* is determined by where they are on their human journey; they can journey back and forth between various stages. If an *awâsis* did not have the opportunity to experience a certain ceremony, celebration, or rite of passage, they are always able to experience them later on in life, even as adults. With that being said, the Turtle Lodge Teachings

ensure healthy child, family, and community development while providing ways to restore a child and family's connection to spirit and culture when needed.

Relationship Mapping

nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk is not intended only as a resource for documenting relationships and community connections. It is also intended as a process to engage in the creation of relationships and connections between service providers and service users. Integrating the Natural Laws, the Seven Teachings, language, and ceremony within the context of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual realms–in connection with the stages of the Turtle Lodge Teachings–supports the creation of an Indigenous worldview-based understanding of our relationships to our family, our community, the environment, and our ancestors.

The most significant challenge in sharing this process as a journal article is the necessity to write in English. As mentioned earlier, the act of translating creates almost insurmountable challenges to true meaning. It is our hope that the deeper meaning of the process can still be honoured and communicated. With that caveat, we will try to share the process of relationship mapping. We suggest that the process be approached in stages, in relationship with the service user, and begin with a smudging ceremony.[2] With reference to the following relationship mapping diagram (Figure 1), we will describe and explain each stage of the process.

Creating the Relationship Image

At the centre of the circle is the *awâsis*, the small spirit on a human journey. Siblings can also be placed in this circle if that is felt to be an appropriate place for them. It may be repetitive at this point, but a small reminder that we are not using the term "sibling" in the Western sense of the term. In this Indigenous universe, siblings (and all other relationships) are determined by relationship, connection, and role–not by genetics.

The next circle contains the closest relationships to the *awâsis*, the individuals who fulfill the roles of *nikâwiy* (mother), *nohtâwiy* (father), *nikâwîs* (little mothers), and *nohcawîs* (little fathers). This circle also includes the individuals who fulfill the roles of *nôhkôm* (grandmothers) and *nimosôm* (grandfathers). These people have a common role–to directly nurture, love, care for, discipline, guide, and honour the gifts of the little spirit on its human journey. There can be many individuals who fulfill the roles of mother, father, little mother, little father, grandfather, and grandmother in the life of the *awâsis*.

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2   For those readers not familiar with the smudging ceremony, or the local equivalent, we suggest connecting with a local Indigenous knowledge-holder, offer them tobacco or whatever is appropriate in your context, and request a teaching about smudging.

The next circle contains the *nisikos* (the father's sisters) and *nisis* (the mother's brothers). Remember that the relationship map of the father will, most likely, contain people who fulfilled significant roles in the father's life–so there may not be direct genetic connections. This circle also contains *wâhkomitowin* (the community) *and wâhkotowin* (the land). This circle is also significant in that it includes all the resources in the community that support the *awâsis*, including the agency and the service provider. The service provider is recognized as playing a significant role in the life of the *awâsis*, and needs to be included within the context of the relationship mapping as the impacts and meaning of the relationship will last a lifetime for the *awâsis*.

The next circle explores the vital role of *isihcikewin* (ceremony) in the life of the *awâsis* and all of those in the previous circles. Ceremony heals, nurtures, teaches, guides, and supports the life journey. Ceremonies are connected to seasons, to life stages, to daily life, to governance, to the essential life teachings, to learning, to the ancestors, to teaching, etc. The community is grounded in ceremony, and it is extremely important to understand the role and meaning of traditional ceremony in a specific community. We cannot thrive without ceremony (and language).

The next circle brings us back to the Turtle Lodge Teachings covered earlier. It is these stages of life and the teachings and ceremonies associated with them that enable us to understand and support the human journey of the *awâsis*. As we explore the relationship map of the *aw*âsis in connection to the Turtle Lodge Teachings, we can also understand how we can support the ceremonies and rites of passage that are connected to the *awâsis*. The relationship between the *awâsis* and their position in the circle of the Turtle Lodge Teachings is specific to the individual human journey of each *awâsis*, and is not connected to specific indicators such as age or growth. In addition, those people who have nurtured the journey of the *awâsis* and who may have passed on to become ancestors, if not already added within an earlier circle, can be honoured by being included within the ancestor section of the Turtle Lodge Teachings.

Finally, we understand that the entire relational process and relationship mapping is based within the teachings of the Natural Laws (love, honesty, sharing, and determination) and the lived balance of the four realms (spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental). Different elements in the life of the *awâsis* can be included within the four realms–for example, sports could be included within the physical realm, school and classes in the mental realm, participation in ceremony in the spiritual realm, and love, support, and caring in the emotional realm.

We have found that the conversation, sharing, and relationship building that occurs within the process of doing the relationship mapping is almost more important than the map itself, fostering *wâhkomitowin*. The experience has a strength-based focus and encourages the exploration of positive influences and experiences within the journey of the *awâsis*.

Figure 1

The Turtle Lodge Relationship Mapping Image
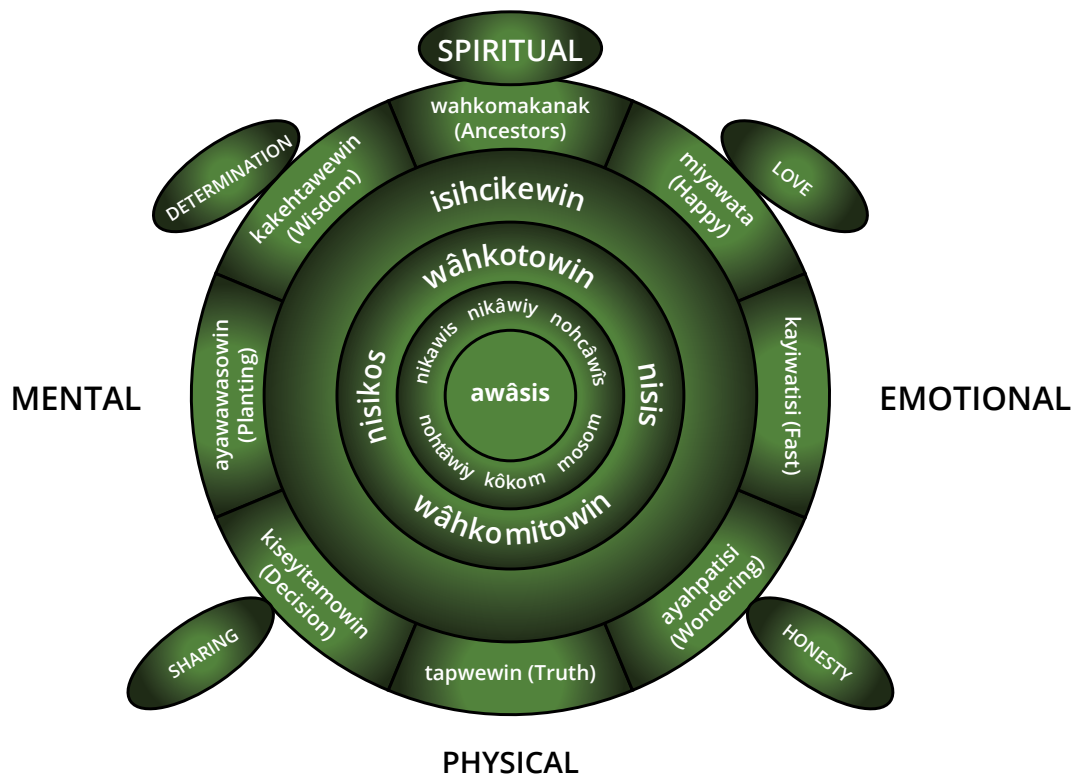
Note. © IRM Research and Evaluation Inc. (Image Only)

Why a Turtle?

nêhiyaw kesi wâhkotohk is framed within the structure of a turtle to bring together *nêhiyaw* teachings on truth and how an *awâsis* can live and experience truth. Within the Seven Teachings, the final teaching is *tâpwewin* (truth), and truth is taught by the *miskinâhk* (turtle) who carries all the previous teachings on its shell. Derived from the word *miskinâhk* is the term *mêskanaw, meaning* a pathway or a journey. As *tâpwewin* is taught and modeled by the *miskinâhk,* to be on a journey means to be on the pathway of living and seeking truth. The *miskinâhk* is an unwavering being that commits to following the path of truth. Additionally, the *miskinâhk* has the ability to recede inside its shell and be introspective, affirming that knowing yourself is central to living and experiencing truth. For an *awâsis,* an experience of truth comes from being raised in ceremony and learning the language, from feeling loved and nurtured by your parents, family, and community, from knowing who you are, where you come from, and having your spiritual gifts and purpose honoured.

Challenges

As stated earlier, we have only explored the basic relationship concepts in this document. As the *nêhiyaw* universe and language is based within the context of relationships, there are a large number of relationship terms, and relational protocols, that we have not included. Also, there are additional concepts and teachings, such as the spiritual clan of the *awâsis*, that are extremely important in understanding connections, relationships, healing, and appropriate teachings and must be considered within the life of the *awâsis*. This article is only a beginning, and we hope that others can carry these concepts further through research, language, and ceremony.

We also acknowledge that we have only focussed on the *nêhiyaw* worldview, ceremony, and teachings. As we live and work on primarily *nêhiyaw* land, we have learned that we must honour the teachings of the land where we live. Other communities may have similar concepts as those we have shared, and we encourage others to explore the possible use of relationship mapping in their respective communities. We are very willing to aid and support that work in any way we can.

One of our greatest challenges has been the use of language and translating from *nêhiyaw* to English. Translating from a *nêhiyaw* verb to an English noun instantly creates a loss of full meaning—and in the training, we have seen that it is challenging for English-only speakers to think of aunts and uncles not as nouns and to conceptualize, while still conversing in English, of *nêhiyaw* verbs.

Future work suggests we need to explore the use of the relationship mapping tool with other Indigenous populations. Although many of the agencies successfully using the tool are urban-based (and many others are rural) it would be helpful to understand how to support those Indigenous service users who are less connected to the terms and the teachings and how they might respond to its implementation.

We hope to continue with that work.

Continuing Our Journey …

It is our hope that, by using the relationship mapping model described above, service providers (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) working with Indigenous children and families will find new ways to work within the context of language, ceremony, protocols, and teachings. As we have been sharing the teachings and the model over the past year, we have noticed some significant changes that have come through it. A number of agencies have committed to no longer using the Western genogram tool, and have replaced the assessment process entirely with the relationship mapping model. They have found, both with Indigenous and non-Indigenous service users, that the model is a strong relationship-building tool, is extremely strength-focused, and presents an accurate picture of the positive resources in the service user's environment. It allows the inclusion of significant individuals who may not be blood-related and honours the role of the service provider in the client's

life. Other practitioners have run the mapping tool alongside the genogram, and have reported that the mapping tool creates more understanding of the service user's life experience and allows the provider to explore different systems of support. Some agencies, combining the mapping resource with the teachings in the four realms (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual) have found that the blending of the two resources allows for a deeper understanding of the service users' needs and how supports from an Indigenous worldview can be provided to the client. Agencies have also reported that the mapping tool works well with diverse clients from other areas of the world and that, in some cases, other nationalities relate much better to the teachings and concepts in the mapping tool than the genogram.

Truly, it is only through these practices that we can be *miyo otôtemihtohiwew otatoskew*–good relationship workers.

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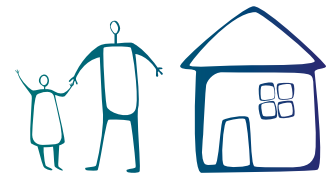
Familial Attendance at Indian Residential School and Subsequent Involvement in the Child Welfare System Among Indigenous Adults Born During the Sixties Scoop Era

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Abstract

The health and wellness of Indigenous peoples continue to be impacted by the harmful colonization practices enforced by the Government of Canada. While the long-term health impacts of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system are documented, empirical evidence elucidating the relationship between the IRSs and the risk of offspring experiencing other collective childhood traumas, such as the Sixties Scoop (1950-1990) and the inequities within the child welfare system (CWS), is needed. Through an online study, we explored the links between familial (parents/grandparents) IRS attendance and subsequent involvement in the CWS in a non-representative sample of Indigenous adults in Canada born during the Sixties Scoop era. The final sample comprised 433 adults who self-identified as Status First Nation (52.2%), non-Status First Nation (23.6%), and Métis (24.2%). The study found that adults with a parent who attended IRS were more likely to have spent time in foster care or in a group home during the Sixties Scoop era. They were also more likely to have grown up in a household in which someone used alcohol or other drugs, had a mental illness or a previous suicide attempt, had spent time in prison, had lower mean levels of general household stability, and tended to have lower household economic stability. Moreover, the relationship between parental IRS attendance and foster care was explained, in part (i.e., mediated) by a higher childhood household adversity score. These findings highlight that the intergenerational cycles of household risk introduced by the IRS system contribute to the cycles of childhood adversity and increased risk of spending time within the CWS in Canada. This is the first study among Indigenous adults from across Canada to demonstrate quantitatively that being affected by the CWS during the Sixties Scoop era is linked to intergenerational cycles of risk associated with the IRS system.

Keywords: Child welfare, childhood adversity, foster care, residential school, Sixties Scoop

Introduction

Indigenous children in Canada account for 52.2% of all children under the age of 14 in foster care, while representing only 7.7% of children in the country (Statistics Canada, 2016).[1] Indigenous children are overrepresented within every aspect of the child welfare system (CWS) in Canada, and similar inequities related to the continued removal of Indigenous children from their families exist in other colonized countries, such as Australia and the United States (US), where historical policies targeted Indigenous children and families (Libesman, 2004; Sinha et al., 2013). It is suggested that the over-representation of Indigenous children in the CWS in Canada reflects the ongoing paternalistic attitudes and policies that perpetuate and interact with the long-term consequences of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system, and of the large-scale removal of Indigenous children from their families between the 1950s and 1990s in what has become known as the Sixties Scoop (Kirmayer et al., 2009; Tait et al., 2013). Both of these government policies resulted in mass removals of Indigenous children from their familial homes, communities, and cultures, with long-term consequences for the personal and collective well-being of parents and children (McKenzie et al., 2016).

Although the links between intergenerational IRS attendance in relation to risk for adverse childhood experiences and mental health outcomes have been consistently observed among descendants (Bombay et al., 2014a; Wilk et al., 2017), there have been no quantitative investigations exploring the links between parental IRS attendance and the likelihood of offspring being removed from their families during the Sixties Scoop era. However, there are two studies among Indigenous youth in British Columbia that demonstrate a link between having a family history of IRS attendance and a greater likelihood of spending time in the CWS, not specific to the Sixties Scoop era (Barker et al., 2019; For the Cedar Project Partnership et al., 2015). The large majority of narratives shared in qualitative studies examining the Sixties Scoop include descriptions of adversities similar to those described by Survivors of the IRS system, and these adversities were perceived to have enduring negative mental health consequences (Abdulwasi, 2015; Sinclair, 2007; Starr, 2016; Stirrett, 2015). The present study explored the links between familial (parents/grandparents) IRS attendance and the subsequent involvement in the CWS in a non-representative sample of Indigenous adults living across Canada who were born during the Sixties Scoop era (1950 to 1990), and how involvement in the CWS was associated with retrospective reports of adverse childhood experiences.

The IRS System and Its Association With the Sixties Scoop

The IRS system was one of the most harmful government initiatives aimed at the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into dominant Euro-Canadian society, and has been officially acknowledged as an act of cultural genocide (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015). The Canadian government concluded that their goal of assimilation would be most effectively achieved by

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1   The term Indigenous means "native to the area." It is similar to terms such as Native Peoples, First Peoples, or Aboriginal Peoples, but carries a more international connotation, and is frequently used by the United Nations (IJIH, Terminology).

targeting children, as they were deemed most suitable for "complete transformation" (Miller, 1996). Children were subjected to daily racism and cultural shaming, physical and emotional neglect, and many endured various forms of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (Furniss, 2002; Knockwood, 1994; Milloy, 2017; TRC, 2015). Nationally representative surveys have revealed that IRS Survivors faced significant and long-term challenges to their well-being (Bombay et al., 2014a; First Nations Information Governance Centre [FNIGC], 2012, 2018), including depressive symptoms and alcohol and substance use, among other health and social challenges (Corrado & Cohen, 2003; FNIGC, 2012, 2018). The long-term effects of chronic childhood adversity can influence the ability to provide adequate care for one's own children through various pathways, including poverty, lower socio-economic status, and poor parental health and social outcomes in both mainstream and Indigenous populations (Bombay et al., 2009, 2014a, 2014b; Chartier et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2003; Evans-Campbell, 2008; Lafrance & Collins, 2003; Larkin et al., 2012).

Several successive generations of Indigenous children were exposed to chronic trauma, neglect, abuse, and malnutrition at IRSs (Bombay et al., 2012). These experiences resulted in negative intergenerational cycles of individual, familial, and community adversity and distress (Bombay, 2014a, 2014b; Bougie & Senécal, 2010; FNIGC, 2012). For example, IRS attendees were more likely to have low income and report that their family experienced food insecurity, factors that were negatively linked to their children's success in school (Bougie & Senécal, 2010). Others have suggested that children with parents who attended IRS were more likely to have experienced abuse or neglect (Stout & Peters, 2011). Having a parent and/or grandparent who attended IRS has been associated with various negative health outcomes, including a greater risk for depressive symptoms, psychological distress, suicidal ideation and attempts, and problematic substance use in various national and regional representative and non-representative samples of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Bombay et al., 2012, 2014a, 2018; Corrado & Cohen, 2003; FNIGC, 2018; McQuaid et al., 2017; Wilk et al., 2017). The factors that contribute to the present-day disparities between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in the CWS are complex, but experts and those affected have argued that the assimilation practices of the IRS system have been replaced by the CWS, as large numbers of Indigenous children continue to be removed from their families, communities, and cultures (Badgely, 1991; Blackstock, 2007; Chrisjohn et al., 1997; Fournier & Crey, 1997; Hamilton & Sinclair, 1999; Johnston, 1983; McKenzie et al., 2016; Sinclair, 2007).

Exacerbating the effects of the IRSs, the Sixties Scoop was a further assault against Indigenous peoples that targeted children and has had continuing long-term consequences (Alston-O'Connor, 2010; Sinclair, 2007).[2] While IRSs were gradually closing,[3] the federal government made an amendment

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2   In February 2017, an Ontario Superior Court judge found that the federal government failed to prevent on-reserve children from losing their Indigenous identity after they were forcibly taken from their homes as part of the Sixties Scoop. The federal government has agreed to pay approximately $750 million to an estimated 20,000 victims as well as establishing a $50 million fund for an Indigenous Healing Foundation.

3   The last school closed in 1996.

to the *Indian Act* that led to the increased removal of Indigenous children from their homes by the CWS to be placed with non-Indigenous families across Canada, the US, and abroad (McKenzie et al., 2016; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996).[4] When the provinces were given jurisdiction over Indigenous child welfare in 1951, many communities were dealing with the ongoing and intergenerational effects of the IRSs and other harmful policies under the *Indian Act* (Blackstock, 2007; Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013). Provided with no financial resources to help communities to address these issues and to heal, provincial child welfare agencies instead chose to continue removing children from their homes (de Leeuw et al., 2010). As with the IRS system, this policy of child removal from the family home was based on the idea that Indigenous cultures and parental care were detrimental to the social and moral development of their children (Fournier & Crey, 1997; Tait et al., 2013; Timpson, 1993). As a result, there was the hugely disproportionate placement of Indigenous children in foster care, institutional care, or permanent adoption placement (Johnston, 1983; Jones & Sinha, 2015; Kirmayer et al., 2000). It has been estimated that over 11,000 Indigenous children were taken from their biological parents between 1960 and 1990 (RCAP, 1996; Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013), however, this is thought to be a significant underestimate by some researchers (Sinclair, 2007). In many cases, Indigenous children were placed in foster care often without cause or justification simply because they were "poor" and Indigenous (Fournier & Crey, 1997; Johnston, 1983; Kirmayer et al., 2000). The final report of the TRC in 2015 concluded that the dramatic increase of the apprehension of Indigenous children during this time "was in some measure simply a transferring of children from one form of institution, the residential school, to another, the child-welfare agency" (p. 68). Evidence suggests that the disproportionate presence of risk factors in households, such as parental mental health and substance use issues, and economic instability, all of which are long-term and intergenerational consequences of the IRS system (Bombay et al., 2014a; Wilk et al., 2017), were often the main reasons children were taken (Sinha et al., 2013; Trocmé et al., 2006).

Qualitative research that has explored the long-term effects of the Sixties Scoop revealed significant levels of stress and trauma faced by Indigenous adults who were adopted during the Sixties Scoop, many of whom shared similar adversities both before and after they were taken from their birth family (Abdulwasi, 2015; Carriere, 2005; Starr, 2016; Wright Cardinal, 2017). Although there are many stories of resilience in these studies, most also describe negative experiences associated with their adoption, such as struggles with racism, shame, and confusion related to their identity, and many reported being subjected to neglect and/or spiritual, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse in their adoptive settings (Abdulwasi, 2015; Carriere, 2005; Starr, 2016; Wright Cardinal, 2017).

The present study explored the links between familial attendance at IRS and subsequent involvement in the child welfare system in a non-representative sample of Indigenous adults living across Canada, and born during the Sixties Scoop era. As there is very limited quantitative data on the impacts of

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4   The 1951 amendment to the *Indian Act* stated that when a provincial law dealt with a subject not covered under the *Indian Act*, such as child welfare, the provincial law could apply to Indigenous peoples on reserves, causing provincial participation in Indigenous law making.

the Sixties Scoop in Canada, this study focused specifically on linking IRS family history to CWS experiences during the Sixties Scoop era (1950–1990). It was expected that Indigenous adults who did not attend IRS themselves but who had a parent and/or grandparent who attended would be more likely to report being adopted and/or that they spent time in foster care or a group home compared to those who were not intergenerationally affected by IRS. Moreover, social issues such as poverty, having a family member spending time in prison, or having a family member with substance use issues and/or mental illness, were examined as adverse childhood explanatory factors that link family attendance at IRS to the CWS. It was expected that those intergenerationally affected by IRSs would report greater exposure to adverse childhood experience risk factors in their familial home while growing up, and that a cumulative score reflecting exposures to these risk factors while growing up would mediate the relations between being affected by IRS and CWS systems.

Method

Indigenous adults over the age of 18 were invited to take part in a study exploring the intergenerational effects of IRSs through advertisements posted at Indigenous community and health centres across Canada, and through electronic mailing lists related to Indigenous issues. Participants had the choice to complete the survey online or to have the questionnaires mailed to them (only 17 participants chose the mail-out option). Participants provided informed consent, and following completion of the survey, received a written debriefing and a $10 gift certificate. Because the study questions focused on exploring the intergenerational effects of the IRS system, those who reported that they attended IRS were excluded from the analyses. The final sample consisted of 433 adults (24.2% male; 75.5% female; one participant did not identify their gender), comprising those identifying as Status First Nation (52.2%), non-Status First Nation (23.6%), and Métis (24.2%). Ages ranged 40 years between the youngest participants born in 1990 and the oldest who were born in 1950 (Mean year born = 1974; SD = 9.87 years). Participants were geographically distributed across Canada: 13.2% resided in British Columbia; 9.2% in Alberta; 9.5% in Saskatchewan; 8.1% in Manitoba; 46.4% in Ontario; 8.1% in Quebec; 3.7% from the Atlantic provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland); 1.2% from the Territories (Northwest Territory, Yukon, Nunavut); and three participants (0.7%) who did not identify their location.

Participants were asked about the attendance of their parents and grandparents at IRS and were categorized into four mutually exclusive categories: (1) not IRS-affected (no parent and/or grandparent attended); (2) at least one parent attended (but no grandparent attended); (3) at least one grandparent attended (but no parent attended); and (4) at least one parent *and* at least one grandparent attended. Participants also indicated whether they "ever spent time in the care of foster parents or in a group home" and responded to a separate question asking about who their primary caregiver(s) were while growing up,[5] with adoptive mother and adoptive father being listed as

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5   Multiple answers were allowed.

options. Participants were categorized by researchers as personally exposed to the CWS (no vs. yes) if they listed an adoptive parent as a primary caregiver and/or if they indicated that they had spent time in foster care or a group home.

Participants were asked a number of questions regarding household risk factors while they were growing up, including if anyone in their household: (1) was a problem drinker and/or used street drugs; (2) was depressed and/or mentally ill; (3) had attempted suicide; or (4) went to prison. Responses to these items were no vs. yes. Also related to household risk, participants rated their "family's economic situation while growing up" on a scale from (1) very bad, (2) bad, (3) moderate, (4) good, to (5) very good, as well as "the stability of your home life (i.e., secure, consistent, reliable, people there for you while growing up)" from (1) not at all stable, (2) not stable, (3) somewhat stable, (4) stable, to (5) very stable. A cumulative score across the six household adversity items was calculated to reflect a total childhood adversity score while growing up. In order to create this score, participants were considered to be exposed to familial economic instability and/or general household instability while growing up if they rated their situation as being at the midpoint of three or below.[6] Then, participants were given a score of one for each of the six risk factors they were exposed to, or a score of zero if they were not exposed.

Results

The IRS System and Its Association With the Sixties Scoop

Descriptive Statistics

Forty percent (40.2%) of study participants reported not being intergenerationally affected by IRSs, while 23.8% had at least one grandparent who attended, 18.0% had at least one parent who attended, and 18.0% had at least one parent and one grandparent who attended. About 20% (19.4%) of the sample had personally been affected by the child welfare system in that they were adopted and/or they spent time in foster care or a group home. About three-quarters (77.1%) of the sample reported that their family's economic situation was moderate, bad, or very bad, and just over half (53.8%) said their household stability while growing up was moderate, bad, or very bad. The most common childhood adversity factor was someone in their familial household misusing alcohol or drugs (reported by 53.3% of participants), 42.5% reported that someone was depressed or had a mental illness, 21.0% said that someone attempted suicide, and 19.6% said that someone in their household went to prison. Just over 10% (10.4%) of the sample was not exposed to any risk factors, whereas 7.0% were exposed to all six (M = 2.72, SD = 1.74).

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6   Additional analyses were conducted in which different cut-offs were used to determine if they met criteria for familial economic stability and/or general household stability; however, the results did not differ significantly and therefore, are not reported for each analysis.

Bivariate Relationships

Cross-tabulations between familial IRS attendance and exposure to the CWS and each household risk factor are presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Figure 1
Residential School Attendance
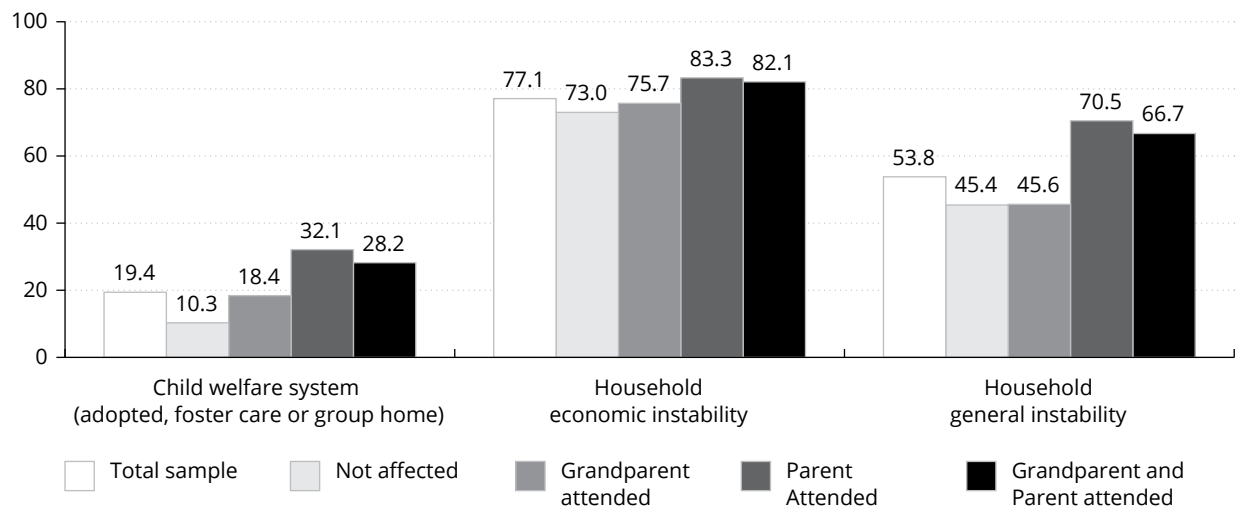
Note. The proportions of the sample that reported having spent time in foster care or a group home, experiencing household economic instability or general instability while growing up, by whether their family was not directly affected by residential schools, if they had a parent *or* grandparent who attended, and if they had a parent *and* grandparent who attended.

Figure 2
Household Risk Factors
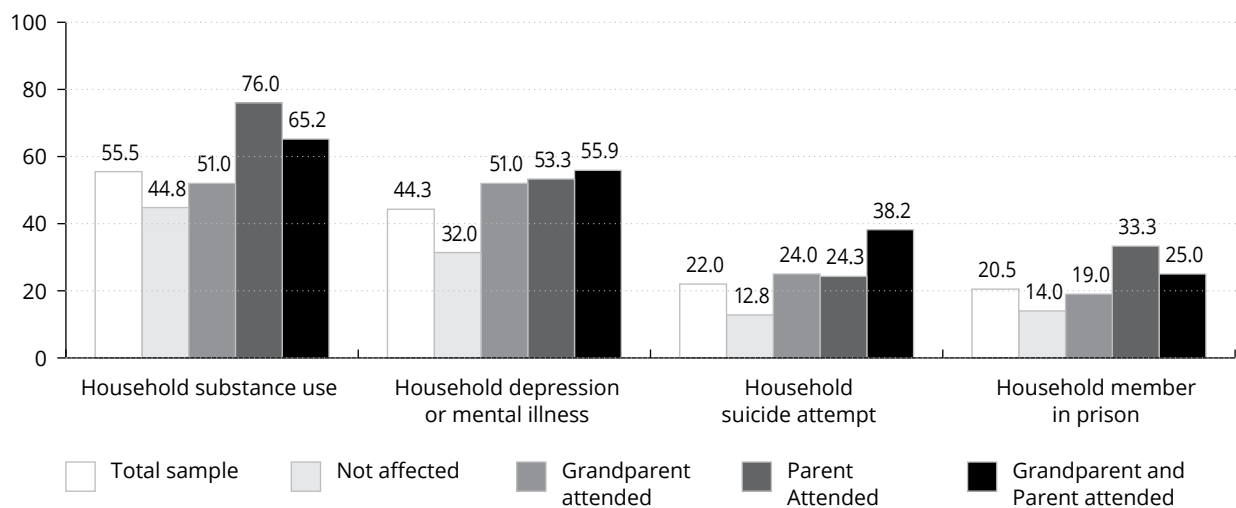
Note. The proportions of the sample that reported experiencing household substance use, depression or mental illness, suicide attempt, or a family member in prison while growing up, by whether their family was not directly affected by residential schools, if they had a parent *or* grandparent who attended, and if they had a parent *and* grandparent who attended.

While a cumulative household risk score was of interest, separate binary logistic regressions were first examined for each household exposure variable to determine the individual relationships to IRS family history.[7] Specifically, contrasts that compared those who were not affected by IRS (reference group) to those who were intergenerationally affected by the IRS, are shown in Table 1 and Table 2, separated by the different household risk factors. Having a grandparent who attended IRS was associated with an increased likelihood of growing up in a household with someone with a mental illness and/or who attempted suicide, and tended to be related to exposure to the CWS, although this only approached significance in comparison to those not affected by IRS. However, having a grandparent who attended IRS was not associated with a greater risk for household economic instability, general household instability, household substance use, or having a household member who went to prison, in comparison to those not affected by IRS (Table 1 and Table 2). Those with a parent (but no grandparent) and those with a parent *and* grandparent who attended IRS were both at greater risk for exposure to the CWS and to each household exposure variable compared to those not affected, except exposure to economic instability, which only approached significance for individuals with a parent who went to IRS (Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1

Binary Logistic Regressions Predicting CWS Exposure, Self-Rated Household Economic Instability While Growing up, and Self-Rated General Household Instability While Growing up From Familial IRS Attendance

	Child welfare system		Household economic instability		Household general instability	
Chi-Square	21.16***		4.70		22.10***	
Nagelkerk R2	.08		.02		.07	
	b	OR	b	OR	OR	OR
Grandparent (no parent)	.67†	1.96	.14	1.16	.009	.97
Parent (no grandparent)	1.41***	4.09	.62†	1.85	1.06***	2.88
Parent and grandparent	1.23**	3.41	.53	1.69	.88**	2.41

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
†p < .10

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7   A logistic regression is a statistical model used to predict the probability of certain events occurring.

Table 2

Binary Logistic Regressions Predicting Childhood Exposure to a Household Member Who Used Substances (Drugs/ Alcohol), Had a Mental Illness, Attempted Suicide, and/or Who Spent Time in Prison From Familial IRS Attendance

	Household substance use[a]		Household mental illness[b]		Household suicide attempt[c]		Household prison[d]	
Chi-Square	24.75***		20.50***		19.49***		12.45**	
Nagelkerk R^2	.08		.07		.07		.05	
Reference category: **No IRS exposure**	b	OR	b	OR	b	OR	b	OR
Grandparent (no parent)	.29	1.34	.86**	2.37	.82*	2.27	.36	1.44
Parent (no grandparent)	1.36***	3.91	.92**	2.50	.79*	2.19	1.12**	3.06
Parent and grandparent	.84**	2.31	1.02**	2.77	1.44***	4.22	.71*	2.04

[a] n=17 responded "don't know" to this question; [b] n=18 responded "don't know" to this question; [c] n=19 responded "don't know" to this question; [d] n=19 responded "don't know" to this question.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

†p <. 10

A univariate ANOVA examining IRS experiences in predicting the cumulative number of household risk factors (N = 413)[8] was significant, F (3,409) = 12.51, p < .001, η^2 = .08. Upon examining the follow-up comparisons, those with a parent *and* grandparent who attended IRS had significantly higher cumulative household risk scores (M = 3.31 ± 1.75) compared to those with no IRS exposure (M = 2.21 ± 1.63), p < .001. Similarly, those with a parent (no grandparent) who attended IRS had higher cumulative household risk scores (M = 3.42 ± 1.64) compared to those with no IRS exposure p < 0.001, as well as compared to those with a grandparent (no parent) who attended IRS (M = 2.68 ± 1.70), p < .05. Moreover, those with a grandparent (no parent) who attended did not significantly differ from those not affected by IRSs (p = .16).

The Indirect Effects of Cumulative Exposures to Childhood Household Adversity Between Parental IRS Attendance and CWS Exposure

In order to examine the pathway in which cumulative childhood exposure risk score helps explain the relation between IRS family history and CWS experiences, a mediation analysis was conducted. PROCESS model #4 for SPSS (Hayes, 2012) was used to carry out bootstrapping procedures (5,000 resamples) to derive 95% confidence limits. Because those who only had a grandparent who attended IRS (n = 103) did not significantly differ from those not affected by IRS in relation to the

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8   n= 20 did not answer at least one of the childhood risk factor questions.

child welfare system, they were not included in the mediational analysis. Those with a parent (but no grandparent) who attended IRS and those with a parent and grandparent who attended were not significantly different in relation to being affected by the CWS, and so were combined in the mediational analysis comparing those with at least one parent who attended (n = 156) to those not intergenerationally affected (n = 174). There was a significant positive association between parental IRS attendance and cumulative household adversity (b = 1.8, CI95 = .81 to 1.4, p < .001). Although the direct link between parental IRS attendance and CWS exposure was significant (b = 1.22, CI95 = 1.90 to 6.01, p < .001), it was less significant (b = .83, CI95 = .19 to 1.47, p = .01) when the indirect effects of the cumulative household adversity were taken into account. The indirect path linking parental IRS attendance to exposure to the CWS through cumulative adversity in the familial household while growing up was significant (b = 61, CI95 = .35 to .96).

Figure 3
The Unstandardized Coefficients in the Mediation Model
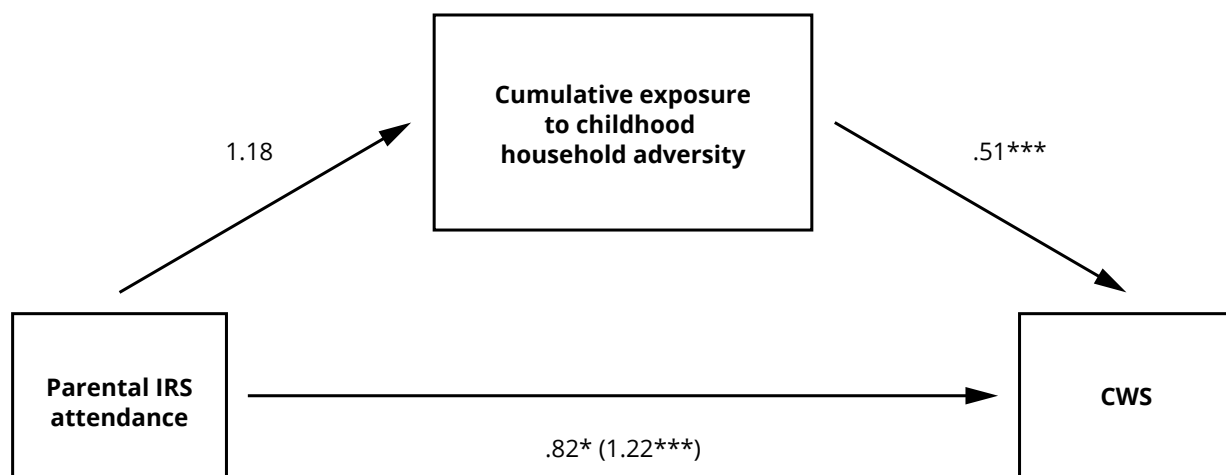
Note. The coefficient in brackets represents the direct link without cumulative exposure to household risk factors in the model.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
†p < .10.

Discussion

Findings from this study add to our understanding of the long-term intergenerational effects of the IRS system, and how the negative effects of this collectively experienced time period were perpetuated through subsequent government policies that resulted in what is today known as the Sixties Scoop. In the current sample of Indigenous adults from across Canada who were born during the Sixties Scoop period, those who had a parent who attended IRS were approximately four times more likely to have spent time in foster care or in a group home while growing up. They were also more likely to have grown up in a household in which someone used alcohol or drugs, had a mental illness and/or a previous suicide attempt, had spent time in prison, had household economic

instability, and general household instability. This study supports previous suggestions that the Sixties Scoop continued the intergenerational cycles of household risk caused by the attendance of parents or grandparents at IRS. In this regard, the pathway from parental IRS attendance to foster care was mediated (explained in part) by a cumulative score reflecting exposure to various childhood household risk factors. Moreover, the current findings highlighting that a number of factors such as mental illness, substance use, and time in prison, etc., together helped explain the pathway between IRS and CWS experience, and support the accumulating evidence that the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in foster care is largely attributable to social and economic disparities (Blackstock et al., 2004; Fallon et al., 2015; Knoke et al., 2007; Trocmé et al., 2006). The direct and intergenerationally transmitted effects of experiences at IRSs in relation to mental health, poverty, substance use, and social isolation are known factors that predict child neglect and child removal into foster care (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015; McKenzie et al., 2016). In fact, neglect is reported as the main reason Indigenous children enter the CWS and is a term used to remove children from their homes due to poverty (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015; Trocmé et al., 2006).

The growing qualitative literature exploring the issues related to the Sixties Scoop suggest that Indigenous adults who were adopted between 1960 and 1990 are a heterogeneous group in terms of their pre-child welfare histories, their experiences while in care, and in relation to experiences and well-being afterwards, throughout their adulthood (Abdulwasi, 2015). Although some who were affected have recounted very positive adoption stories and subsequent success in their adulthood (Swidrovich, 2004), in general, the large majority of narratives shared by former adoptees in research studies included descriptions of adversities similar to those described by Survivors of the IRS system (McKenzie et al., 2016; Sinclair, 2007; Starr, 2016). In the few quantitative studies conducted, the findings speak to the negative effects of the involvement with the child welfare system among Indigenous peoples in Canada and also reported linkages with familial IRS attendance (Barker et al., 2019; For the Cedar Project Partnership et al., 2015). In this regard, one sample of 605 participants aged 14 to 30 years who use drugs and lived in British Columbia between 2003 and 2005 showed relations between involvement in the CWS and having a parent who attended IRS (For the Cedar Project Partnership et al., 2015). Similarly, in a study also among young Indigenous peoples (<35 years of age) who use drugs and lived in British Columbia between 2011 and 2016 (*N* = 267), IRS family history (parent and grandparent) was associated with increased odds of CWS experience (Barker et al., 2019). The stories of former adoptees also suggest that most (but not all) were deprived of healthy cultural socialisation practices from Indigenous adults and peers to allow for the development of cultural engagement and pride, which has been shown to be a protective factor for Indigenous peoples (Bombay et al., 2010).

The current study is not without limitations, including the non-representative sample and the self-selected recruitment methods. Participants also came from various Indigenous groups from across the country, which differ with respect to their histories, beliefs, and traditions, and it is likely that the

study findings would vary within different groups and in different parts of the country. Although there are variations across groups, Indigenous peoples in Canada share the common experiences of the IRS system and the Sixties Scoop, and the present findings should be further explored in other Indigenous samples. There were also challenges regarding a lack of specificity in some of the questions asked. For example, the term "foster care" is an all-inclusive term that could refer to in-home placements, group homes, and possibly kinship care. Thus, as participants were considered to have been personally exposed to the CWS if they listed an adoptive parent as a primary caregiver and/or if they ever spent time in foster care or a group home, these experiences could be vastly different. It will be important to tease apart these intricacies in future research to gain a better understanding of the links between IRS and specific experiences within the CWS, particularly as kinship care could be associated with better outcomes as opposed to placement in a group home. However, further research is needed to distinguish these effects. Moreover, it is also important to note that participants' perceptions of stability and instability in their home environment are subjective, and therefore, could be impacted by the conditions in which they are most familiar. For example, in the case of communities with a history of poverty, rates of economic instability could be unreported, which could have resulted in the weak association between economic instability and IRS family history in the current study.

Despite these limitations, the current findings can help inform and advocate for increased investment in Indigenous-led and culturally relevant interventions to address intergenerational trauma and the required systemic changes in the CWS that will take into consideration the unique historical and collective factors that affect the lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada. The system changes required in the CWS were highlighted by the landmark 2016 decision, in which the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that the federal government discriminated against First Nations children on reserve through its design, management, control, and funding of child welfare services (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al., 2016). This study supports the need for adequate funding for prevention services to break the cycle of removing Indigenous children from their families and communities. This study is one of very few that demonstrate quantitatively that the Sixties Scoop and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the CWS are linked to intergenerational cycles of risk initiated by the IRS system. This has important implications in the discussion surrounding the need for further healing and reparations for those directly and intergenerationally affected by the IRS system, and for the government to apologize and address the long-term impacts of the Sixties Scoop. It also highlights the need to address the cycle of childhood adversities, including economic inequities such as poverty, that are associated with the IRS system in order to reduce overrepresentation of Indigenous children within the CWS in Canada. Today, the disproportionate rates of removal of Indigenous children from their homes have not only persisted, but have increased since the IRS era (Blackstock, 2007; Tait et al., 2013), and have resulted in the destruction of family units and connections to Indigenous cultures. As identified by the TRC of Canada, reconciliation depends on reversing this pattern of Indigenous children's overrepresentation in the CWS.

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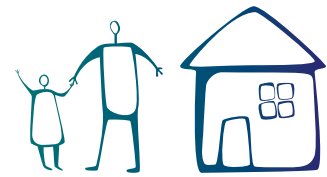
Human Trafficking in Northeastern Ontario: Collaborative Responses

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Abstract

Human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is undoubtedly occurring in Northeastern Ontario. However, there is a lack of information, resources, coordination, and collaboration on the issue in comparison to Southern Ontario. Furthermore, urban-based programming from "down south" does not necessarily fit the unique circumstances of Northeastern Ontario: specifically, the isolation and underservicing of rural and remote communities, the presence of francophone communities, and diverse Indigenous communities. The Northeastern Ontario Research Alliance on Human Trafficking is a community-university research partnership that takes a critical anti-human-trafficking approach. We combine Indigenous and feminist methodologies with participatory action research. In this paper, we first present findings from our eight participatory action research workshops with persons with lived experience and service providers in the region, where participants identified the needs of trafficked women and gaps and barriers to service provision. Second, in response to participants' calls for collaboration, we have developed a Service Mapping Toolkit that is grounded in Indigenous cultural practices and teachings, where applicable, and in the agency and self-determination of persons experiencing violence, exploitation, or abuse in the sex trade. We conclude by recommending seven principles for building collaborative networks aimed at addressing violence in the sex trade. The Service Mapping Toolkit and collaborative principles may assist other rural or northern communities across the county.

Keywords: Critical anti-human trafficking; participatory action research; service mapping; Indigenous methodologies; feminist intersectionality; social work

Introduction

Human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is undoubtedly occurring in Northeastern Ontario. However, we are behind Southern Ontario in terms of research, information, coordination, and collaboration. While there is substantial literature on the incidence of cross-border and domestic trafficking in Canada (Boyer & Kampouris, 2014; Canadian Women's Federation, 2014; Norfolk & Hallgrimsdottir, 2019; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2005; Perry, 2018; Sethi, 2007; Sikka, 2009; Sweet, 2015), there is an absence of research on the specific circumstances of Northeastern Ontario, namely, the isolation and underservicing of rural and remote communities, the presence of francophone communities, and diverse Indigenous communities. In particular, little has been written on specific tools and practical ways to support those currently being trafficked and human trafficking survivors (exceptions include Dandurand, 2017; Kaye et al., 2014) to overcome the gaps in and barriers to service provision identified by this study.

In August 2013, in response to this dearth, we formed the Northeastern Ontario Research Alliance on Human Trafficking (NORAHT), a research partnership between the Amelia Rising Sexual Assault Centre of Nipissing, the Union of Ontario Indians: Anishinabek Nation, the AIDS Committee of North Bay and Area, and Nipissing University.[1] Over the past seven years, NORAHT has embarked on a research journey as a collaborative group from diverse professional backgrounds and practice approaches. We focus on the trafficking of women,[2] as violence against women is a central component of the work of our community-based research partners. However, we acknowledge here that Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons (2SLGBTQ+) are also vulnerable to human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. We place a special focus on the trafficking of Indigenous women because nationally they are over-represented in human trafficking cases (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2013), and furthermore, 78% of Ontario First Nations peoples are located in Northern Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, 2018). Using participatory action research (PAR) grounded in feminist and Indigenous methodologies, we have sought to identify the needs, gaps, and barriers for persons who have been trafficked in our region as a means to develop service provider toolkits and recommend social policies.

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2   We decided early on that child sexual exploitation was beyond our scope and focused on women 18 years of age and older. However, research participants repeatedly noted that girls in care aged 16–18 are especially vulnerable to trafficking as they "age out" of the system. Participants with lived experience further emphasized the need to respect the agency and self-determination of youth in the sex trade.

In the spring and fall of 2017, we held eight full-day PAR workshops with service providers and persons with lived experience in sex work and human trafficking. During the PAR workshops, our participants identified the needs of trafficked persons, the gaps and barriers to funding and resources in our region, and a need for collaboration and education amongst service providers about the need for culturally appropriate wrap-around support. In this paper, after first providing readers with the background and context of our study, we outline our methodology and findings from the PAR workshops, which have not only provided us an understanding of the existing gaps and barriers but also informed our feminist and decolonial outlook on the issue of human trafficking. In response to our participants' calls for collaboration, we then present our design of a service mapping toolkit to assist communities in developing responses to human trafficking that are grounded in trauma- and violence-informed and harm reduction approaches cognizant of Indigenous cultures, where applicable, and in the agency and self-determination of persons experiencing violence, exploitation, or abuse in the sex trade. We conclude the paper by proposing seven main principles for developing collaborative networks for the provision of wrap-around, comprehensive supports, based on the approaches, knowledges, and programs identified in the service map. We are grateful to those with lived experience who have shared their stories to aid in the development of collaborative responses to human trafficking in Northeastern Ontario. This grassroots effort to respond to human trafficking at the local level will hopefully assist other rural and northern communities across the country.

Background and Context: Critical Anti-Trafficking, Agency, and Empowerment

The Criminal Code of Canada defines domestic human trafficking as the "recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, holding, concealing or harbouring of a person" (279.01) or "exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation" (279.01). As various scholars have noted, the ambiguity of "sexual exploitation" means that how one defines human trafficking is widely contested and complex (Boyer & Kampouris, 2014; Doezema, 2002; Roots, 2013). We take a critical anti-trafficking approach (Shalit & van der Meulen, 2015) and explicitly understand human trafficking to be distinct from sex work.[3] Whereas human trafficking involves elements of coercion, force, duplicity, and loss of control, sex work is a chosen form of labour.[4] Moreover, we do not conceive of coercion and consent as a rigid

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3 We disagree with radical feminist arguments that prostitution and human trafficking are simply forms of sexualized male domination (Barry, 1981; O'Connor & Healy, 2006). We reject this essentialist argument because it treats women as inherent victims and men as inherent perpetrators. It provides little explanation for the trafficking of men, boys, and transgender persons. In seeking to abolish prostitution, it denies the agency and safety of sex workers. Finally, it neglects the intersectional factors, such as colonialism and poverty, that contribute to human trafficking.

4 We use "sex work" in reference to an explicit position that identifies an occupation whose workers are entitled to make a living and human rights. However, not everyone in the sex trade will identify as "workers." Thus, we use "sex trade" to refer to commercial and survival sex that may be forced, voluntary, or anywhere in between (Young Women's Empowerment Project, 2009).

dichotomy. Rather, as one of our participants put it, there is a spectrum from sex work to human trafficking, and women's experiences are "fluid" along this spectrum. Rather than viewing trafficked persons as abject victims who have no agency, we argue that people experience "situational coercion" and make "reluctant choices" that are "often rational" in the face of considerable constraints (Hoyle et al., 2011, p. 322). Further, as one trafficking survivor relates, "even within the most coercive and violent situations there is a sufficient degree of agency and autonomy to ensure survival and self-preservation" (Cojocaru, 2016, p. 8).

In taking a critical anti-trafficking approach that emphasizes agency and resilience, we also challenge "rescue narratives," which predominate anti-trafficking campaigns and media representations (Baker, 2014; Cojocaru, 2016; Kempadoo, 2015). Framing Indigenous women as helpless victims perpetuates stereotypes of them as "lacking in agency, choice, or voice," wrote Kwakwaka'wakw scholar Sarah Hunt (2010, p. 27). This invites colonial interventions, such as the increased policing and surveillance of Indigenous communities and sex workers, while depoliticizing systemic disenfranchisement (Hunt, 2010; Maynard, 2015). Indigenous peoples, both historically and currently, have too often experienced harm in the name of social policy and service provision. Indigenous genocide through the residential school system and its ongoing legacies, including intergenerational cycles of abuse and disproportionate rates of child welfare removal, incarceration, and poverty, is one glaring example of "civilized saving." Combined with the "race, identity and gender-based genocide" of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people (National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls [NIMMIWG], 2019, p. 5), these legacies generate multiple vulnerabilities to violence against Indigenous women and girls in the sex trade, including human trafficking. There is over-surveillance and under-protection in service provision, notably policing and child welfare. Further, as our participants noted in discussions, emergency rooms are often the first or only point of contact that trafficked persons might have to seek support. Yet, sometimes there is overt racism and stigmatization of commercial sex in the delivery—or denial—of health care services.

NORAHT challenges the stigmatization of sex work and believes that current prostitution laws in Canada, which criminalize the purchase of sex, jeopardize the safety of sex workers and drive traffickers further underground (Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform, 2017). That said, we recommend that agencies and communities focus on supporting those who have experienced harms and violence and who ask for help. To paraphrase Dr. Robyn Bourgeois (Cree scholar/activist), who testified at the NIMMIWG (2019), despite different positions, at the end of the day, we all recognize that women are experiencing violence in the sex industry and "we want our girls and our women to be safe no matter what" (Vol. 1, p. 657). Furthermore, we cannot assume to know better than trafficked persons what their unique needs are at any given time. In particular, trafficked women may not desire strategies to "exit" from the sex trade per se, but only from their abusive situation.

In order to develop effective and appropriate strategies, the paid involvement of persons with lived experience in the collaborative network is crucial, i.e., survivor-champions,[5] sex workers, or family members. The idea of *nothing about us without us*[6] is key to developing policy frameworks and frontline supports, including peer outreach and support, that meet the needs of individuals in a manner that respects their autonomy, self-determination, and empowerment, and is without judgment. Every person's subjective experience of violence and exploitation is complex, and we need to consider the person in the context in which they have been living. As we develop later in the Service Mapping Toolkit, this necessitates decolonial trauma and violence-informed supports,[7] that are culturally relevant and sensitive to harm reduction approaches. Together, these approaches understand trauma not as an isolated event, but as embedded in colonial violence and other forms of marginalization.

Moreover, as Bonnie Burstow explained:

> Trauma is not a disorder but a reaction to a kind of wound. It is a reaction to profoundly injurious events and situations in the real world and, indeed, to a world in which people are routinely wounded. (2003, p. 1302)

Trauma and violence-informed strategies, therefore, require an intersectional analysis that is attentive to the context in which trauma and violence occur. At the same time, trauma and violence-informed approaches recognize that experiencing such harms can influence how a person understands their sense of self as well as their experiences within the broader context of social structures. Indigenous healing paradigms help revive culture, while Indigenous harm reduction is a process of integrating cultural knowledge and values into strategies and services to tackle the effects of colonialism (First Nations Health Authority, n.d., p. 1). For reasons of space, we note here but will not elaborate that some of our participants asked what supports are available for perpetrators in their healing. Some suggested having former perpetrators help with education and prevention. Thus, community outreach and programming may also be important strategies, including having men's participation in healing and building community resilience based on traditional values and knowledges.

In sum, a critical anti-trafficking approach responds to violence in the sex trade through an emphasis on agency, self-determination, resilience, resistance, and the empowerment of trafficked persons and their communities. Combining participatory action research (PAR) with Indigenous and feminist methodologies enables us to emphasize these affirmative values.

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5   See Leona Skye, Tammi Givans, and Wendy Sturgeon, "Let's Talk…About Surviving Today", Niagara Chapter Native Women, Inc., Final Report, Phase 1, March/April 2018. Skye further adds that peer survivor support could include not only survivors of human trafficking but also survivors of childhood sexual trauma, domestic violence, and so forth.

6   This phrase comes from the disability rights movement.

7   Following the Public Health Agency of Canada (2018), we use the term "trauma and violence-informed" approaches to acknowledge that trauma and violence are connected. However, we condense to "trauma-informed" on the toolkit graphics for reasons of space.

Methodology

We draw on Indigenous, feminist, and participatory action research methodologies in the spirit of Two-Eyed Seeing, which is Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall's term for "weaving together" (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335) Indigenous and mainstream knowledges in a manner that draws on the strengths of each "to the benefit of all" (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335; Peltier, 2018). We do so in order to advance "self-determined solutions" centred in our relationships with each other (NIMMIWG, 2019, p. 11). In Anishinaabe ontology, Cindy Peltier (2018) wrote , "relationships tie us to everything and everyone in both physical and spiritual realms" (p. 3). Indigenous ways of knowing and being are holistic: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Thus, an Indigenous research approach "flows from an Indigenous belief system that has at its core a relational understanding and accountability to the world," including the non-human world (Kovach, 2010, p. 3). Research with, by, and for Indigenous peoples runs much deeper than "consultation" and is instead based on the *Four R's* of Indigenous research, *respect*, *relevance*, *reciprocity,* and *responsibility*, which are necessary for building good relationships and socially just practices (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001; Kovach, 2009).

These principles can inform PAR approaches, which, like Indigenous methodologies, emphasize collaboration and co-inquiry, drawing on multiple ways of knowing, and the involvement and empowerment of those most affected (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). PAR is oriented toward problem-solving, with iterative cycles of *diagnosis* (identifying the problem), *planning* (developing a research strategy to address the issue), *action* (implementing the research strategy, working for social change) and *reflection* (analysis, evaluation, and sharing; MacDonald, 2012).

The Indigenous principle of *relevance* starts in the diagnosis stage of research, where participants identify the problem, and the dynamic nature of PAR allows for continued flexibility to interests. *Respect* speaks to the development of relationships of trust and accountability with Indigenous participants, demonstrating respect for protocols, and the ethical sharing of stories. *Responsibility* speaks to the importance of making meaning together, of listening carefully, and of engaging in critical self-reflection with respect to power dynamics between researcher and participant, and not sharing cultural knowledge without permission. *Reciprocity* runs throughout the PAR cycle, with the sharing of results, feedback, and approval from participants, and deriving mutual benefits from the research (Peltier, 2018; Stanton, 2014).

The aim of PAR is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in everyday life, and the use of visuals is one of the principles of Two-Eyed Seeing to make things accessible for oral peoples (Bartlett et al., 2012). Like Indigenous methodologies, PAR recognizes that the poor, the exploited, and the marginalized are experts in their own lives and helps them develop their own resources for resistance, activism, and self-reliance (MacDonald, 2012,). Additionally, feminist PAR approaches bring intersectionality and explicit critiques of power into the framework in order to elucidate and interrogate injustice and inequality (Evans et al., 2009; Reid et al., 2006). Feminist intersectionality

looks at the ways in which gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, colonialism (and so forth), are "intertwined and mutually constitutive" in the "social and material realities" of people's lives (Davis, 2008, p. 71).

We are mindful that feminism is "fraught" for some Indigenous women, even those actively organizing on women's issues (Gehl 2017; Lew, 2017, fn. 4; Sunseri, 2011). Approaching feminism through an Indigenous lens necessitates an emphasis on the self-determination of Indigenous women and their communities, and the return of Indigenous life and land (Konsmo & Pacheco, 2016; Kuokkanen, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Furthermore, as Métis activist and academic Natalie Clark (2016) noted, Sioux activist Zitkala-Sa and other Indigenous feminists at the turn of the twentieth century were writing of the way "that violence has always been gendered, aged, and linked to access to land"(p. 49). Thus, she argued, "Indigenous ontology is inherently intersectional and complex in its challenging of the notions of time, age, space, and relationship" (Clark, 2016, p. 49). In the Service Mapping Toolkit, we particularly rely on feminist and Indigenous intersectionality to explain human trafficking as the product of the relationship between structures of violence and personal circumstances.

PAR Workshops and Findings

In the spring and fall of 2017, we held eight full-day PAR workshops in two large cities with over 100,000 in population (Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie), one medium city with a population of approximately 50,000 (North Bay), and five smaller communities with populations ranging from 200 to 8,000 (Little Current, Kirkland Lake, Cochrane, Parry Sound, and Dokis First Nation). Donna, the Elder on our team, felt quite strongly that this was not the time to go directly into First Nations communities to conduct research because of the potentially traumatizing nature of the topic. Thus, we decided to focus on service providers and persons with lived experience who, in keeping with principles of self-determination, felt they were at a sufficient stage in their healing to attend. Our team also decided to exclude child protection agencies and all police services in order to ensure a safer space,[8] and to honour that the Anishinabek Nation maintains its inherent right over the welfare and jurisdiction of its children.[9] We followed Indigenous protocols at the workshops, with Donna or a local Elder opening the day with a prayer and a smudge, having a prayer and spirit plate at lunch time, and closing the day with a sharing circle for reflection and debriefing (Wilson, 2008). We also had Elder and counselling support on hand, and shared Amelia Rising's crisis support phone number in case support was needed afterward.

In total, we had 165 participants, with approximately 60 participants identifying as Indigenous and/or attending on behalf of Indigenous agencies. The types of agencies represented (Indigenous

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8   Our group has had some debate over whether to use "safe" or "safer", since it is not possible to create fully safe spaces.

9   However, in the three follow-up conferences we held in 2018, we invited police services because many participants said they should be at the table. We recognize that police services and child protection agencies will be part of any local collaborations on human trafficking, but that a law enforcement approach alone is inadequate and potentially harmful.

and non-Indigenous) included mental health and addictions support services, intimate partner violence support services, shelters and transitional housing services, correctional services, AIDS service organizations, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Victim Services, and health-care providers. Five participants had lived experience in human trafficking and/or the sex trade, either directly or as family members. The following discussion of findings is informed by our participant-observation notes, flip chart notes put together by participants in group discussions, and *dot-mocracy* results, where participants were given three sticky dots to place beside their preferred recommendations listed on the flip charts.[10]

Trafficked persons have a complex set of needs "due to the compounded nature of systemic and interpersonal violence that they experience" (Nagy et al., 2018a, p. 20). Some short-term needs, especially for people in crisis, included: sleep, safer shelter, food, hygiene, clothing, cigarettes, emergency medical care, detox or addiction management, and safety planning (Nagy et al., 2018a, p. 22). Our participants also identified longer-term needs that included: security from traffickers, transitional housing, affordable housing, mental health and addictions support, life skills and employment, health cards, tattoo removal, dental work, the return of children in care, and peer support. Participants emphasized the importance of having a trauma and violence-informed approach, where we seek to avoid retraumatizing people while supporting their pathways to healing. Having culturally relevant supports for francophone and Indigenous women is also crucial.

The experience of being trafficked is mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional; thus, holistic support is necessary. Indigenous participants mentioned the importance of Grandmothers, Aunties, Uncles, and Elders in the community; of knowing the Grandfather teachings; of breaking the cycle of intergenerational trauma; of nurturing the wellness of individual, family, and community, including connections to the natural cycle; and the idea that everyone has a role in community. Somewhat similarly, for non-Indigenous women, psychosocial care models that emphasize reintegration into the community "can be incredibly helpful for trafficked individuals due to the high degree of social isolation they experience" (Dyck, n.d., p. 33).

There are significant resource gaps in Northeastern Ontario, and this was the foremost theme of discussion at all workshops. Funding is a chronic challenge. We also heard multiple discussions about the lack of human trafficking data specific to our region that might help secure funding. Yet, some participants also worried that lower statistics could be used against Northeastern Ontario funding applications. In any case, gathering statistics is difficult given the nature of human trafficking. Despite recognition of the importance of collaboration, people also noted the tension that arises when we are all competing for the same pot of funding. Funding specific to human trafficking in the region during our 2017 workshops was mainly short-term funding through the provincial

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10 For a full discussion of findings and analysis across the region and within each location, see our full report (Nagy et al., 2018b). The call for collaboration was the second priority after a call for education for the general public, the hospitality industry, parents, school children, and training for service providers.

Victim Quick Response Program of Victim Services, and awareness campaigns through Crime Stoppers and Victim Services. However, as various people noted at different workshops, awareness campaigns without access to appropriate resources may be problematic, if not dangerous.

With regard to specific resources needed in Northeastern Ontario, there is a lack of transitional housing and a shortage of long-term safe and affordable housing. Participants further noted that homeless and domestic violence shelters have long waitlists and may be unsuitable for trafficked persons due to requirements for sobriety and/or verification of identity (traffickers may take identification cards). Moreover, participants indicated that shelters may serve as recruitment sites for trafficking because these insecure sites are known to traffickers, who can access and manipulate the vulnerabilities of residents. Research participants noted that northern-specific barriers to service provision include "huge geographical circumferences," "remoteness and accessibility," and the inadequacy of sending someone "down south" for services away from family and community supports. Thus, we heard multiple calls for the development of safer spaces and/or a dedicated safe house in the region for survivors of human trafficking. Other barriers to accessing services include institutionalized racism, the lack of culturally appropriate services, fear of arrest, and, in the case of some towns, the location of Victim Services in the police station. Smaller towns also face challenges such as the common knowledge of the shelter's location. Finally, a major barrier in all communities is the shame and stigma associated with rape and with the sex trade more generally.

Participants spoke about the need for greater communication between agencies and service mapping.[11] As one participant pointed out, "We're all working in silos here." Another asked, "Why would someone want to disclose [that they've been trafficked]? We don't have much to offer." Another simply noted, "I don't have enough resources to help her." Some service providers said that they did not know where to refer people, and that trafficked persons themselves do not necessarily know where to go for help, particularly if they are not accessing services in the first place. Almost none of our participants had human trafficking specifically in their mandates and most were doing human trafficking "off the side of their desks." This often meant that agencies are addressing human trafficking through existing programs such as "Healthy Relationships" programs and various forms of outreach. It is important to acknowledge that these approaches can be helpful where service providers are well-informed to do the best they can to support people who are being or have been trafficked.

For the most part, however, our conversations with service providers demonstrate the gross lack of resources and funding dedicated to human trafficking in this region. Stretching already thin resources puts a greater burden on service providers to perform double the work-load which, in turn, could have adverse effects on service providers' own well-being and their capacity to provide services.

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11 Participants in our northernmost locations said service mapping is not a useful exercise due to the extremely limited number of services available in their communities.

Having a dedicated organization and safe house in the region for trafficked persons may be an ideal approach because of the complex nature of personal situations and the length of recovery from violence and trauma (Nagy et al., 2018a). However, financial realities such as lack of sustainable government funding mean this may not be possible, at least not in the short-term. That said, the presence of a dedicated organization or safe house does not preclude the need for collaboration and service mapping because the complex needs of survivors necessitate comprehensive supports that no single service can deliver.

# Collaboration and the Service Mapping Toolkit

This final section presents the Service Mapping Toolkit designed to assist with developing multi-disciplinary collaboration and wrap-around support. The five graphics in this section are intended to be a handout for affected persons, agencies, and communities. Service mapping exercises will need to be repeated as organizations and personnel change. Thus, the service map should be understood as a living document, and the suggestions we provide are not exhaustive and can be adjusted for specific communities.

Page one of the Service Mapping Toolkit (Figure 1) uses an intersectional approach to illustrate the complex connections between structures of violence and personal experiences and circumstances. As the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) wrote, "Violence experienced by women who are sex workers, sexually exploited, and/or trafficked is not separate from colonial violence, but a central part of it" (Roudometkina & Wakeford, 2019, p. 4; Collin-Vezina et al., 2009; Macdonald & Wilson, 2013; NWAC, 2014). While we cannot elaborate on all details in the graphic, the deeply gendered nature of colonial dispossession is foundational to understanding sexualized violence against Indigenous women and girls. Indigenous women have historically been positioned as less than human, sexually available, and therefore, inherently violable (Boyer & Kampouris, 2014; Kaye, 2017; Smith, 2005). Socioeconomic marginalization resulting from the imposition of heteropatriarchal governance structures, the "marrying out" clause, and the lack of housing and other basic survival needs render Indigenous women all the more vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation.

Particularly in northern and remote communities, "the lack of infrastructure and services … feeds the sex industry and further exploitation," or drives women south where they are more vulnerable to being trafficked (NIMMIWG, 2019, p. 661). Land dispossession is therefore a key structural factor, including as it relates to a reliance on hitchhiking (NWAC, 2014). There is also documentation of an increase in human trafficking and other forms of violence at resource extraction sites (Konsmo & Pachecho, 2016). Finally, we note the intergenerational effects of residential schools, most especially cycles of abuse and neglect, mental health and addictions, and the normalization of violence, all of which factor into vulnerability. Given the variability of intersections between colonial structures and personal experiences and circumstances, Page one (Figure 1) of the service map allows us to see

Figure 1

Personal & Structural Dimensions of Human Trafficking
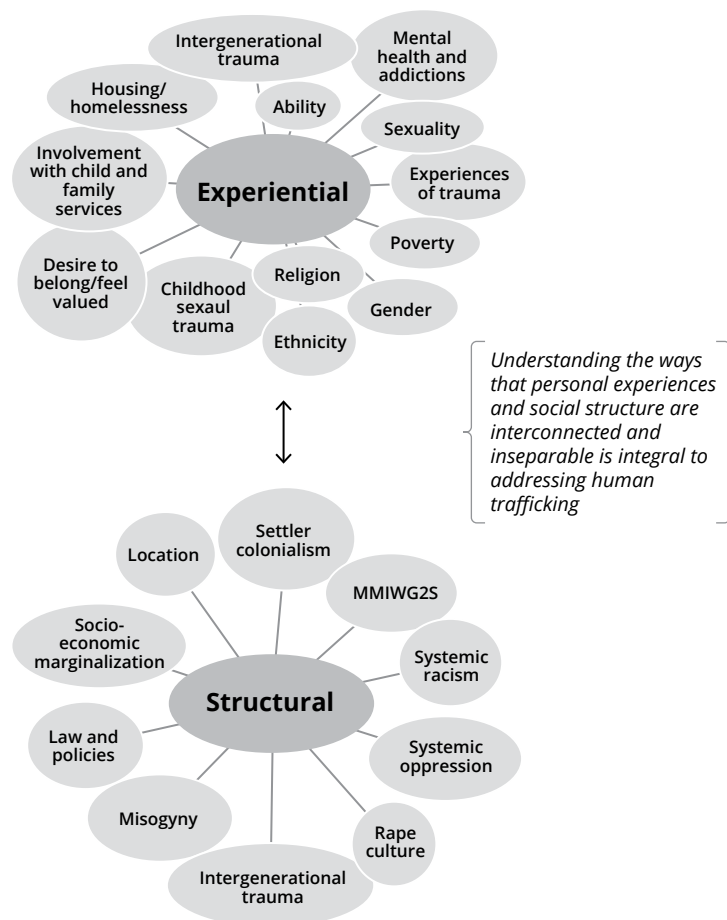
Note. Illustration of the complex connections between the structures of violence and personal experiences and circumstances

the ways in which the experience of trafficking and/or abuse is unique to each person, family, and community, and therefore requires individually tailored supports.

Page two (Figure 2) of the Service Mapping Toolkit speaks to the effects of human trafficking and core values, behaviours, and structures needed to respond to the issue. Modeled after the medicine wheel, it points to the physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, and social harms of trafficking. These pertain not only to the trafficked individual, but also to their family, community, nation, and society. These larger groups may be both implicated in trafficking and/or harmed by it. Thus, the core values required in responding to human trafficking apply not only to service providers but also to these larger groups. For example, elevating the positive value of self-determination over the negative value of control and dispossession speaks to the loss of control experienced at the hands of a trafficker, as well as the dispossession of Indigenous bodies, communities, and land (Konsmo & Pacheco, 2016). For service providers more specifically, valuing self-determination means ensuring that support services do not

Figure 2

Effects of Human Trafficking: Core Values for Responding

There are physical, emotional, psychological & spiritual effects to experiencing human trafficking. Trafficking affects not just exploited individuals, but their families, community and nation/society. How does your organization or community meet these needs? Now might we promote or enact positive values, behaviours, and structures over negative ones?

Positive Values, Behaviours and Structures

Self-Determination

Resilience and Resistance

Healthy Relationship

Acceptance and Non-Judgment

Equality & Dignity

Accountability

Negative Values, Behaviours and Structures

Control, Dispossession

Passive/Pathalogical Victimhood

Abusive Relationships

Stigmatization, Low Esteem

Racism, Sexism, Poverty

Apathy, Impunity

Positive Values Replace Negative Values

mimic or reiterate the controlling behaviours of traffickers or presume to know what is best for clients. Similarly, prizing resistance and resilience above passive or pathological victimhood is important in the production of awareness campaigns, media representations, and in recognizing that trafficked women negotiate survival on a daily basis. This is in contrast to misconceptions about women's perceived lack of agency that justifies coercive interventions and infantilizing approaches (Cojocaru, 2016). As the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform (2017) wrote:

> It is of utmost importance that women experiencing violence or exploitation are able to come forward and report when and if they choose, but this decision should be made by the individual, not determined by an intervention from an outside source. (p. 6)
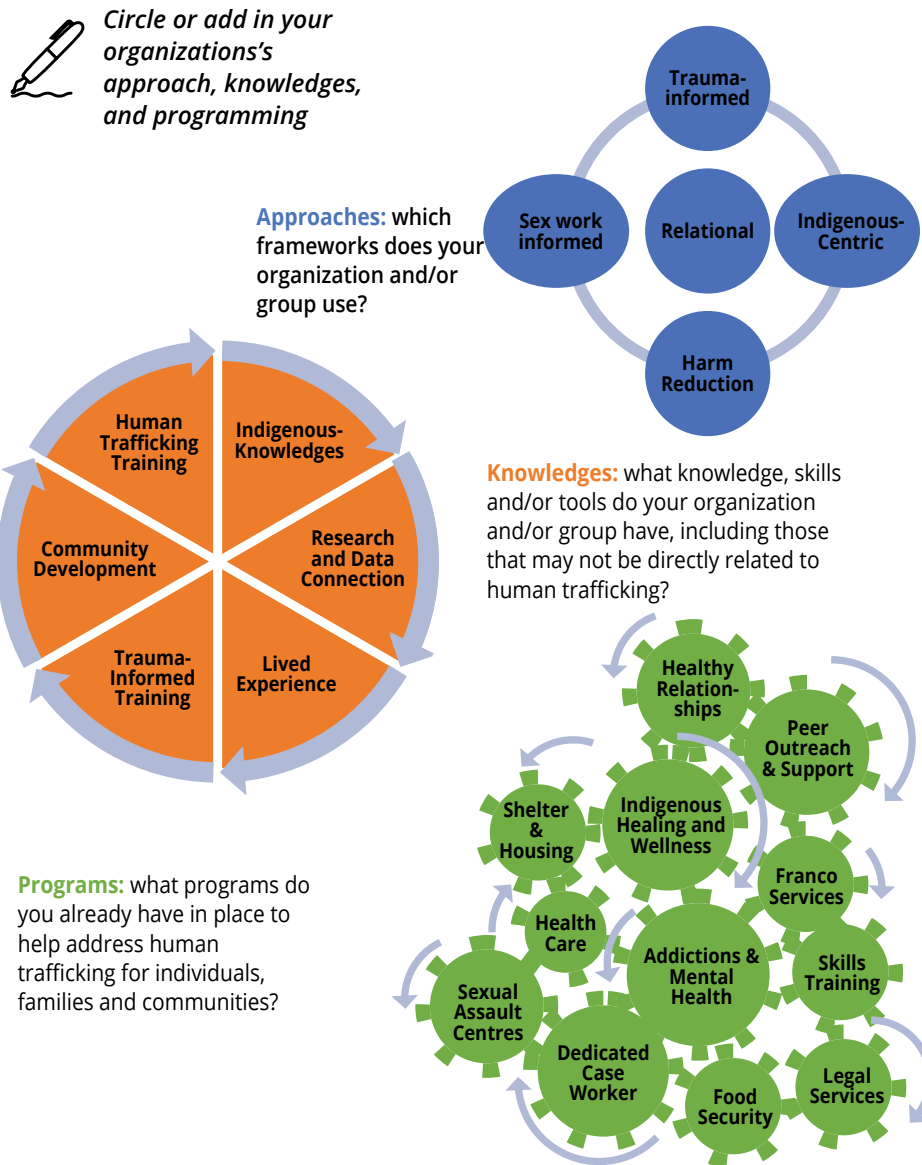
For service providers, acceptance and non-judgment are crucial to building trust with clients. Furthermore, our research shows that stigmatization is a key barrier to families and individuals seeking help. Moralizing approaches are ineffective. Moreover, reducing the stigmatization of sex work enhances the security of everyone in the sex trade and helps reduce the underground conditions that facilitate violence and trafficking. De-stigmatization may also facilitate acceptance by communities and families, and we argue that the rebuilding of healthy relationships is integral. The term families, here, embraces a wider circle of belonging beyond immediate family, and might also mean chosen family, that is, persons who are not biologically related. The final two sets of core values emphasize the equality and dignity of people, as well as responsibilities and accountability at the level of community, Nation, and society (Konsmo & Pacheco, 2016). The marginalization and social exclusion that come with poverty, racism, sexism, and other forms of systemic oppression requires not only attitudinal changes at the interpersonal level (such as from apathy, indifference, or bias) but also structural changes in terms of law, policies, and the distribution of resources.

Page three (Figure 3) of the toolkit is the start of the service mapping process itself and is applicable within organizations, across communities, and regionally. Page three is intended to help service providers assess the strengths and limitations of their policies and practices in order to map out existing support systems. It is designed for each organization or agency to conduct a reflective self-assessment in terms of their approaches, knowledges, and programs, including in ways that are not specifically categorized as anti-human-trafficking strategies. We argue that it is vitally important for service providers to continually assess their strategies and policies as well as to evaluate their personal biases and privileges. We want to emphasize that these three categories, approaches, knowledges, and programs, must be integrated together. It is insufficient to simply check off specific programs which may in fact be inappropriate for women seeking support if programs do not embody specific approaches or incorporate appropriate knowledges.

In terms of approaches, we argue for relational approaches that are tailored to the specific needs of trafficked persons, their families, and community. By relational, we mean service provider approaches that honour self-determination and agency, are based in respect and non-judgement, and encourage service providers to act as allies in achieving change, rather than imposing "expert" solutions (Folgheraiter & Luisa, 2017). Building this kind of relationship with trafficked persons is necessary if support strategies are to have any meaningful impact. We highlight here the need for trauma and violence-informed practices that prioritize the safety and needs of those who are accessing support and aim to avoid causing further harm to persons. As previously mentioned, trauma and violence-informed strategies require an intersectional analysis of the complexities of trauma and violence in order to understand how people are affected by harmful experiences. This

Figure 3

Organizational profile

Circle or add in your organizations's approach, knowledges, and programming

Approaches: which frameworks does your organization and/or group use?

Knowledges: what knowledge, skills and/or tools do your organization and/or group have, including those that may not be directly related to human trafficking?

Programs: what programs do you already have in place to help address human trafficking for individuals, families and communities?

Note. Relevant approaches, knowledges, and programs.

is important in terms of addressing human trafficking because practices that are not trauma and violence-informed can unintentionally retraumatize persons who are accessing support.

As discussed previously in relation to self-determination, any act that attempts to control persons or deny their right to make choices for themselves may be perceived as being similar to traffickers' methods of control. Thus, for example, policies that require people to consistently attend certain types of programming in order to qualify for other supports may, in fact, be counterintuitive to
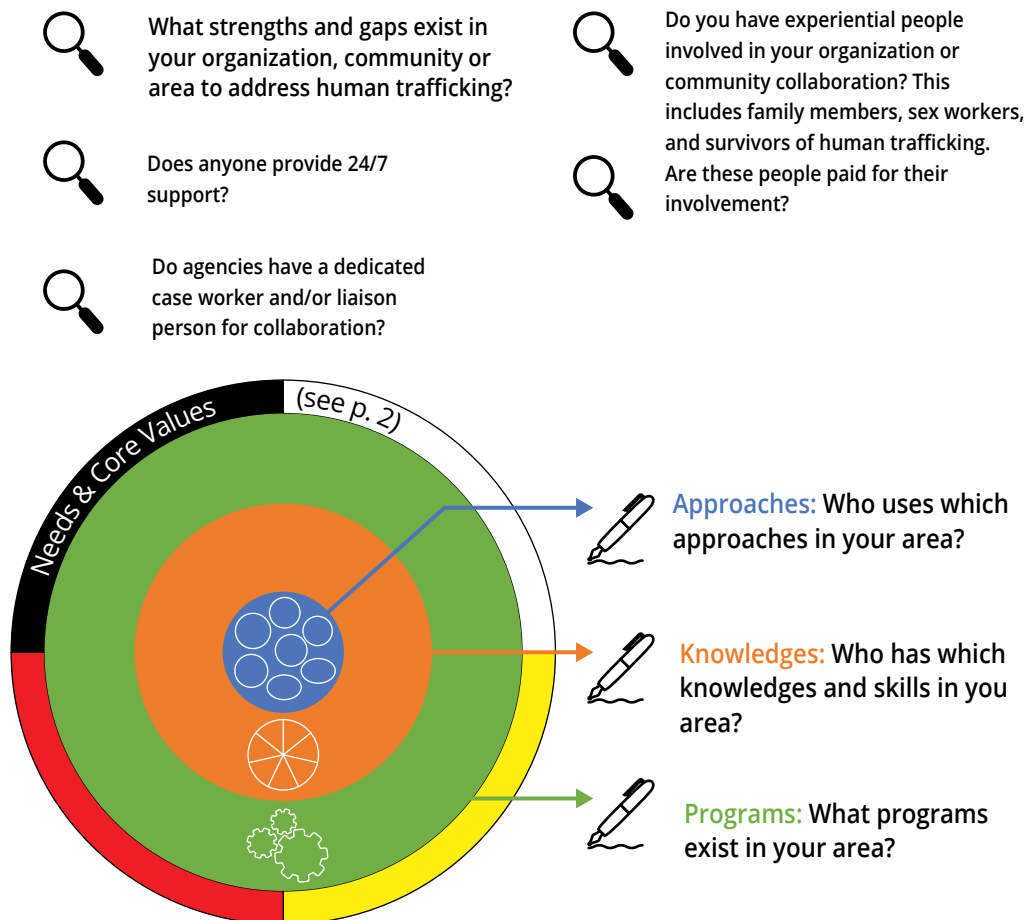
trauma and violence-informed practices. Honouring self-determination further requires a sex work informed approach to human trafficking. The violence and harm experienced by sex workers in the name of anti-trafficking is well documented: surveillance, harassment, intimidation, criminalization, deportation, and the denial of sex workers' agency and self-determination (Kempadoo & McFadyen, 2017). Sex workers should not be the collateral damage (The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, 2007) of anti-trafficking. Furthermore, we believe that sex workers can and should be at the forefront of detecting and responding to human trafficking. Thus, they must be consulted in a meaningful manner in the design of anti-human trafficking measures.

Harm reduction strategies are central to trauma and violence-informed practices. Both approaches move beyond framing trauma as the result of isolated events to understanding that trauma impacts the person as a whole, while simultaneously recognizing that people are more than their trauma. As one member of NORAHT described, harm reduction means meeting people where they are in their journey at that particular moment. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that healing is not a linear process and that people may require different supports at various moments throughout their healing. Harm reduction strategies will vary across sectors and there is no singular definition of what constitutes harm reduction. Some common principles include: respecting human rights and dignity; a commitment to social justice and social transformation; reducing stigma; and minimizing negative health impacts (Harm Reduction International, 2019)

We also argue for decolonizing trauma-informed approaches because healing strategies rooted in Eurocentric paradigms may be insufficient to meet the needs of trafficked persons. This is particularly important in our region given that Indigenous women are likely to be disproportionately trafficked, and our findings indicate a need for Indigenous-centric approaches. Decolonizing trauma scholarship is critical of the ways in which practices rooted in Eurocentric paradigms pathologize individuals by focusing on what is "wrong" with the person and the ways in which personal experience is addressed in isolation (Baskin, 2016; Duran, 2005; Linklater, 2014). In contrast, decolonizing trauma approaches focus on the harms experienced and create space for culturally relevant healing practices that may differ from Eurocentric, biomedical, and psychological paradigms. Following Renee Linklater (2014; Rainy River First Nation), we argue that understanding the concept of resiliency is integral to decolonizing trauma practices. She wrote, "Resiliency focuses on the strengths of Indigenous peoples and their cultures, providing a needed alternative to the focus on pathology, dysfunction and victimization" (Linklater, 2014, p. 25). Decolonizing trauma practices have much in common with Indigenous healing paradigms, such as an emphasis that individual healing is "grounded in social healing" (Ross, 2014, p. 37), and an emphasis on holistic healing. Moreover, decolonizing approaches not only recognize the harms of settler colonialism but systematically work toward repair and redressing such harms. For example, this could mean working toward the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) and the National Inquiry on MMIWG2S (2019).

Figure 4

Integrating Approaches, Skills/Knowledges, and Programs in Your Community or Area

What strengths and gaps exist in your organization, community or area to address human trafficking?

Do you have experiential people involved in your organization or community collaboration? This includes family members, sex workers, and survivors of human trafficking. Are these people paid for their involvement?

Does anyone provide 24/7 support?

Do agencies have a dedicated case worker and/or liaison person for collaboration?

Needs & Core Values

Approaches: Who uses which approaches in your area?

Knowledges: Who has which knowledges and skills in you area?

Programs: What programs exist in your area?

How do specific programs integrate the approaches, knowledges and core values needed for responding to the needs of trafficked persons, their families and communities?

The obvious overlaps in the above approaches identified here include a rejection of Eurocentric knowledges centred on individualism. Instead, a positioning of individuals in their relationships to families and communities allows for envisioning their physical, mental, psychological, spiritual, and social well-being, not in isolation but in an enabling structural environment where coalitions of service providers are well-resourced and equipped with the present toolkit. This toolkit not only touches upon relevant knowledges and necessary programs, but also highlights especially the importance of experiential and Indigenous knowledges, and the importance of having culturally sensitive trauma and violence-informed training. Programming priorities include having a dedicated

case worker, Indigenous healing and wellness, mental health and addictions, peer outreach and support, and safe shelter and affordable housing. Our francophone participants also highlighted having French programming and services as culturally important, and that it is difficult for francophone clients to translate traumatic emotions into English. We further note the importance of supports for "aging out" youth and helping trafficked women get their children back.

Figure 5

Human Trafficking Collaborative Service Map

Agency & Program	Approaches ✔						Skills & Knowledges ✔								
	Relational	Trauma-informed	Indigenous-Centric	Harm Reduction	Sex Work Informed		Lived Experience	Indigenous Knowledges	Trauma-Informed Training	Human Trafficking Training	Community Development	Research and Data Collection			
Organization	✔		✔	✔	✔		✔	✔			✔				

Note. A chart to help determine what approaches, skills, and knowledges are present in your community organizations and programs

Pages four (Figure 4) and five (Figure 5) of the Service Mapping Toolkit are designed for community or area-wide collaboration to see what strengths and gaps collectively exist. One of the things we

observed at our workshops was that some participants simply did not know what other agencies provide or the kinds of resources that are available. If mainstream agencies are organizing the collaborative network, it is especially important to reach out to local First Nations, Friendship Centres, other Indigenous groups, and especially Elders, for inclusivity and perspective. Personal invitations to join a meeting—phone calls or community presentations, rather than random emails—are key to starting relationships if none exist.

Flexible support, available 24 hours/7 days a week, is key for meeting people where they are, rather than trying to fit them into mandates defined by contractual obligations with funders (Nagy et al., 2018a). Having a dedicated case worker and/or liaison person for the collaborative network is very important because it saves women from repeatedly telling their story (which can re-traumatize) and it ensures the smooth coordination of services. Case management is crucial, where a *walk with me* approach means we do not simply facilitate making appointments but also accompany clients for added security and support. We also cannot overemphasize the importance of listening to and meaningfully involving people with lived experience, as well as compensating them for their time, expertise, and support in the circle of care. Trafficking survivor and research participant Leona Skye suggested that member organizations pay into a collective pot as a promise to help employ a peer survivor. This would create job positions and also ensure that member organizations will use the services of the peer survivor because it is part of their budgets. Finally, responding to human trafficking requires a long-term commitment and core, long-term funding. Participants reported that it may take multiple attempts and several years to exit an abusive situation and that the recovery process may be long and complex. As one key informant indicated, "If you can't commit the time, then don't get engaged at the outset" (Nagy et al., 2018a, p. 21).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have identified gaps and barriers to service provision and the particular circumstances of responding to human trafficking in Northeastern Ontario. Comprehensive, wrap-around support is necessary to address short-term and long-term needs of people being trafficked, trafficking survivors, their families, and communities. We recommend the development of safe houses dedicated to women experiencing human trafficking in Northeastern Ontario. We further highlight the pronounced need in our region for transitional housing and long-term safe and affordable housing, both of which were identified by our participants as one of the key gaps in responding to human trafficking and other forms of abuse in the sex trade. We recommend, also, that provincial and federal funding opportunities be accessible to grassroots organizations that are doing outreach, because they are often most directly connected to persons in the sex trade and, thus, most likely to be in a position to provide support. While the communities in our region are working toward dedicated safe houses, it is recommended that safe spaces be created within existing organizations and that staff be trained to understand the unique needs of persons seeking anti-

violence supports using the approaches and knowledges we have identified. Collaboration among grassroots organizations, service providers, and experiential persons is key to addressing human trafficking and violence in the sex trade, including in the sharing and coordination of information, knowledges, and resources.

To that point, we summarize below seven main principles for building collaborative networks or coalitions aimed at comprehensively responding to human trafficking and violence in the sex trade:

- Focus on supporting those who have experienced harms and violence and ask for help. Don't assume to know better than trafficked persons what their unique needs are at any given tim.

- Involve persons with lived experiences in the paid circle of care. This includes in the design, management, and evaluation of programs, as well as community outreach and peer support.

- Employ non-judgmental, trauma and violence-informed approaches, and harm reduction.

- Provide culturally relevant supports that draw on appropriate knowledges.

- Maintain open communication and common referral protocols, and the tracking of data within the collaborative network.

- Commit to providing 24/7, flexible, and individually tailored support for several years for each trafficked person.

- Provide support that is relational and holistic. Building healthy relationships within families, communities, and between service providers and trafficked persons is key to support and healing.

At the core of these principles is the importance of supporting trafficked persons in ways that uphold self-determination and human dignity. Importantly, we emphasize that trafficked persons must be able to choose their own pathways to healing, with service providers delivering support and tools. Local and regional collaboration based on these principles serves to redress some of the gaps and barriers, to streamline and coordinate responses, and to develop and provide more comprehensive supports that empower and respect the self-determination of trafficked persons, their families, and communities.

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