First Peoples Child & Family Review
An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews
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Foreword:

Marlyn Bennett

In this issue I have stepped away from my usual role as the coordinating editor of this journal temporarily. I bring words of encouragement, acknowledgement and thanks to our very special guest editor, Jeannine Carriere and the various authors for carrying their knowledge and wisdom forward in this issue. The starting point for this issue was an event called the "*Indigenous Gathering and Sharing Wisdom Conference*," where the lead organizers were the Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network, partnered with the University of Victoria in delivering evidence-based research at a provincial conference held October 6 and 7, 2009, in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The conference sought to highlight and honour research and practices that enrich the lives of Indigenous children and communities. While not all of the articles (9 of the 14 in this issue) were presented at the conference, I think you will agree with me that all of the articles in this issue do more than just highlight research being done by, with and for Indigenous populations. The articles honour and enrich not only the lives of Indigenous children, communities, students, Elders and academics, but also those of us who had the privilege of hearing the original conference presentations and those of us who will get to read all or some of the papers that have resulted in this issue.

This issue also highlights an unusual practice in that it is dedicated to a young conference presenter who lost her life un-expectantly a short time after the conclusion of the *Indigenous Gathering and Sharing Wisdom Conference*. It was important to the conference organizations that we acknowledge Roxanne Charlie and her dedication to better the world for herself, her family and her community. We know that her star shines brightly across the paths of her family, friends and communities today.

I want to close by saying *Miigwetch* (thank you) for the opportunity to partner in bringing forth the sharing and knowledge that was imparted during this important conference and to acknowledge the important contributions of all the authors to this issue of the First Peoples Child and Family Review journal. Enjoy the read!

Marlyn Bennett, Director of Research and Coordinating Editor of the First Peoples Child & Family Review Journal, First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada

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Editorial:

Gathering, Sharing and Documenting the Wisdom Within and Across our Communities and Academic Circles

Jeannine Carriere

Writing this editorial is both an honour and a challenge for me cloaked in sadness. My sadness comes from our dedication of this issue to Roxanne Charlie who lost her life while we were preparing for this journal and after some of us had the honour to witness her story at our *Gathering and Sharing Wisdom* conference in Victoria, BC, October, 2009. How many more of our youth will we lose this year and how many voices will go unheard? Roxanne as our dedication states, we honour your life and thank you for the bright light you brought to us at our conference and in our lives. You are indeed an inspiration.

Our conference also opened with another inspirational speaker, Chief Wayne Christian who submitted his words of wisdom to our journal by reminding us that placing children at the center is our collective duty. Chief Christian revisited the impacts of the sixties scoop and how he and his community challenged the child welfare system through standing together and reclaiming jurisdiction and traditional child caring laws almost thirty years ago. Quoting several Indigenous authors in his article, Chief Christianson states that, "We must all reinvest in our children if the policy of the government was 'to kill the Indian child' then our policy is to 'bring back to life the Indian in the child.' He closes strongly by reminding us that if we believe that children are our future then "our future is now" in order to preserve the next seven generations. Well said.

The Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network at the University of Victoria was the coordinating body for the *Gathering and Sharing Wisdom* Conference mentioned earlier. Under the leadership of Jacquie Green, this network has provided a forum for many Indigenous practitioners, academics, students, community members and other interested parties to express their ideas on matters related to Indigenous child welfare. Throughout their article on the network, Jacquie Green, Rebecca Taylor, Rakiva Larken, Margaret Brier and Trevor Good describe an innovative approach to training which engages members of Indigenous communities in learning what is research, how to conduct research and to demystify the role that research can play in our communities. The article also features the stories of young female and male warriors at the University of Victoria who are students with a high degree of personal commitment and vision for Indigenous communities. Their examples inspire our youth to reach to their highest potential and accomplish dreams for their families, communities and themselves.

We move from the voices of youth to the powerful voice of Elder Gordon Shawanda. Storytelling is powerful and it is at its most impactful through our Elders, our teachers. In this article I was riveted by Elder Shawanda's depiction of nature stories, the warmth of family and the description of his experiences in residential school. Early in the article as he describes a visit with an Elder as making him feel 'warm and cozy', I thought it was the same feeling that I experienced reading this article. It is an emotional and amazing testimonial of one of our Elder's life and in this article you will find a number of gems that make you smile or bring you to tears.

Gordon Shawanda leads the way into Dr, Maragaret Kovach's article on Indigenous research pedagogy and relational methods. Margaret reminds us of the importance of our personal location and how this interacts with methodology for Indigenous peoples. She cites a number of Indigenous scholars such as Shawn Wilson (2001) and Absolon and Willett (2004) and posits that "it is not the method per se, that is the determining characteristic of Indigenous methodologies, but rather the interplay (the relationship) between the method and paradigm and the extent to which the method itself is

congruent with an Indigenous worldview" (p.40). Margaret describes a 'conversational method' for Indigenous led research and provides examples in which she used this approach. In her conclusions she reminds the researcher of the importance of self care and to use a reflective process that centres the research paradigm and method in order to maintain the importance of relationship in research with Indigenous peoples.

The discussion on research using an Indigenous framework continues with the article by Naadi Todd Ormiston who cautions us on the outside interests of research such as what is conducted by government agencies. Todd reminds us of the power of oral histories and preserving our stories as a means to decolonization and maintaining the 'truths' of our communities. He states that "vital to Indigenous research is that it benefits our people, our communities and our Nations" (p.53).

Molly Wikham is a student in the Indigenous Governance program at the University of Victoria. In her article on youth custody, she encourages us to take a closer look at the 'injustices within the justice' system for our youth. Margaret incorporates a strong critique of the current youth justice system and advocates for a decolonized approach to youth justice with "a blanket of cultural teachings and love" (p.60). Her passion for this topic is obvious and she concludes the article with an Indigenous framework for addressing the needs of Indigenous youth in the justice system.

Homelessness is predominant among our youth in urban centers across Canada. In 'Home and Native Land: Aboriginal Young Women and Homelessness', Lia Ruttan, Patti LaBoucane- Benson and Brenda Munro take us through the journey of young Aboriginal women on the streets of Edmonton, Alberta. The authors describe homelessness as 'enforced home loss' that is in dire need of resolution for the young women in their study who represent the youth of any city in Canada. The authors describe traditional community life before the massive urbanization of Indigenous peoples and state that "today, the nature of home, in urban Aboriginal spaces, located on former native homelands, is a dynamic process" (p.68). Their research includes interviews with 18 homeless young Aboriginal women who provided some valuable insights to the issue of homelessness for Aboriginal youth in urban Canada.

The analysis by Danika Overmars on the DSMIV is a 'must read' for anyone involved or interested in mental health and Indigenous peoples. Her article includes a comparative analysis of the DSM process and a Coast Salish naming ceremony where of course the outcomes are very different. Both processes involve that "a name is given to an individual by someone who occupies a position of respect and power" (p.82). Danika continues by explaining the differences however in particular how the names given under each circumstance has life long effects on those being named. She concludes with recommendations that are more culturally relevant than the labelling and resulting stigma that has traditionally been used in mental health services for Aboriginal peoples.

It is encouraging to read through an increase in the social sciences literature on matters related to Métis peoples and Dalene Thomas' article is no exception. By taking us through historical accounts of Metis life in Canada, she describes the issue of 'resistance' and survival for Metis families. Dalene also provides a synopsis of holistic living and values that can take the Métis child into a different era in Canada, surrounded by community love and reaching toward a greater freedom as one of Canada's lost children in child welfare.

The issue of adoption is close to my heart as many of you know. Reading Maria Bertsch and Bruce Bidgood's article on adoption practices framed in a First Nation ceremonial process was inspiring. The authors remind us that adoption sanctioned 'in a good way' can be a positive and life changing experience for Indigenous children and families. This article provides a welcomed change in adoption processes and hopefully will inspire others to follow the lead of the Lax Kwa'lam community members.

Children involved in child welfare experience a number of challenges in the school system. Keith Brownlee. Edward Rawana, Julia MacArthur and Michele Probizansky have approached this topic with helpful suggestions in how to ameliorate this experience. By encouraging a strong community/school relationship this authors suggest that the key to enhancing success for Aboriginal children in care is to utilize strengths' based assessment as the starting point. This is followed by building on the student's strengths to ensure that components of this are incorporated into their daily educational life. Experiences in giving back to the community and finally to participate in workshops or forums that can assist them deal with relevant issues that impact their lives such as grief is also part of this model which provides hope for other school jurisdictions who are looking for creative ways of addressing the school needs of children in care of child welfare services.

Steven Koptie calls us to be witnesses in the decolonization and resurgence of Indigenous ways of being. He states that "to be able to research, record and re-tell truths about unsustainable fallacies is to realize the eternal hope of survival that the Indigenous people continue to hold across Turtle Island (North America)." (p.123). this strong calling is for each of us

who are privileged with the opportunities need to remember our responsibilities toward other Indigenous peoples in our every day lives.

Elizabeth Fast and Collin Verzina provide us with a useful review of the literature on trauma and resilience for Indigenous peoples. This article offers some practical assistance to all those interested in these topics and immersed in the never ending search for relevant literature. Their conclusion that connection to culture and spirituality are the foundational supports for Indigenous people in the healing movement is actually not only a recommendation found in this article but seems to be the framework for each of the works inside the covers of this volume.

Finally Cathy Richardson's article on "Islands of Safety" leaves us with a lasting contribution from the voices, perspectives, knowledge and work of Métis Community Services in Victoria, B.C. Islands of Safety is a model and process designed to focus on dignity, resistance and safety knowledge for women and Indigenous peoples. This model, Islands of Safety, is based on rigorous safety planning, practices that dignify family members, and exploration of individuals' responses and resistance to violence in the family, negative social responses, and oppression that stems from colonial perspectives. Richardson's article reminds us that all human beings are spirited and that by preserving a person's dignity and integrity, we encompass the spiritual, physical, emotional and social needs of those individuals touched by violence.

I am pleased to have reviewed each of the articles within as I am a proud member of the editorial board for this journal. Again I am witness to how important this journal to our communities who are concerned with child and family services. In the last few years our circle has widened to a larger readership and scholarship which contributes to enduring realities that truly are multidisciplinary. The future of our journal continues to be bright as it offers insights into these important matters within an Indigenous paradigm.

All my relations.

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In Memory of

Roxanne Charlie

Roxanne Charlie's spirit and essence made its rapid and strong travel over 150 participants at the Gathering and Sharing Wisdom Conference. She was strong in person and is even stronger in spirit. She stood up as protector of her truth and holder of her story. Her story was affirmed by the community and validated by the drumming of a warrior woman song. Roxanne wanted others to benefit and move forward by speaking her truth and knowledge. She carved a space with her words and also extended her wisdom to provide safe passage for others who may have or are walking to that space that brings people into the darkness.

Roxanne Charlie gave of herself generously, fully and completely. Roxanne Charlie speared her place in the earth and spoke her words and wisdom and they will endure on and provide safe passage for others. She demonstrated exceptional heart and courage and the love for family in trying to break cycles of colonization that impact us all. Roxanne Charlie, keep walking with your family, community and with all of us as spirit guide and warrior woman. We dedicate this journal to you, in your memory and spirit.

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Voice of a Leader: If you Truly Believe Children are our Future - the Future is Now!

Kulpi7 (Chief) Wayne Chistian

Abstract

This paper is based on a speech by Chief Wayne Christian the Co-keynote speaker for the "Gathering and Sharing Wisdom Conference" held in Victoria BC October 6th & th, 2010. He shares the history of his community, their children and how state policies, legislation and laws have affected a way of life for his people. He illustrates through narrative the importance of re-learning our cultural practices. Chief Christian begins his account by quoting a historical approach remembered by many Indigenous people in which the government policy of the day sought to "Kill the Indian in the Child." Chief Christian noted that First Nations people have resisted this policy, but importantly, he discussed how balance can be restored today for Indian children.

Introduction

This speech was made by Chief Wayne Christian at the "Gathering and Sharing Wisdom Conference" which took place in Victoria, British Columbia October 6th & 7th, 2009. The original speech has been modified for publication, with an effort to maintain the narrative nature of his words. Chief Christian was invited to share the keynote space with the late Roxanne Charlie who is a young woman from his territory and has passed to the spirit world October 2009. The theme of the conference was intended to hear accounts of successful child welfare practices that have occurred in the province of BC. Additionally the conference organizers invited leaders to share their speaking space with young people and to model leadership with them. Reasons for inviting young people were to hear what they had to say about family and community wellness in their communities and in their post secondary and high school education. Chief Christian was invited to speak about his role in the monumental march he organized to assert their right to care for their children and families in his community. Additional footnotes have been included in this narrative to provide supplementary information, and references where required.

Chief Wayne Christian

I would like to acknowledge the Hereditary Chiefs, Chiefs and their Council members, Directors of Child Welfare Agencies, Front Line Workers, and Presenters. In addition I would like to acknowledge Grand Chiefs, Regional Chief Members of the political executives for the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, First Nations Summit and BC Assembly of First Nations.

I want to acknowledge and give special thanks *Kukstemc* to the people who supported our community in 1980 with the Indian Child Caravan. What I will be speaking about today stems from the support and care you gave in 1980 when you walked alongside us for our children. I believe it is important you know who I am as your keynote speaker as it is through my experiences and stories that I speak about child welfare today.

During the sixties scoop[1] my entire family of ten, five girls and five boys were apprehended by Child Welfare Services here in British Columbia. I grew up as a child in care of the government. As a young person in care, I was a victim of the state, however, today when I reflect on these experiences I see myself as a survivor of sexual and physical assault. The effects of disconnect from my family comes with much life trauma and

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1. The sixties scoop was a phenomena that began during that time period, when federal responsibility of Indian children was passed over to the provinces. With this transfer came the transfer of dollars and a result of this policy was the spike in child apprehensions of Indigenous children, only to be placed with non-Native families.

Biography of Wayne Christian:

Kukpi7 (Chief) Wayne M. Christian, Wunuxtsin, is of Secwepemc - Sinixt ancestry. He is the proud father of seven children and fifteen grandchildren. Chief Christian was re-elected as chief of Splatsin First Nation in December 2007. He has worked for over 30 years in establishing healing and health systems for the Indigenous nations of B.C. Chief Christian was elected as tribal chairman of the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council in April 2009 and now acts as tribal spokesperson representing 10 of the 17 communities of the Secwepemc nation with responsibilities in Aboriginal title and land.

has been far reaching for myself, my family and my community. My family has experiences reflective of disconnect and isolation from family and community which has included jail for myself and more sadly, suicide for my brother on December 10, 1978. I also lost my Mother in November 1979 and I believe these are related to historical and systemic trauma and violence.

Today, I am a Father of seven children; four sons and three daughters. I am a Grandfather of fifteen children; eleven grandsons and four grand daughters. I know my children will take up the fight to protect our Nation's children and fight for our people and communities to gain recognition of sovereign title, rights and laws. Caring for our children and child welfare history in British Columbia has been affected by policies, practices and the general climate of the times related to Indigenous and white relations. Our community has responded with our own cultural practices and today I am revisiting how child welfare has either enhanced or minimized how we care for children as a Nation.

Federal and Provincial Policy and Child Welfare

In 1910 Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier was presented with a letter from our Chiefs. It was a message from our community and part of it stated the following:

"Thus they commenced to enter our "houses," or live on our "ranches." With us when a person enters our house he becomes our guest, and we must treat him hospitably as long as he shows no hostile intentions. At the same time we expect him (the settlers) to return to us equal treatment for what he receives.

Some of our Chiefs said, "These people wish to be partners with us in our country. We must, therefore, be the same as brothers to them, and live as one family. We will share equally in everything—half and half—in land, water and timber, etc. What is ours will be theirs, and what is theirs will be ours. We will help each other to be great and good." [2]

Although our Chiefs viewed their relations with newcomers to this land as one of mutuality, this view was not shared by non-Native people during these early encounters. The approach between the government of Canada and Indigenous peoples during this time was one of assimilation and ultimately, legislative genocide. The federal and provincial government of the time made residential schools mandatory through an amendment to the Indian Act in 1920. This meant the forced and mass removal of children from their homes. Children were removed from their homes in any number of ways, including by the force of the police, Indian agents and priests. Children were transported to schools sometimes by their family members, but oftentimes in dangerous and inhumane ways; children were often transported on boats, in the backs of trucks and in cattle cars by rail. Schools were used as a mass assimilation tool with an outright goal: to kill the Indian in the child.

The Government of Canada also created laws, which forbade ceremony, such as the Potlatch Law amendment made to section three of the Indian Act in 1884, and confined First Nations people to reserves across the nation in yet another provision of the Indian Act. The Indian Act also restricted access to ancestral lands and resulted in First Nations people having no access to hunting, fishing and other subsistence-based activities. These legal restrictions to First Nations people meant no access to sacred areas of land, a relationship that was essential to maintain our culture, spirit and connection to land and community well being.

Genocide by legislation continued to evolve into a new era of national legislation, policies and law in this century, which once again has an underlying meaning: to kill the Indian in the child. For example, beginning in the late fifties and early sixties, countless numbers of Indigenous children were removed from their families and put into non-Native homes. Social workers of the time often removed children from the home because of poverty or discrimination, without evidence supporting the decision to remove the child from their home and community.[3] In the fifties and sixties it was taken for granted by government social workers that Indigenous children would be better off being raised white.

For our small community these state laws had detrimental repercussions. The removal of children from our community

2. The Chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan and Couteau Tribes of British Columbia (letter to Sir Wilfred Laurier, Premier of the Dominion of Canada, August 15, 1910).

3 McKenzie & Hudson, 1985.

© Wayne Christian

into white homes began a cycle of apprehensions, which continued up until 1980. In 1980 there were up to 100 Splatsin children apprehended by the state and these removals were justified as legal practices and duties under BC provincial law. Like many reserves in Canada our community is living in fourth world conditions in a first world country, and none of the existing child welfare policies are able to address these underlying issues of poverty, child care and living conditions. Like residential schools and the sixties scoop, although there are new or current policies regarding Indigenous child welfare, these current laws and practices are similar to policies of the 1800s albeit being flavored with new language and newly created justifications. The truth is, current policies are still a race-based response leading to assimilation, led by the federal and provincial government of Canada. That is, they are systematically and institutionally racist. Child welfare policies do not account for, or respect Indigenous child welfare practices. Social workers often hold racist ideologies and Indigenous children continue to be overrepresented in the child welfare system, often disconnected from their families and communities, and these realities contribute to ongoing intergenerational traumas that impact the lives of all Indigenous People. Regardless of questionably positive policy intentions they all have the same effect: to kill the Indian in the child. The impact of all of these historical policies has left our families and communities affected by the multi generational effects of historical colonial trauma.

Traditional Child Welfare Laws and Policy

In 1980 Splatsin enacted laws based on our traditions and how we looked after each other. In 1979 to 1980, we viewed our legislation clause-by-clause. In our analysis we reviewed what practices, policies and laws worked for our people in the past. Our population was 350 at that time. We found that every family with the exception of two families were impacted and affected by the sixties scoop. Over one hundred children were stolen from the embrace of their grandmothers and mothers, which in my view is the second wave of genocide, following residential school. It has been twenty-eight years since we have enacted laws and jurisdiction that works for and reflects our community and our children. Today our population is 800 and for the last twenty eight years 450 children have been living within our community and under our traditional laws which has resulted in less than 5% of our children going into care, even within our own legislated system. It was necessary for our community to strategize laws that reflect our customs. To date in BC, there are no other Indigenous Nations who have sovereign child welfare jurisdiction for their own laws, own customs, and their own families like us, the Splatsin Nation. Hence, Splatsin Nation represents a unique example of a community that was able to reclaim the right and responsibility of child welfare, providing a successful example of a Nation that has found a way to support children and families outside of harmful governmental policies.

Traditional Healing Approaches

The Role of Culture and Traditions

McCormick[4] conducted a comprehensive study examining the healing processes of Indigenous people in British Columbia, finding that traditional healing approaches were both popular and powerful. Study participants identified a number of traditional healing practices including: participation in ceremony, expression of emotion, learning from a role model, establishing a connection with nature, exercise, involvement in challenging activities, establishing a social connection, gaining an understanding of the problem, establishing a spiritual connection, obtaining help/support from others, self care, setting goals, anchoring self in tradition, and helping others.[5]

Research conducted in British Columbia on Aboriginal strengths found that Aboriginal wellness and strength could be found in several areas including: a sense of community, Aboriginal identity and cultural traditions, contributing to others spirituality, and living in a good way and coming through the hardship many families and communities face.[6] These studies all demonstrate the importance of identity and cultural healing practices in positive healing outcomes for Indigenous People, and a return to these practices as western models continue to exclude and fail Indigenous Peoples. This healing leads in turn to a sense of empowerment for Indigenous People.[7]

It has been observed by some that many traditional healing practices have been eroded over time, with colonialism causing a reduction in spiritual practices and traditional herbal medicine usage.[8] This was further impacted by the Indian Act restrictions on a number of cultural ceremonies and practices, related in part, to a fear of settler conversion to Indigenous practices.[9] It is important to note that while many practices have been impacted by colonial interference, these practices are not entirely lost.[10] In fact, there is a resurgence of these practices in many instances. For example, in a study of residential school survivors in the Cariboo region of British Columbia11 "researchers found that 45% of those surveyed consulted elders for advice and 41% accessed the sweat lodge ceremony

4. 1996.
5. McCormick, 1996.
6. Van Uchelen, Davidson, Quressette, Brasfield & Demeris, 1997.
7. McCormick, 1996.
8. Warry, 1993, as cited in McCormick & Wong, 2006.
9. McCormick & Wong, 2006.
10. McCormick & Wong, 2006.
11. Cariboo Tribal Council, 1991, as cited in Wyrostok & Paulson, 2000.

as part of their use of mental health services. Two-thirds of respondents endorsed traditional Native healing as

a mental health resource".[12] In a 1991 study involving 500 Aboriginal addiction-counsellor trainees it was found that 27% used Aboriginal healing activities as an integral part of their own healing.[13] In a study of traditional healing practices among Aboriginal students, it was also documented that the majority of participants reported as having participated in a variety of traditional healing approaches.

The role of the family and community

It is important for Indigenous People to receive support from others, including their friends, the family, and the community both socially and in support-specific interactions. For Indigenous People there is a shared responsibility among families and communities to ensure the wellbeing of others.[14]

The role of spirituality

Because an Indigenous world-view sees spirituality and healing as interconnected, spiritual beliefs and practices are important in the healing process. Because spirituality is an important aspect of many elements of Indigenous identity, an integrated approach to healing that includes spirituality helps to create positive outcomes for Indigenous People. These spiritual elements can include the sweat lodge, a relationship with the Creator, plant medicines, drumming, the medicine wheel and numerous other manifestations.[15]

The fusion of western and traditional approaches to healing

In a review of successful healing programs for Aboriginal people it was found that such programs stressed "traditional values, spirituality, and activities that enhanced self-esteem".[16] While Indigenous approaches to healing are largely successful on their own, it has been argued that using these approaches in conjunction with, or fused into western healing practices, can create other new healing approaches, and make combined healing approaches both more effective and more applicable to Indigenous Peoples.[17] While Indigenous approaches have been historically rejected by western practitioners, learning about and respectfully incorporating Indigenous healing perspectives into these approaches is being both explored and advocated for.[18]

In Closing

What does the future hold for our children and communities? Our laws, our traditions, our culture, our future-culture is cultural treatment to heal from the attempts of genocide by the state. First and foremost I ask each of you, how does one create safety for our children, for our parents and for every segment of our communities? First, as helpers and leaders in our communities we need to seek to understand how to build a cognitive life raft for our people. We need to invest in the children and stop child abuse. We need to utilize our traditions to re-build our Nations by creating puberty rites on how boys become men and how girls become women. We need to learn how to acknowledge our relationship to the land; the land is our culture; the land is the ashes of our Ancestors; the land provides all that we require from cradle to grave. Of worldview of balance including the four directions; four races of the world and interconnectedness not integration. All research programs have to be built on our Cultural values and traditions but most importantly on our traditional laws.

We must all re-invest in our children if the policy of government was to "kill the Indian in the child" then our policy is to "bring back to life the Indian in the child". If you truly believe that the children are our future then our future is now! 20 years ago we had a population of 350 Secwepemc people. Today our population is 800.

Decisions or lack of decisions by us as helpers and leaders do effect the next seven generations. I am asking each one of you to understand that you can make a difference if you help one person no matter what race or economic situation; you will move closer to truly reducing harm to mankind. I invite you to join hands together in our journey of healing. We need your help in the fight against the colonial laws and structures that continually deny that we exist and who deny us OUR HUMAN RIGHTS to our land. We must stand each other up to be great and good, we must stand up our relations, all our relations, the birds, animals, water, the plants, the fish, and the earth.

Actions speak louder than words. Leadership is action not a position. If you truly believe that the children are our future, then the future is now. If the state said "kill the Indian in the child" then our job is to "bring back to life the Indian in the child".

All my relations, Chief Wayne Christian.

12. Wyrostok & Paulson, 2000, p. 16.
13. Nechi Institute on Alcohol and Drug Education Research Centre, 1991, as cited in Wyrostok & Paulson, 2000.
14. Ross, 1992, as cited in McCormick & Wong, 2006.
15. Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo, 2003.
16. McCormick, 2000, p.29.
17. Anderson, 1992, as cited in McCormick, 2007.
18. Sue & Sue, 1990.

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Voices of Students: We are Here! We are Ready to Care for the Next Generations! "Gathering & Sharing Wisdom Conference" and the Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network

Jacquie Green[a], Rebecca Taylor[b], Rakiva Larken[c], Margaret Brier[d] and Trevor Good[e]

a Jacquie Green is from the Haisla Nation. She is Associate Professor in the School of Social Work and holds a BSW, MPA, and is currently working on a PhD. She is Project Manager for Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network. She is committed to decolonization and cultural renewal; her research interests involve strategizing curriculum, programs and policies that center Indigenous philosophies and values. Her current research is on reclaiming Haisla ways through Oolichan Fishing.

b Rebecca Taylor is a Graduate Research Assistant for Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network. She is a mother and Masters Student in the Indigenous Social Work Program at the University of Victoria. She is Inupiaq from the Bering Straits Region of Alaska and was raised in Northern BC in Smithers.

c Rakiya Larken is Namgis and Piikani First Nation. She is a grade 11 student, an HIV AIDS and children's rights activist and has presented at numerous conferences across Canada about issues facing young First Nations girls. Through Anti-dote Multiracial Girlz and Women's Network she has created a short film, "The Silent Epidemic" to help raise awareness and questions about how HIV/AIDS is addressed in the school system. See: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg2cxwjJkms.

d Margaret Briere is from the Coast Salish territory of Shishalh (Sechelt) Nation. On her mother's side she is from the Coast Salish territory of Shishalh (Sechelt) Nation. On her father's side, she is from Nanaimo BC of European decent-French Canadian. Currently, she is attending the University of Victoria, and taking Child and Youth Care courses.

e Trevor Good is Coast Salish, from the Snuneymuxw Nation. He is a recent graduate of a Bachelor of Social Work, First Nations Specialization. He is also a graduate of the Indigenous Studies Program (formerly the First Nations Community Studies Program) offered at Camosun College. Trevor has worked at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre for two years in different roles all of which were great learning experiences. He is grateful for working with the Office of Indigenous Affairs and continue to being in a role as a helper for the Indigenous community at the University of Victoria. HISWKE, Huy ch q'u, Gilakas'la, Kleco Kleco!

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Abstract

This paper highlights the voices of four youth presenters at the first "Gathering and Sharing Wisdom Conference" hosted on Coast Salish Territory, Songhees and Esquimalt, in Victoria, British Columbia. You will be guided through story about our role as leaders, planners, and facilitators for this conference which was convened to provide a central space for Indigenous youth and other community members to share stories about the caring and nurturing of our children, families and communities.

Leading up to the Conference

Over the last year we delivered two training sessions in British Columbia on the topic of Indigenous Research. The sessions were carried out in the format of an interactive workshop over the course of two days and were designed as a skill sharing resource for those working in Indigenous child welfare research and practice as well as for Indigenous people for whom these topics are pertinent. Some of the stated goals of the training sessions were to: highlight projects and practices that are working; to share resources, skills and to provide a forum for networking; to examine contentious histories with regards to research on Indigenous peoples; and finally, to examine more current Indigenous directed research projects and Indigenous methodologies within research.

Our approach to training was very similar to our conference planning. Prior to training we met with the local community, young people and Elders. We planned with them what the training could look like in their community. The young people in both venues spoke to the audience about what was important to them. They shared about how they (the young people) are living their lives differently and let us know what was important for them to resist life challenges as Indigenous young people. In our training sessions the young people shared that social

Note:
Our Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network is very new; we have been in operation since October 2008. Ultimately, our goal is to provide support to Indigenous communities and organizations to meet their own research needs. Importantly, given the diversity among Indigenous peoples in British Columbia, our network strives to be inclusive of various Indigenous knowledges and practices.

workers make to many assumptions about young Indigenous people. They said that not all young people skip school, not all young people drink or do drugs, not all young people run away from home. The young people also shared that they are often told that they are to respect all living things; yet, they see adults been cruel to animals, to the land and to other people. They asked what message are these actions of adults to young people. As conference organizers we wanted to create space for young people to share their knowledge at this provincial forum about what is important for them. We invited several young people to share what was important for them to say to adults, educators, social workers and our communities. The young people who were invited came from many different aspects of life. Some were pursuing post secondary education; one young person was in high school and another young person was a young mom. This paper highlights the voice of the young people who gracefully accepted our invitation to speak at our Gathering and Sharing Wisdom conference.

In early 2009 our project team began planning for our first Research Network conference. This conference would be a province wide and large gathering, the first of its kind on the topic of Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network in BC, organized by and from Indigenous people and perspectives. It was clear from our organizing team that there was a need to incorporate student and youth voices throughout the two day conference. One of the goals of our network is to link the voices of young people into the work that we do as professionals, researchers, academics and care takers from our different communities. In our training sessions and our conference we wanted to ensure that the voices of young people were present at the onset of planning, implementing our conference agenda. As conference organizers we remembered voices of our leaders who say that their decisions are for the next seven generations. We wanted the young people to be at the forefront with leaders to illustrate that indeed they will be mentored to be our future leaders.

Once our training was completed, we quickly moved into planning for our first annual "Gathering & Sharing Wisdom Conference" October 6 & 7, 2009. Once again our goal was to centre Indigenous stories and knowledge through voices from our Elders, Post Secondary Students, Young people and Youth[1]. We invited Chief Wayne Christian and Cindy Blackstock, two Indigenous leaders from British Columbia to be our key note speakers. We then asked that they share the key note space with a young person and/or a post secondary student.

It was important in our planning to invite special guests and as such we invited local communities, Elders and various dignitaries from different Indigenous organizations and governments in BC. In preparation we also met regularly with Elders Voices, an important program hosted through the Office of Indigenous Affairs at the University of Victoria. Led by Elders from several Nations, this honoured group helps to lead ceremonies, protocol and take part in the "Elders in Residence" program on campus in which they alternate days spent in the Elders' Lounge, at the First People's House, providing guidance and support for students and staff at the university. Through our organization development and planning for the conference, Elders' Voices has been an advisory group to our project.

We also met with young people to ensure that our approach to centering young voices was done in a respectful manner. We held two meetings where Elders Voices and the young people were introduced to one another as well as additional organizing meetings for the conference planning team, volunteers, youth, Elders and staff. Thus the hosting of the conference was a collaboration of local people, Elders, young people and our steering committee members.

Selection of Speakers

Early in the conference planning stages we sought out Indigenous students from the University of Victoria to ask them if they were interested in speaking at the conference. We did this because we felt it was important to include student voices, given the nature of the conference and it's affiliation with the University. Some were unsure, some didn't think they could speak in a conference setting and some said 'sure', but not really sure of the expectation. We invited speakers who we met on campus or in the community. There were recommendations to invite students who were known for their activism, contribution to learning cultural ways and educational accomplishments.

As the conference date drew closer we had 24 different workshop presentations selected. Presenters spoke about the storytelling (research) they are doing in their communities. Some spoke about policies and laws they are working on. Others spoke about their experiences as government and educational researchers. On day two the keynote speech for

1. We recognize and acknowledge that young people can be identified in various ways. We have identified three categories. We invited young students who are Post Secondary students; we invited a young Mom who was 24 years old and one youth who is in high school.

the day was entitled "4 generations" involving Elder Ray Green, his daughter Jacquie Green, his granddaughter Rosie Woods and his Great Granddaughter Nizhonie. The organizers wanted to illustrate four generations where learning and healing took place in a family. Ray is a residential school survivor and because of the abuse he endured in the school, he did not want to teach his children Haisla language or teachings. He shared how he and his wife have been working through their trauma from residential school and how they are now teaching their children, grand children and Great Grandchildren. Elders in the conference appreciated the words Ray shared, as his story was similar to their story. Younger people thanked Ray and family for sharing their story in an honest way.

To begin our conference it was important for us to honor the local territories and their cultural practices. We invited a local Elder, a member of our steering committee and the young artist who did our project logo to welcome participants, share in words, encouragement and prayer.[2] The artist, Dylan Thomas, explained the logo design, "I have used human hands to symbolize the helping hand of the organization. The hands and arms wrap around the ravens (symbolizing children) to portray the protection that will be provided by the organization. I chose ravens to represent the children because in Salish mythology ravens are symbols of changes in life and transformation, which I thought would be a perfect representation for what the Indigenous Child Welfare Research Project does."

On day one of the conference we highlighted student voices and young people. The words they had to share with participants and the energy they provided to our conference environment was invigorating and profound. The young voices at the onset set the tone for two days and as such throughout the two days of presenters centered young people, connected young people to their practices culturally and professionally.

In total, all speakers alluded to the importance of 'gathering sharing wisdom.' To keep with our momentum in centering young people, rather than provide participants with conference bags, we provided them with 'youthful' back packs and asked that they give their back pack to a young person in their community. Our idea to ask participants to gift young people in their community was to promote the idea of 'gifting'. Participants were able to gather with other Indigenous communities to share and gather knowledge – which is rewarding to each participant. We wanted to remind participants to think of young people in their community or organization who could not experience in this event of sharing stories and wisdom. We asked participants to gift a young person with their back pack and let the young person know that

'their' story as a young person is important. We also invited First Nations kindergarten students from George Jay Elementary School here in Victoria to provide us with pictures which illustrated what they learn from their Elders. The picture above was drawn by little Ojistah sharing with us that he learns how to knit sweaters from his Elders.

In total we had 15 pictures which were posted throughout the conference rooms.

Rakiya Larkin

As an organizing team we invited Rakiya Larkin, a grade 11 youth activist from the Namgis and Piikani First Nation, to join us in welcoming participants to our conference. Our organizing team is comprised of predominantly Indigenous people in our staff, steering committee and advisory. We have two facilitators Ainjil Hunt, Carol-Anne Hilton; our executive team comprised of Leslie Brown, Sandrina de Finney and myself, Jacquie Green; our Administrative team comprised of Rebecca Taylor, Jocelyn Sam and Pedro Moran-Bonilla. There were many words shared at the onset of day one, there were many volunteers and support staff welcoming, assisting and registering participants to this

2 The local Elders, Joyce and Victor Underwood are from *Tsawout* First Nations; Robina Thomas and her son Dylan are *Lyackson* – all from within the Coast Salish Territory

wonderful territory we reside on. Once participants were settled and waiting to 'share and gather wisdom' we then introduced the young voices beginning with Rakiya. Here is what she had to say:

> *I am a proud First Nation's youth. Everyone here has enough knowledge to know we are not equally treated as others are. We need help in this fight for our rights and freedom. Collectively we have to come together, and stand up to those who have tried to knock us down. We are not stupid we are not powerless we are the voice to push forward. Words are an expression of oneself they can destroy and also give life. We as Indigenous people have seen both sides of the spectrum. As a race we must rewrite the policies as Harper and John A MacDonald rewrote our HISTORY. We must be the voices for ones who can't speak for themselves. It is vital to our souls to embrace support and love our children and youth. The youth I see today simply need someone to listen. They don't want money, they don't want fame and most importantly they don't want to be anyone's problem, they just need someone to listen. So as a First Nations youth I ask you all to go home and just listen to our youth and children because we will always be here we will always stand together in unity. The government can try to shove us to the side, they can try to put us under the carpet but SORRY they are wasting their time we were here in the beginning and we will be here till the end. The time is now for change -- I march for my people! What do you march for?*

Thank you to Rakiya for welcoming participants to our conference. Your energy is vibrant, your knowledge about Indigenous history is incredible and the words you shared to participants was powerful and well received. Indeed you are a warrior forging forward in your leadership with, and for, young people.

Roxanne Charlie

The second set of speakers for day one was Chief Wayne Christian and the late Roxanne Charlie. We are sad to say that Roxanne journeyed to the Spirit World on October 31, 2009. She was 26 years old and left behind two daughters aged 2 and 4 who are now residing with relatives in Kelowna. We had the honor of meeting Roxanne Charlie in early September of this year. As shared earlier, we asked our key note speakers if they could share their speaking space with a young person and mentor them into public speaking to share their story. Chief Wayne Christian did not hesitate in his recommendation to invite Roxanne to co-speak with him. Roxanne and Wayne were the first key note speakers and spoke to an audience of almost 200 people. She was a powerful speaker, with more life experience and wisdom than many adults, let alone other young people her age.

Prior to Roxanne's arrival in Victoria for the conference, I spoke on the phone with her about her key note talk, what our expectations were and more importantly we spoke about how nervous she was. On the phone she shared about her two little girls, she spoke about returning to Kelowna and what it was like for her to live there with her little girls. Roxanne emphasized the importance for her to complete high school, to attend Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and to attend the Indigenous Governance Institute in BC. For Roxanne, it was important for her to do what she needed to sustain herself as young adult and to contribute to the wellbeing of others. For her, there were challenges and struggles she endured as a young person and her answer in life to address these challenges were to pursue higher education.

We stayed in touch over a one month period leading to the conference. Chief Wayne and another community member assisted us in providing Roxanne details about her travel to Victoria as well as assisting her in preparing for her speech. Roxanne indicated to Jacquie and Wayne that she has never spoken publicly about her story. She was nervous and cautious about what she wanted to say. Both Chief Christian and Jacquie encouraged her to share from her heart. We asked her what important message she wanted to say to young mothers, young single mothers. We encouraged her that there are many young single parents who would be encouraged in their journey by hearing her (Roxanne's) story. In the car ride from the Victoria Airport to her hotel, she shared stories about her daughters. She spoke about how beautiful her girls are and how her girls have changed her life. She was amazed at herself that during the toughest times in her life she managed to confront challenges and work through the issues. For her, it was important to address the issues not only for herself, but also for her girls. We both agreed that by sharing this story at the conference, other young single mothers would be inspired be her story. We talked about how young single parents are lonely and afraid. We encouraged Roxanne to share what inspired her to pursue education, to create a safe life for her girls and to share how she felt as a young single mom. She asked Chief Wayne and Jacquie to stand with her while she shared her story to the audience.

Roxanne's generous spirit touched the hearts and spirits of the 200 audience members who listened to her keynote presentation. Roxanne was scheduled to speak after Chief Wayne Christian, but just as Wayne was finishing his speech, she said "I can't do it." We told her it was okay and if she didn't feel comfortable sharing she didn't have to. However, once I said that, she stood up and shared her story. She shared her story to a group of social workers, academics, community members,

Elders, other youth and students the honest in your face realities of the challenges that face young people today. She spoke about her own story with no apologies. She spoke of her pride and love for her two girls and her desire to change her life for the benefit of her little girls.

At the end of her speech, a woman in the audience stood up and asked to honor her with the Women's Warrior song. There were Elders who stood with the drummer and they asked Roxanne to stand with them. They drummed and sang to her and the audience stood up and sang as well to honor Roxanne.

After Roxanne finished her speech, people stood to clap for her and honor her life story. Some people complimented her life journey and honored her wisdom and power. Many people approached her afterwards and said their lives were changed because of the life story she shared. Because of her story, one of the participants phoned the Education Advisor at Camosun College and asked that they come meet Roxanne. The Camosun Advisor biked to the hotel and met with her to try to recruit her to college. Roxanne was thinking of going back to school. It was like the whole conference was rooting for her.

As our conference organizing team were preparing conference papers to be published in the First Nations Caring Society's on line journal, we heard the news about Roxanne's passing. Roxanne was interested in having her story published along with the other student and youth voices who shared their stories. I was working with her community worker and Chief Wayne to assist her with writing her story. What we have shared in this piece is how we remember Roxanne in the short time we had with her.

In Roxanne, we met a beautiful wise woman and devoted mother. We thank the Creator that we had an opportunity to share this last part of Roxanne's journey with her. The Steering Committee, Advisory Committee, conference participants and staff of the Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network share our condolences to Roxanne's family, friends and community.

Margaret Briere

We have known Margaret Briere for about five years. She was a student at Camosun College, she worked with young people at the Victoria Native Friendship Center she is currently a student in Child and Youth Care here at University of Victoria. Margaret has shared her experiences of been a young child in foster care. As a young girl she learned quickly how to adapt to a new home, family and community. She emerged into a wonderful young woman who now enjoys giving back to young people. Her experiences as a foster child gave her insights to work with young people today who are affected by the child welfare system. As a young person Margaret recognizes the importance of growing up around her grandparents, her territory and her traditional teachings. As a fostered child, she grew up away from these important aspects of her life. Today, Margaret recognizes the importance of grandparents, traditional territory and teachings. In her work with young people, she finds methods to teach about Indigenous traditional teachings and stories. Margaret is a young woman who expresses her excitement to life every time we see her. In the last two and half years of her educational journey, she has been very excited about learning about Indigenous knowledge, epistemology and pedagogy. These academic words are not a part of her words; however, she expresses her excitement in learning what these terms mean and how she can apply these definitions to her pursuit in higher education. Margaret has conceptualized her academic program within the context of her personal life and work experiences. In her assignments and presentations it is important for her to share the Indigenous World View. It is important to share with her classmates and other peers the importance of decolonizing our thinking and actions. Right now her goals are to complete her degree in Child and Youth Care, but we have no doubts that she will pursue PhD studies. Here is a little piece of what Margo shared at our conference.

> *My name is Margaret Briere (Margo), on my mother's side I am from the Coast Salish territory of Shish-alh (Sechelt) Nation. On my father's side, he is from Nanaimo BC of European decent-French Canadian. Currently, I am attending the University of Victoria, first year and taking Child and Youth Care courses to be admitted into the program, hopefully by January 2010. My volunteer experience is extensive as I strongly value the "giving back" phenomenon stemmed from my earlier experiences as a youth who received support. Presently, I will be contributing to a decolonizing project with a group of Indigenous people facilitating at the Youth Detention Centre located in Victoria; I am also going to be working on a Harm Reduction Network Project really soon with Aids Vancouver Island organization as mentorship support with the youth. The Harm Reduction Network Project is connecting with Indigenous communities from Victoria all the way up into Port Hardy. I am super excited to be a part of that since I have previous experience in volunteering with safer practices of sex and substance use. While I will be growing in the Child and Youth Care program, I will be keeping in my mind/ spirit that I can only support someone on a journey as far I have gone. So, my perspective focuses on that as I am always learning and developing as an Indigenous woman.*

Margo shared inspirational words about her work experiences and importantly about her educational journey.

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Her goal is to provide support to younger students, other young people and share with them how she managed to overcome challenges and also share how to have fun! Margo is an athlete, an activist and a wonderful role model to young people. Thank you Margo for accepting our invitation!

Trevor Good

As you have probably noticed, we have highlighted young women warriors. We want to now introduce you to Trevor Good who has completed his degree in social work, diploma from Camosun College in Indigenous Studies and is now employed as the Indigenous student advisor at the University of Victoria. Trevor highlights the important factors in his own success in post-secondary education so that others can learn from his experiences. One of key first steps for him was to address the addictions in his life and find healthy ways of dealing with stress. This shift in life for Trevor was life altering. For him, abstaining from alcohol and drugs were an essential prerequisite tor to re-learning cultural teachings and pursuing a post-secondary education. Trevor has been a wonderful support person to his peers, his family and to his large circle of friends. Here is what Trevor shared with us:

> *My name is Trevor Good; I am a Coast Salish man from the Snuneymuxw Nation. I grew up in different areas of Victoria. I had the honor of growing up close to Songhees and Esquimalt communities and territories. I have relatives in the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. There were also family members from Snuneymuxw who lived in the Victoria area and I had them in my life for most of my childhood. My childhood was one filled with a blend of dysfunctional happenings and Indigenous values. My mother, a residential school survivor suffers from addictions issues. She had endured much in her childhood and did the best she could to protect my brother, sister and me from the intergenerational trauma she/we process. This is an impossible task for anyone to carry out; as a result my childhood was traumatic, dysfunctional at the worst of times and calm at the best of times. As I entered my teen age years I quickly became familiar with my own addictions. I walked down that black road for all of my teens; as a result I did very poorly in school. I failed the majority of my classes but learned to work my way up the grade ladder by using flaws in the educational system.*
>
> *As I stumbled into my twenties my addictions were out of control. At 24 I knew I needed a change and at the age 25 I checked myself into Round Lake Treatment Centre. It was here I was introduced to Indigenous teachings and reintroduced to my own Nations teachings. In Round Lake I was shown teachings that would allow me to build a foundation for walking the Red Road and continue to grow as an Indigenous person.*
>
> *A few months after leaving Round Lake I started upgrading at the Songhees Band School. After many previous unsuccessful attempts to other upgrading schools, the Songhees school was a safe place to learn and begin my educational journey. I was learning in and with community and that created a bridge to work my way into Camosun College where I finished my upgrading and entered the Indigenous Studies program which is a two year diploma program. During my time at Camosun I had the opportunity to apply for a summer job at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. The job was working with Indigenous youth. At the end of the summer another job had came up and another, I found myself there for nearly two years under three different positions. During this time I found myself applying and being accepted to the University of Victoria, into the Bachelor of Social Work (Indigenous specialization) program. The feeling was surreal to me; I could not believe how far I had come in such a short time. I have heard many community members tell me to "walk in a good way" and in doing amazing opportunities have been presented in my path. For example, I was able to travel to Australia for the World Indigenous Education conference in Melbourne, Australia. I also spent a week in New Zealand, Whatake at University of Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi for six nights.*

Every summer for the past six years the Office of Indigenous Affairs, here at the University of Victoria hosts a mini Indigenous youth summer camp. I had the opportunity to volunteer two summers in a row and at the end of the second time of volunteering, I was finishing the social work degree, a job was opening up within the Office of Indigenous Affairs. I applied for it and was successful and now I am currently the Coordinator of Indigenous student support. My job is great and I am able to be around wonderful people daily. I have been given so many great gifts and am grateful for all I have; many remarkable people along the way have reminded me to be aware that I have the responsibility and an advantage of staying connected and working for our Indigenous communities. I truly learning and meeting new people every day! Hychqa Siem!

This young man certainly is a role model for other young men. He has committed himself to continuously re-learning and un-learning the world view of Snuneymuxw people and cultures. As in his story, he continuously pursues aspects that will enrich his life personally and professionally. Trevor's goals are to attend grad school and we are all sure that in the future he will become a Professor in a university setting.

Conclusion

These are the students and young people who are interested in having their story published. As a reviewer of student and youth voices we have not changed their words, we only changed explicit corrections when necessary. There were other young people, as well as other presenters who contributed to our knowledge sharing and gathering during the two days who chose not to have their presentation published. We thank you for sharing your knowledge and for assisting us to make our conference a success.

There were a mixture of young people, adults, professionals, community members and Elders listening to all the stories shared. The conference provided for people the opportunity to network with one another and to broaden relationships to enrich the lives of young people, their families and their communities.

In two years our goal for a second conference is to invite our International Indigenous partners to share about their methods for nurturing their communities and families. The first year of our network came with much enthusiasm from our staff, governing body and network membership to look at alternative ways to care for our children. An over-arching theme from our conference was to regenerate our traditional teachings and stories and implement them into our diverse practices and professions. As a network, it is our goal to broaden our membership, continue to share and gather stories and teachings that are leaving a positive impact for our families.

Wa!

Hychqa

Quayana

Gilakas, la

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Voice of an Elder: Zhaawonde - Dawn of a New Day

Gordon Shawanda[a]
edited by Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, Ph.D.

[a] Zhaawonde = Shawanda (Dawn of a New Day). My great Grandfather, Zhaawonde was a Potawatomie from Northern Minnesota, USA. It was in the mid-1830's that United States Government agents forced the Potawatomie and the neighboring tribes to leave their lands in what is now known as the Americas. My great Grandfather stayed with other warriors and moved into Canada.

The Potawatomie people and my grandfather's family traveled a great distance and a good number arrived in Mnidoo Mnissing (Manitoulin Island) where they would live free with the Odawa and Ojibwe and help form a nation known as the 'People of the Three Fires', in modern times this nation is identified as the 'Three Fires Confederacy'.

My great Grandfather's name was Zhaawonde, (Shawanda) meaning 'dawn of a new day'. The name came from and old story told and retold that Darkness and Light were two warriors who kept arguing. They chased each other around the world until Dawn came between them, and broke them apart in order to begin a peaceful day. In Potawatomie language, Zhaawonde (Shawanda) is the encouraging colors we see in the break of dawn and the good feelings that a fresh start brings at the Dawn of a New Day.

Abstract

This paper evolved, maybe 'was birthed' is an even better term given the circumstances, out of an engagement process that brought Gordon Shawanda and several university students together over an academic year. Gordon was invited to attend my Aboriginal Spirituality class at the University of Toronto in September 2009. He liked being there so much that he came each week, sitting through lectures, reading the materials, and participating with unerring grace in the many discussions over the entire year. We were all touched by his presence, his quiet dignity, and his deep interest in our academic learning and sharing experience. Gordon embodies what modern education is trying to get right, the bringing together of theory and practice, and the unveiling of the kind of humanity that can bring Indigenous Knowledge alive for all young people everywhere. Gordon was inspired by their enthusiastic receiving of his words to write down his story. This paper is his first real attempt to express the pain and healing he has experienced over his adulthood. I am honoured and humbled to (gently) edit this work for publication. This is a story that comes directly from the heart and soul of one man, but is the lived experience of many of our people who attended Indian Residential Schools in Canada.It is organized into four parts.

Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux

Forward

I believe that people cross our paths to bring us important messages. The further backward you can look the further forward you can see. This story is about finding out who I am, why I am the way I am. It's about me looking at my experiences as a part of my healing process, and this story acknowledges my greater understanding of the issues facing Aboriginal People today. I was influenced by my upbringing, without it, my story would not exist, so this book is not about attacking my parents, if anything it is about healing a badly broken relationship.

What I Remember…

Quaan Jaa Lake's strange calm before the storm does exist. So do Aliens. To be creative is to solve a problem. If one does not have a problem, there would be no motivation. Let's find this out.

I was only eleven when this all happen, so over 50 years have happened in between, and yet my memory is as clear as this day. My brother, Eugene, was going on thirteen. We harnessed our workhorses one morning in early July for a trip to Quaan Jaa Lake with our Dad. The rubber tired wagon was loaded the day before, with hay, camping essentials, and provisions to last us for a month, and, like a treasure of great value a 303 British rife was tucked away orderly in the hay wagon as well. My father having served in the armed forces in Europe was an authority figure who was a difficult man to live with; he ruled with an iron hand. My mother was in the hospital sick from aggravated exhaustion. As had often happened before,

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alcohol had taken control of my father; alcohol was his friend as well as his enemy. Now, we were preparing for a dreaded journey and a month long stay with our father at Quaan Jaa Lake.

Quaan Jaa Lake is a remote area 30 miles into the wilderness from where we lived at Murray Hill in *Wikwemikong*. The Odawa Nation had started things here in the backwoods centuries ago. It was once a place where councils, ceremonies and celebrations were held, but now they had been cast aside. In the past, I had heard mysterious and puzzling stories about Quaan Jaa Lake. The name Quaan Jaa referred to a being that was often referred to as part human and part serpent. Some referred to the 'living thing' as an all seeing, all knowing wide-eyed protector who observed everything that went on in the setting. Today, remnants of the earlier encampments still remain if one was to look carefully.

I had been down these winding trails before with my mother and her neighborhood friend Stella, when my Father and Stella's husband, Vincent, were in Chapleau Lumber Camp about 500 miles North West from us. In our outings, my older brother, Francis, was the lead-hand, leading the way with the neighboring kids, Ronnie and his brother Jimmy Joe Wakegijig, William and Mary Agnes Manitowabi, my younger sister Roselinda, and Eugene and I. For us, camping at the lake for the weekend, swimming, fishing, cooking, roasting hot dogs in the campfire was always exciting.

It was in the mid 1950s that my father built a cedar log cabin facing Quaan Jaa Lake. A barn was built for the horses for their comfort, which was simply set; a dirt floor was exceptional for the horses, because it was easier on their feet. My Uncles, George and Wilfred, often came from Michigan during the summer to spend their leisure time fishing in the lake and they returned to the same site year after year. My Dad and my Uncles grew up in *Dwe ganing* or South Bay a short distance from Quaan Jaa Lake.

Strangely, this particular summer morning, it was not the same. I felt this trip was not for me. More importantly, I wanted to stay home and be with my mother. Regrettably, Eugene and I were home only for the summer holidays, and we were required to return to the residential school in the fall. Now, we must help our father cut pulpwood for the summer. In those days money was essential to survive, and for many, cutting timber was the answer. When we arrived at the log cabin the terrible loneliness and fear was upon me again, the same lonely feeling that I felt when I was first taken to the Indian Residential School (IRS). In my experience, the need for caring, kindness and gentleness was once again missing. I never realized then how much a child's development and growth needs the care and closeness of a mother. Obviously, my Mother was missing in my youthful life, but already and continuously, I kept my feelings to myself as life went on.

My father worked about a mile away from the cabin, the only time we saw him was in the morning and in the evening. In the late afternoon he would come after the horses at the barn and haul his pulpwood to the campsite. Our job was to peel the 4-foot pulp, which he already had cut. What can eleven year old do with an axe I thought? But I soon learned watching my brother. I learned while living in the woods that a poplar tree carries more water than any other tree; therefore it was easy to peel. The horses, Barney and Sandy were tough, and they always had that one more burst of speed, energy and power. My father was a top horseman and he always brought out the best in them. He made sure the horses were always fed and groomed, hooves cleaned, with proper shoes and he would always say, "Horse grooming is essential to good health as well as appearance."

Usually after supper my father and my brother would go out again for an hour or so to peel the bark from the poplar trees already cut. I tried to help as much as I could, but I always seemed to spend more time bonding with nature. Day after day in the late afternoon I played in the mud puddles by the muddy wagon road, catching frogs, baby turtles and watching tadpoles swim. Some days my contribution would be to catch fish and pick raspberries for an appetizing meal. So I wouldn't be bored to death, my father gave me a steady chore, to brush out

Living Memory:

My memory takes me back to when I was 5 years old. I remember it was a few days before Christmas on a beautiful afternoon. The sparkling snow was falling gently. My brother, Eugene, and I were both thrilled to be going out with our father to look for a Christmas tree. Our two horses, Barney and Sandy, were pulling the sleigh and it was running slowly. The decorative sleigh bells were jingling on the black harnesses that the horses wore and as I watched closely down at their horseshoes, they would kick snow back at my face. It looked hilarious and it made me laugh continuously. As we drove onward through the field into the deep woods, I could see the beautiful glittering snow covering the evergreen trees and the winding rabbit trails leading to every direction. This nature scene was an awesome one, a scene that no person could ever forget. That night, as Eugene and I watched excitedly, our mother decorated the glittering evergreen tree and we listened to the Christmas songs playing on the old battery-radio. It was one of the happy times we spent together and is a memory that I will never forget. Today, I ask myself, what made the world so different? Winter must be cold without these warm memories. G.Zhaawonde

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Definitions

Aboriginal people – includes Métis, Inuit, and First Nations, regardless of where they live in Canada, regardless of whether they are registered under the Indian Act of Canada.

Assimilation – a dominant group effectively impose its culture on other groups in ways for them to become virtually indistinguishable from the dominant culture, acculturation.

Disability - describes what disables, such as an illness or being deprived of normal strength or power.

Disease – Any harmful condition. Poverty is a disease to society. In the scientific paradigm of modern medicine, diseases are abnormalities in the structure and function of body organs and systems.

Indian – was wrongfully used by the explorers

I R S – Indian Residential School

Legacy of Physical and Sexual Abuse in Residential Schools – often referred to as simply (Legacy) meaning the on-going direct and indirect effects of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools. The legacy includes the effects on survivors, their families, descendents and communities (including communities of interest). These effects may include, and are not limited to, family violence, drug alcohol and substance, physical and sexual abuse, loss of parenting skills and self-destructive behavior.

Loneliness – "solitude split off from the community is no longer a rich and fulfilling experience in inwardness; now it becomes loneliness, a terrible isolation."

Rain Dance – an ancient ceremony of sacrifice, consist of fasting, drumming, singing, dancing, piercing and feasting.

Residential Schools – The Residential School System in Canada attended by Aboriginal students, including industrial schools, boarding schools, homes for students, hostels, billets, Religious based residential schools, residential schools with majority of day students or a combination of any of the above.

Standing people – trees

Survivor – an aboriginal person who attended and survived the residential school system.

What is Trauma? – Increasingly, psychological trauma is understood as an affliction of the powerless. During the traumatic event, the victim is made completely helpless by an outside force. When this force is one of nature, it's called natural disaster, when it is human to human, it is called an atrocity. Traumatic events cause people to lose a sense of control, connection and meaning.

Turtle Island – In North America the term proudly used by Native People. The belief that the world they knew rested on the back of a giant *Mshiikenh* (turtle).

Spirit Names Are Ancient, and These Names Are The Names Of Our Ancestors

When the Europeans first arrived they couldn't pronounce our names, so we were given English names. Some people kept their names and recently some went back to their original name. The names written down here have other meanings. There are 3 dialects spoken in Wikwemikong.

Alec-koonh – alec, alek, alexander

Akwesasne – where the partridge drum, St. Regis

Anishinaabe – Ojibwe, the language they speak, identifying a native.

Anishinaabemowin – Ojibwe language, the native's language

Bebamikawe – family name in Wikwemikong

Bezhniik – Virginia

Bkejwanong – where the waters divide, Walpole Island

Byencesag – little people

Boodwe waadmii – Potawatomi Nation, Firekeeper.

Chi-mama/Nookmis – grandmother

Cochichiing – one of the Reserves in Fort Francis

Dawaganing/dweganing – a place of drumming/ where the elders drum, South Bay

Epnigishmog – one of the Four Grandfathers, of the western direction

Epnigishmog – a Spiritual leader Sunset, who brought the Rain Dance back to Mnidoo Mnissing after it was well hidden out west.

Gch-piitendaagok – all sacred things, sacred values.

Giiwednong – one of the Four Grandfathers, of the northern direction

Kaboni – a family name in Wikwemikong

Niigan Naazhea – shinning ahead/one who gives light (brilliance) in future

Maaniiyanh – Mary Ann

Manitowabi – a sacred sight

Mishibinijima – left behind

Mshiikenh – turtle

Mishoomis – grandfather

Mnaadenmowin – respect

Naakoowaam – distant thunder

Naandwedidaa – healing one another

Neyaashiing – be a point, of land/cape. Cape Smith

Negannigwani – pheasant

Niiwen Mishoomsag – in Ojibwe, the four spiritual grandfathers (guardians) north, east, south, and west, direct/guide us throughout our life.

Odawa/Ottawa – one of the 18 Algonquin nations in North America.

Mnidoo Mnissing (Manitoulin Island) is the homeland of the Odawa, the Ojibwe came afterward, and then the Potawatomi followed. These three groups are known as the People of Three Fires, more recently recognized as the Three Fires Confederacy.

Ojibwe – peacekeepers, members of the Three Fire Nation

Tekemah – a family name in Wikwemikong, a little town outside Manitowaning.

Petawanakwat – in among the clouds

Pwaagan – pipe

Quaan Jaa Lake – a living thing

Shawana – a family name in Wikwemikong

Shawanda – dawn of a new day, Fine Day.

Shigan – bass/fish

Takwadjiwan – tidal wave, Lewis

Waabnong – one of the Four Grandfathers of the eastern direction

Wakegijig – wavering cedar

Wassegijig – bright sky

Webkamigad – beginning of an event

Wikwemikong – Bay of Beavers, pet name Wiky

Zhaawon'de – dawn of a new day/Fine-day. Zhaawonde is the Linguist style of writing I learned at Lakehead University in 1992, while I was doing the Native Language Program. I use the name only when I write a story. I remember one of our Linguist teachers Randy Valentine saying, I still hear an O sound in there Gordon. It took me 3 years before I could hear an O sound and use it. An Elder once told me, it's good to have an O in our name. It is up to the individual to find out that meaning, and I see *Jawande* written in the very old church newsletters. The name may have been use by the early Jesuits.

Zhaawondens – translated to English ens indicates, noun diminutive – meaning minute, smallness, cute, always ends in "ens"

Zhaawnong – one of the Four Grandfathers in the southern directions

Zhoolyea – Julian

Nishin Aasagaabwiitaadying – it is good to support each other.

Miigwech - Thankyou

the sweat and dust that accumulated in the horse's coats, and gently comb out their manes and tails. This early horse training created special bond in me for a lifetime, a relationship built on trust and respect for the horse, as well as all animal life.

Sunny days came and went. On stormy nights my Dad would say, thunder beings are here for a visit. If you wish, keep your eyes peeled and ears open. As I lay in bed, a short distance away the incredible sound of lightning bolts crashing against the trees made my spine quiver. I'd jump from my wooden bunk bed and stand by the lone window in the cabin and watch the flashes from the lighting as they shone on 6-foot waves in Quaan Jaa Lake. I enjoyed watching the flashy thundering storms and listening to the whistling sound of blowing wind. The light was so bright it made my eyes blink and sometimes for a split second I could see the white seagulls flying high in a twirl as if they were caught in the raging storm. Completely lost in thought, it was like magic, a fantastic sight to see nature at work. Nature is divine and peaceful yet frightening in its power. As the storm finally came to silence the gentle rain hitting the tar paper-roof would eventually put me to sleep.

In the early morning after one rainstorm, curiosity led me to walk in the woods under the sheltering trees where freshly washed leaves were ready to spill their tiny cups of water on me. Mosquitoes hummed and danced around my head ready to bite. A few feet away, I saw a tall pine tree with a split branch, where I heard a sharp crack and a booming sound during the night's heavy storm. There, a huge fallen branch lay dead on the ground and I knew that it would one day be revived with the life power that is in nature, giving food to other living things and would soon be humming with new life. The dampness everywhere was somewhat discouraging, but I understood that the thunder-beings came for a reason. We needed the rainstorm to nourish the earth. When the morning sun came shining down through the leaves of the tall trees, it was the most beautiful place to be in the world, fresh air, green forest, glossy white birch trees with their little red marks, robin singing its cheer up song, and happy glowing different colors of wild flowers adding to the beauty of nature. A few steps away a cold stream slowly tumbled and murmured along and I knelt down for a drink of cold fresh water. I watched and listened to the tiny pebbles as they mumbled words to me. I could see and hear the bubbles, but the forgotten language they spoke to me was long lost in time.

My ***Chi-mama*** (grandmother) always told me ***Anishinaabe*** (Native people) understood nature, because they were part of nature. They understood ***Gchigami*** (lake-water) the strange calm before the storm. They understood the Spirit of blowing wind, the talking leaves, and the cry of the wolf. They understood the sky-world, the messenger clouds, and the dances of thunder-beings. Rocks and trees were regarded as sentient beings, sacred in their own right and entitled to great respect from human beings. The brilliancy around me made each day a little brighter, and it was truly a place where one can surely forget his problems. But still, I wanted to be with my mother. There is nothing stronger than a Mother's affection.

One sunny morning around ten o'clock, I took a stroll to take my father some fresh tea. As I arrived he laid down his axe. He said son, let's share this moment with the animals, and let's listen to the silence in the forest. Not noticing the stillness before, it was absolutely amazing to me. There was not a sound in the woods. My father told me, this was around the time of the day that all the forest animals took their break. The whole time I was in the forest I had never understood respect for silence existed amongst those intelligent Creatures.

Moments later, all hell broke loose. Two squirrels were chasing each other up and down the trees, a red headed woodpecker was tapping a tree, and birds were brightly singing their own songs. Suddenly from a swarming hive, a black bear was swatting bees, even the brave ***shigan*** (bass) was jumping from the water to telling us Quaan Jaa Lake was ready to give. Not much was ever mentioned about Nature's language, nor was I ever before made aware of the communication going on around me. With a sense of amazement, I felt so great, because even though I may have blamed my father for his behavior, he and I found ways to bond.

That day, I will never forget my father telling me that Eugene and I need not go back to the Residential School. He was home to take care of us and that even though my mother was in the hospital from exhaustion, she would be home when we got there. It was gratifying to know she was in a safe place. When I relayed the message to my brother Eugene, he was overjoyed. This was truly a heartwarming day for us.

My mother was a stay-home mom; a strong woman, she believed there is no greater curse than total idleness. She worked hard on the farm, churned butter, planted and harvested crops, picked wild berries, and treasured her flower garden. My mother was an excellent cook. No one came into her home without a big welcome and no one ever left hungry. In spite of her struggles; with my father serving in the arm forces in Europe, and her children taken away by Indian Agents, she never lost her sense of humor. Her smile showed her kindness and gentleness. One's mother is always a loving mother.

My mother's maternal father, ***Alec-koonh*** was well known in the Village of ***Wikwemikong.*** He lived in the rural community ***Neyaashiing*** (Cape Smith) and he was once a harness racing champion in the County Fare event at the exciting harness tracks of *Manitowaning* in the mid 40's where he competed against the best. My Grandfather was also a Fortune Teller known for reading tea leaves and he was gladly welcomed

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everywhere for a cup of tea and people would listen in silence to his astounding stories. I would hang out with my Grandpa, and on New Year's Day he would pick me up in his cutter (one-horse sleigh), a two-passenger sleigh used for special outings. We would take a trip towards the Kaboni Road for the New Year greetings and visit his brother David and come back on the long swerving trail known as the Webkamigad road. The New Year greeting was an event that was still popular in the 60s, but has since disappeared. My Grandpa was the last Person to own and ride a one-horse drawn sleigh and buggy in the village of Wikwemikong. I thank my Godparents for naming me after my Grandfather ***Alec koonh*** (Alexander), for one to be named after their ***Mishoomis*** (Grandfather) was very special.

When ever I heard a loud truck coming towards the cabin I would run to the road where the pulp was stacked in rows. My brother Eugene would already be there, gasping for air. We always knew Frederick Petawanakwat would come by in his big maroon truck to haul our pulp. Fred was fun to be around with and he would often drop off a small bag of marshmallows. It was a big treat for Eugene and me. Roasting marshmallows in the evening campfire was exciting. Frederick frequently spared a few minutes to tell us cheerful tales. One story he told was about the ***Byence-sag*** (little people). Should you ever see the little people roam around in the forest, you'll be lucky, for they signify good luck. He said, "The ***Byencesag*** lived in water and they are rarely seen. Whenever you feel lonely or depressed go to the lake just before it rains. Cleanse yourself gently with water and when the little raindrops drop, you will hear the little people speak in the ancient language. You may not understand what they are saying. But those little rain spirits will cheer you up." His stories made my brother and me aware of the supernatural.

Frederick would always remind us, keep your head up and remember where you come from. Don't ever run away from the Residential School you will only make things worse for yourself. Fred told us he was also in the IRS. Eugene was always fascinated with 'muscle body builders', like Charles Atlas in the 1950s and Frederick was a big man. He said, Dad told him that Frederick was a powerful man. He once heard a story that Frederick rolled a huge stone aside that had fallen from a cliff, off the middle of the road. There were three workers who were traveling with him and who weren't able to budge the rock. Frederick got out of his truck and told the 3 young men to take a rest. Like a mountain goat, ready to charge he dug a grip with his feet in the ground, and with his bare hands and his powerful physique, he rolled that huge fallen-rock down the steep rugged cliff and the three men stood there watching him with their mouth open in awe.

Eugene and I had watched Frederick load up his truck several times with the curve hook, tossing heavy pulpwood like they were sticks. Fred was in great physical condition with good coordination. In 1960, my brother and I were saddened to hear about Frederick's accidental drowning. Fred was our dear friend, a happy go-lucky caring and a powerful young man whom we admired exceptionally. We greatly appreciated his friendship in the short time in which we knew him and we learned a great deal from him.

Aliens Invade Quaan Jaa Lake

One day I was playing by the lake when an old man came by. "What is your name?" I asked. "My name is ***Mshiikenh*** (turtle)," he replied. He sat down on a stump by the low flame campfire facing the lake. I offered him tea. He helped himself gently. I remember your Grandfather well, he said. "His name was ***Naakoowaam*** (distant thunder) Joseph ***Zhaawonde.*** He was a constable in this area, South Bay, for many years; he worked with the Mounties," he said. My Grandfather died 1946, 4 months before I was born, I explained to him.

I could hear ***Mshiikenh*** sipping hot tea from the old tin cup as I sat next to him. There was something about this Elder that made me feel safe and cozy and I soon found out why. "I have something to tell," he said. The story he told me I can now tell. It was about the terrifying Serpent they called "Quaan Jaa" who once appeared in a time of need. "The Spirit of the lake is alive," he proceeded to tell me.

Many moons ago strange, menacing, 'monsters' resembling people came to this land. An extremely large spaceship shaped like a mushroom with lengthy spider legs and rays flashing like northern lights landed in Quaan Jaa Lake. The mysterious figures with hairless heads had a mechanism that helped them perform human tasks and made them easily pass for human beings. They came from a place beyond man's reach. They came with violence and a scheme to kill, take, and to destroy all the fire-breathing animals and abduct human beings. Flames came out of their weapons. They scorched the land with fire and the village was burned to the ground. The people were scared to death. They ran for their lives. Six children were abducted and one of our extraordinary leaders named ***Niigan Naazhea*** (ahead of the light) valiantly fought them off, but was also taken into the ship with the children. The space-ship eventually lifted-off, and the Alien Invaders were not to appear again for half a century.

In the deadness and quiet in the moments following the lift-off a masculine brave named ***Negannigwani*** (pheasant) became the new leader of ***Quaan Jaa*** Lake. ***Negaanigwani*** is from the feathered clan, a symbol of leader-ship. He was instructed that he must travel to ***Wikwemikong*** (the bay of beavers) nestled in the valley with a cast of towering hills filled with resources. He must inform the auspicious leader ***Tekemah*** (where ability is) about the horrifying incident that took

place at *Quaan Jaa* Lake. In those days *Wikwemikong* was the meeting place (capitol) of *Mnidoo Mnissing* (Manitoulin Island). To Native people the Spirit *Wikwemikong* is a 'skillful builder' who will bring new directions and new life back to *Quaan Jaa* Lake.

After the *Negannigwani* and *Tekemah* meeting they spoke to the people. They had come to believe that the Aliens intentions were to come to earth to live among them and steal the *Gchi pittendaagok* (sacred values). To wipe out their way of life and to break all the Indigenous people on planet earth and slowly destroy their spirit mind, so that they could become like them. The Aboriginal people only wanted to live in peace and harmony with nature. They respected and communicated with that which the Great Spirit created, but the hairless creatures that were very much Alien to them, because they were programmed by machines, could not be ignored.

Half a century passed before the aliens returned to *Quaan Jaa* Lake. The People were puzzled to see the man they thought was dead. Even more mysterious, *Niigan Naazhea* had never aged. Sadly, the six children taken never returned home. They stayed at the Meteor where they had been taken and were held there by the power of the harmonious rock, and they remained deeply attached. The never-ending machines and the Aliens' plan had caused the children to forget that they had a home to return to. Yet, the Alien magic failed to work on *Niigan Naazhea* who was a star, a leading light in a living form, the gifted spirit of the future generation. In his short stay, *Niigan Naazhea* informed the people what was going to happen on the planet. He said many Natives were already beyond the bright lights and had been secretively abducted years before him. He told his people when the age of technology arrives welcome it as a value for everything comes as a reason. When you do so, you disarm it of any power over you. Some day machines will take us to distant places. The Aliens living standards will be passed on to us gradually. The Native people noticed their former leader, *Niigan Naazhea,* was talking out of the ordinary and he even walked rigid, except that his shining long black hair was still intact.

Negannigwani who became the chief of *Quaan Jaa Lake,* was a *Pwaagan* (pipe-carrier) and was also a seer known to tap into the universal creative force that underlines nature; the journey of souls. He was keeper of the days, responsible for naming the days, and observing and recording events in the heavens. *Negannigwani* was also an extraordinary leader from all indications. There are still many stories and like the Spider web, in those days the Native people where closely connected with the sky–world.

Then another dreadful day came. The Aliens kidnapped another six children and re-captured *Niigan Naazhea.* This was the last time *Niigan Naazhea* and any of the many children taken where seen on the planet earth. A decade later, the aliens once more returned to Quaan Jaa Lake with no trace of the other people that had been abducted in the years before. The Aliens were now unable to find the fire-breathing animals they had hunted for thousands of years. As they were getting prepared to departure, they forced more Native people to leave. Restlessly, waiting out of their reach was the incredible *Tekemah;* he was on hand to witness the abduction. Connected like the Spider-web, he was able to evoke the last of the Fire-Breathers, the monstrous serpent *Quaan Jaa,* to make her presence known. Danger was near at hand, and preceded with a gigantic wave, moved by a powerful energy force, the Monstrous Serpent appeared, casting a giant shadow on the startled Alien invaders.

The people scrambled and made their escape as the Giant Serpent made an attack on the space ship blowing fire and causing an explosion from which there was no escape, and killing all the intruders. Again a great terror filled the homes of *Quaan Jaa Lake.* Many people were traumatized, but the few who were left were protected by the unseen force of '*Quaan Jaa* the Serpent.' She had emerged as a tidal wave and swept the frightened people across the lake to where a huge rock stands at peace. The hairless Aliens were never seen again in *Quaan Jaa* Lake.

On calm evenings, night Chants and the sacred Drum were often heard coming from the naked rock across the bay. *Tekemah* the gifted mystic knew from various findings that *Quaan Jaa* never showed her face in full daylight. So the Odawa's chanted and drummed on calm evenings. Sneaking a look into the night skies, *Tekamah* could see far-off *Nigan Naazhea* blinking in communication. *Tekamah* discovered through *Quaan Jaa Lake's* mirror image, that the aliens had long established a presence on earth and they had gathered information on us for thousands of years. *Tekemah* informed his people; welcome the hairless, they are the far-off, far-out Aliens made of technology. Don't be afraid of them, because we are one with the earth. After they move on, we will still be here.

Unexpectedly, *Mshiikenh* asked me, are you OK son? Still in a daze, I answered I'm OK, just a little shaken by your story. The old man smiled. I gladly offered *Mshiikenh* another cup of *Naadwewashk* (herbal tea). *Mshiikenh* explained, "our ancestors were drumming in this area for centuries, they call this place *Dwe'ganing* (where the Elders drum), now known as South Bay. *Quaan Jaa* Lake is a sacred space, powered by the sun ahead of all lights. People came to this lake years ago to meditate. It's a special place," he said.

My brother and I swam quite often in *Quaan Jaa* Lake, the water was dark and cold, but we liked it that way because it

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made us tough. We swam with the water snakes; every time we saw the little serpents we greeted them with stones, not knowing their purpose in life and why they came around. I was thankful *Mshiikenh* came by frequently, we learned a lot from that Elder. He saw what we were doing and he asked, "Why are you killing the snakes? Would you greet me with stones? The snakes know you are here and they come to visit." "They're our relations," he said. "The snake has good medicine, and it has both good and bad power. A good doctoring power used for seeing and healing. Turtle is not so different, as it supports the earth like the snake. I'm from the Turtle clan that's how I know and that's why I'm telling you this. Next time you see water snakes, talk *Anishinaabe* (native) to them and they will hear you," he said. From then on we let them alone. We learned to appreciate why they are there.

Mshiikenh was a wise man and he would tell us how everything in nature is "our relations" the rocks, water, trees, animals, and all that is in the sky-world. Seeing the world as the Great Mystery was encouraging. One evening while playing and hollering around, my brother Eugene heard voices in a distance. Now we realized the enormous rock across the Lake was full of life. Soon my brother and I worked out our vocal cords and hollered out to the talking stone across the lake, and the beautiful ancient hollow sound of the echo would return to us. We had discovered another fun-loving entertaining activity in the beautiful surroundings of *Quaan Jaa* Lake.

I began watching the changes of *Quaan Jaa* Lake more carefully, the beautiful sunrises, the gorgeous sunsets, the huge waves, and the change in color of the standing people. Everything seemed to be alive and gave meaning to our existence. All this was soon forgotten as I went on into different levels of awareness and experience. But I always kept in mind *Mshiikenh's* fascinating story because I knew there was more to it than just another legend.

On our last day at the cabin, my father came home from hunting with a deer slung on his back. Before sundown another hunter, *Baagizhenh* (Ambrose Kitchicake), whom my father had known for years, stopped to visit. After a while the two of them were full of activity; cooking, packing and storytelling. Our visitor was my mother's relation, a very helpful man, and enjoyable storyteller. As I fell asleep that night, I could hear their low voices by the crackling fire until the wee hours of the morning. In the morning the delightful sound of birds singing awoke me. I was ready, anxious, and excited to leave.

After breakfast my Father, Gene and I hitched the horses to the rubber tired wagon. We left the cooking utensils behind at the cabin for others to use. As we rode away from the deep forest, I was surprised at my mixed feelings. I felt a keen anticipation to see my mother yet I felt a little sad to be leaving our log cabin and the fantastic surroundings of *Quaan Jaa* Lake. However, the experiences that summer gave me a little of the wild that I would come back to sustain me when I needed that comfort, and my exploring gave me unforgettable memories of my boyhood days in *Quaan Jaa* Lake.

End of Part One

The Indian Residential School (IRS)

Promoting awareness and public education about IRS System and its impacts on the Human Dignity of Former Students.

In the Second World War my father volunteered and joined the Canadian Armed forces in Europe. There he was accepted as a "man" and he ate at restaurants and drank in taverns with other men, unlike in Canada where he was prohibited from making those choices. Upon returning home there was no opportunity to grieve their losses or heal their shock and trauma. Returning Native soldiers were still restricted in drinking on the Indian Reserves, and they were not allowed to vote, buy liquor or drink in town hotels, or work outside of the Reserve.

A Native soldier who risked his life to defend Canada gave the highest possible gift he could lose; his life. The Native soldier in Canada was forced to be a farmer. Native people were subjected to punishment for not enfranchising into mainstream society. Then my father heard that laborers were needed to make a passageway for Hydro Power Lines in the backwoods of Northern Michigan USA, he left Canada. He took his selfish pride as a man and left. As a result, I ended up in the Indian Residential School and suffered under the hands of the Jesuit Strap.

I don't remember the very first time I left home for St. Charles Garnier Indian Residential School. My older brother Francis remembered, and I apparently put up quite a big fight, kicking, crying, and pleading not to go. I was only 6 years old, while my brothers Eugene and Francis were 7 and 9. I distinctly remember arriving and being fixed up with school clothing with my new name '67' inscribed on them. I remember being led to the field to join the game of soccer, where I asked myself, "What is soccer?" I especially remember that I was scared watching the kids play. I had never seen any kids as rough as the ones I was to play with and against, but I soon became like them rough, tough, and hard to break. That was the effect of long-term confinement at this school. At bed time I would cry myself to sleep thinking that loneliness would forever surround me. My first trauma of being totally separated from my mother, and sent to this school, hit me severely.

Sundays were visiting days for the boys. The girls came over from St. Joseph School across the street to visit their

brothers. The boys with no sisters had no visits and were chased outside into the freezing cold, but some of us would sneak into the barn to keep warm. The clothing provided was inadequate for the cold weather and my hard leather shoes were always too tight and my feet were often sore and cold. For me, longing for my family were the hardest times for me, and the loneliness hurt me more than the malformed toes I still have from the ill fitting shoes I was forced to wear in those early years.

I remember that in the dormitory all of the students slept in bunk beds. I once slept on top of the bunk, but because of my bedwetting I was transferred to a bottom bunk. I may have been 7 years old when one night after the lights went out an older student who slept on the bottom bunk next to me threatened me. He said he would beat me up if I didn't perform a sexual act on him. I never told this to anyone and this has always bothered me. I was too afraid to report this incident. Children who tried to report sexual abuse or any kind of abuse were strapped for lying.

I learned later that when a child is sexually abused there is so much that is denied. The child experiences trauma and when trauma takes place in a child's life, they stop growing. The child does not grow like other children. As the child ages, they may become abusive themselves. There is a lot of fear, and anger replaces the fear.

Another instance of sexual abuse was when I had chicken pox or measles (not sure which), I was in the infirmary, and was kept in a dark room for five days. As I lay in the bed the prefect Brother Laflamme would come and check the red spots on my body. To the best I can recollect he abused me three times while I was sick in bed. His idea of nurturing was sexual touching. In the winter evenings it was mandatory for everyone to go to the infirmary on the third floor for a tablespoon of cough medicine, which for us was a dose of cod liver oil. We would march in single file ten at a time. There was always a scary feeling inside me when I had to see Brother Laflamme. He was the physician known as the magician who played with generators. He would give us a shock treatment on our visits. He had us line up and clutch hands and then he'd turn on the electrical gadget, and the volts would go through everyone's arm and the person at the end of the line would get the biggest jolt. It was another one of his warped and sadistic ways of having sick fun at the children's expense.

Emotional abuse came in the form of constant ridicule. I had bad kidneys and wet the bed. All the "piskers and piss bombers" as we were called were subjected to constant abuse and ridicule. Every Saturday morning I was ordered to line up with other bedwetters and we had to drag our wet mattress to the barn to change the straw. Our weekly ritual was to walk between a gauntlet of jeering boys and laughing priest dragging our mattresses. No one will ever know the real extent of pain, blame, and shame we each experienced inside of ourselves for bedwetting. We couldn't help the physical condition. Everyone slept on a mattress, but I and the other boys with the same problem were required to sleep on a straw mattress all during our stay at the school.

Another source of abuse came while playing ball or marbles. I would hear the priest yell "Scramble". I would drop what ever I was doing and run to the game of scramble. Father Brennan took sadistic pleasure in tossed jellybeans on the ground like he was feeding hungry chickens. I became a regular in the game of scramble by being rough and ready. Charging, bumping heads, and scraping knees, bruised black and blue and crying just to get a jellybean or two. The game of scramble was always cruel, and aggression teaches violent behavior. But I was hungry all the time, because there was never enough food, and many times I would have to hide lard under the table to use the next day for buttering bread. I would be lucky if it was still there the following day. I know others were hungry too.

There were many sports played in the institution. One sport where one had to shape up and be alone was boxing. In this annoying game, we were blind folded with potatoes sacks, not seeing where your opponent is and not knowing when the next damaging blow to the head is going to knock you silly or angry was very difficult. Many times I was put in the ring and many times I was hurt. This activity looked amusing to the children, and I am sure I gave them the impression of looking like a clown in my confusion. To the priests I think it was just another one of their sadistic misbehaviors. Their expectation of toughness was taken seriously, and they obviously believed that pain and punishments was the answer to making a kid wake up and behave. From this "sport" I went on to learn to hit first and ask questions afterwards. I was also minus three knuckles. Boxing blindfold in potatoes sacks as sport came to an end when one kid was seriously injured.

Hockey is Canada's game and playing hockey was mandatory at the IRS. One Saturday morning I was rushing to participate in the hockey game. The ice surface was divided into four sections, and group teams played in the morning immediately after breakfast. I may have been nine years old and I liked playing hockey. That particular morning I didn't have time to take out the straw mattress to replace the straw. For my punishment, I had to clean toilet bowls and urinals for a week. Lavatory duty was used as punishment or as a means of force labor. I worked in the cold latrine for a whole week for not taking out my wet mattress.

Alfie Morrison was a kid from *Cochichiing* (Fort Francis) Reserve. It was Alfie's hockey skill that attracted the attention of all the native boys and girls at the Indian Residential School. He was our Hockey star in the mid 1950s. Other great players came before and after him, and one who became well known on my

home team of Wikwemikong, was Max Simon. Constantly, we were warned to concentrate and keep our eyes on the game, not on the girls, otherwise, we would be punished. The cheering and excitement was no doubt tempered by the disturbing feeling of the possibility of getting strapped. Looking at the girls meant you were doing something morally wrong. Yet, at times we were allowed to public skate with the girls in the arena at the IRS it was terribly confusing. It was a confusion that never quite went away in my life.

There were many great players who played at the Indian Residential School institutions in Canada, and later for their home communities. Had they been given a decent chance, they would have easily made the big leagues. Max Simon went on to play for the All Native team called the Wikwemikong Flyers, winning three Championships against the five Non-Native teams on Manitoulin Island, eventually retiring in Wawa, Ontario. Alfie Morrison and the boys who once teamed up at the Spanish IRS got together and joined a league in the Windy City (Chicago) where they all worked in the early 1960s. They were called the Elden Blades. They were truly a force to be reckoned with and these young men also captured three Championships against the Non-Native teams in Chicago. The Residential School was a combination of survival and battlefield. The boys worked hard and played hard; win or lose. The Priest may have been a great influence simply because they were superior at coaching and yelling and issuing punishment if you didn't heed their words.

One afternoon, I may have been nine years old, we were playing in the schoolyard near the barn area when we heard as lot of noisy gobble sounds and saw that somehow the long neck birds had got away. A few of us children ran after the reddish-headed turkeys, trying to help hurl them back over the fence. I must have looked like a thief, but really I was just having a difficult time trying to toss the flapping bird over the wired fence, when unexpectedly I felt my left ear burning. I was being slapped upside the head by a farm worker, and the blow to the left side of my ear knocked me to the ground. It was another of the sadistic brothers, Voisin. Blood came pouring out of my left ear and he sent me to the infirmary. When the other sadistic brother Laflamme, asked what happened and when I explained what had happened, he stuffed cotton balls in my ear and send me back to play as if nothing happened. Today, I still have problem hearing.

When a dozen of us received our First Communion in the Roman Catholic institution we were given special treatment; a day off from school, and we were given three special meals in a special room. We were fed highly pleasing meals; the fineness of tasty treats that I had never seen on the table in our dinning room in the residential school. The older boys that worked in the kitchen revealed that was how the Jesuits ate everyday, but we were denied necessities and fed days old food, spoiled bone soup, leftover from the scrap bones of pork and beef, green corn meal, smelly mush, and lard for buttering bread. In this school, the priest ate divinely and drank wine, while 'us' kids were starving.

One evening while we were having supper, they brought Joe Ratt down stairs from the main office on second floor. Joe had run away from school and had been caught. When they brought Joe downstairs for supper his head was completely shaved to the skin. He glanced around the tables and saw that everyone was looking at him in various degrees of shock. One student nervously laughed and a fight erupted. Next thing I saw was Prefect Father Orr and Joe Ratt under the table fighting, struggling, and kicking. It was terrifying, watching the horrifying incident.

Spiritual abuse was a hurtful reality on a daily basis. We were called pagan because nature was our spiritual way of life. It defined our culture and spiritual ceremonies. By tradition the medicine men and women on our homes opened their sacred bundles as soon as the first echoes of thunder-spirits were heard. Spring was welcomed because the rain nourished all sacred living things. Each bud on a tree was regarded a spirit opening out to our Environmental Spirituality. The wolf is our brother we shared the forest with the animals. We asked ourselves why can't we be just natural like the birds and sing our own songs? The Residential Schools began rooting out traditional values and beliefs in our heads, and planting Christianity and its values and ways in their place.

Confessions took place Friday evenings week after week. Confession was not easy, and sometimes very confusing. If I ever said, "I have no sins I didn't do anything bad." I was called a liar and told it was a sin. The priests said, "You have to be a sinner." I was instructed to say, "Bless me father for I have sinned." After saying this, I would just lie and say, "I did this, I did that, I stole this, I stole that." It seemed that lying was the only way to satisfy the Holy Father.

I was also strapped for inquisitiveness. Sunday was church day. When we walked down the Isle in church we were strictly informed that we were not allowed to turn our heads to the right where the girls sat. Some boys were looking and trying to spot their sisters, and for others it is a natural habit to observe. Natural curiosity about the opposite sex was discouraged. One was made to feel ashamed for even having such curiosities.

Showers made me feel withdrawn and inferior. While taking a shower Father Brennan would stand in front of the door watching and staring. His constant stare reminded me of a hawk ready to pounce. He was a man who hid his sexual perversions and sadistic tendencies in the covering of holiness. He would say you stink because you piss in bed. The pee smell

was strong from the steam shower as it washed off my body in front of other children, always leaving me feeling shame. Scarred from that childhood experience, to this day I don't take showers. I never took showers at the steel plant where I worked for three years and still don't take showers where I work out at the fitness club with other men. I carry the deep feeling that my body was something to be hidden and to be ashamed of.

Now and then Saturdays were designated as days for long walks. Occasionally a senior 'native guide' would be in charge, which always made it more pleasurable. The one in charge would ask us 'where do you want to go today? Us kids would holler out, "Smith Lake." There was an attractive lake close by Saint Charles Garnier Residential School, but Smith Lake was our favorite place. Spanish town was about a mile and a half from the Residential school and Smith Lake was about three miles. We would all march through the little town slowly two by two, all staring at the candy store as we passed by. As we slowly marched onward we would stare at the greyhound station wishing we could get on a bus, and wondering who was getting off. When we finally came to Smith Lake everyone would be excited knowing what we were after. When we arrived at the hidden lake it was like little prisoners getting released from prison. Everybody scattered, yet most kids were drawn like a magnet directly to the landfill site lake, which was close by. In spite of the garbage at the nearby dump, nature heals. Smith Lake was still a loving place to choose; we were able to run free and feel happy again. It was a place where I first learned how to swim, and it was a peaceful place for swimming. It had cool clear water, fresh air, the fresh smell of pine trees, birds singing their own songs. Sometimes, in an amazing stroke of luck blueberries would be growing on the high rocks above the landfill and 'us' kids would be in our glory. About an hour after the initial scatter, everyone would be running around with slingshots. The black tire tubes at the dump served their purpose. For ammunition, bits of pinecones would be flying in every direction; older kids would secretly roast rabbits, and others would hunt partridge. It was fun while it lasted. This last time would prove to be the end of Smith Lake for all of us. Come Monday morning a barrel full of slingshots was confiscated by the black robe priest, and we knew that some title-tattle had leaked out.

We took advantage of being alone, to break free of the rules forced upon us. We felt pride in being Native, rebuilding our minds and spirits. That place was my favorite place, the freedom I felt there; my life so full of love. As I'm writing this section, I am smiling, yet I'm teary-eyed with a lump in my throat looking back and imagining us little children scampering about so happy, and yet so lost.

On several occasions big bullies beat me when the prefects weren't watching. My father wasn't there to protect me. My mother wasn't there to comfort me when I cried. I needed my parents. It made me feel angry and confused knowing my parents could not help me and wondering where they were, not knowing they had no say in the matter for me being where I should not have been. The only people I was acquainted with were the men in black robes who had no experience in parenting and who were presume to be watching us instead of abusing us. As a result of my early childhood, I grew up without love and caring. As an adult, I did not have the ability to show love towards my parents, brothers, sisters, or even my own children. I had no parenting skills. The only skills I had came from those authority figures; always ordering me around. Now, there I was yelling at my children, and adopting the awful parenting skills of the abusers. Now my children are feeling angry from the side effects of the IRS system.

In our afternoon class, we would go up one by one and tell our stories, recite poems and riddles. Many kids were strapped for not knowing what they were saying. In the schoolyard older kids would tell us what to recite, not understanding what was bad about it, if anything at all. One day I recited a poem called, ***The Men Who Went To War;***

In the year 1944

the men went to war

They had no guns

they used their bums

After my poetic sharing, I was sent to the main office on the second floor and strapped by Father Maurice until I cried. There was no such thing as forgiveness, no respect, no consideration, just strap, strap, strap. Force and fear were the tactics used on little children everywhere in the building.

A few decades later I am working with my daughter Wonda. I'm teaching Native Language & Culture to the little children at the Niwasa Head Start Program in Hamilton. Wonda is one of the ECE teachers. At times, I have heard teachers, guest teachers and staff of the program speak to the children saying, "On your bum, sit on your bum please." It is hard for me to believe that after fifty years, I'm still triggered with these words, and affected by bad memories of being hit and strapped. If only they knew what happened to us when the word "bum" was mentioned in the Indian Residential School. Would they believe me? All of the teachers I work with weren't even born yet, it was so long ago. My little friends at *Niwasa* (little ones) always made my day. In our little circle they would pass around a talking stone taking turns sharing stories of their little escapades. From the spirit stone they have learned how to listen and respect the person speaking.

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One of the Seven Grandfather teachings is ***Mnaadenmowin*** or, in English *respect*. This is always the message given to my little friends at Niwasa Head Start Program. I feel so good to share such an important part of our culture with the little children. There is no such thing as abuse in our Niwasa building. Shaming in front of others can be devastating to a Native child, any child, and is not something I have seen happening there.

Our cultural belief has always been that children are gifts from the Creator. Etched in my mind is another cold winter morning at IRS. I may have been 9 years old, and we unexpectedly had a fire drill. It was still dark when the fire alarm went off. There was a lot of commotion, running and bumping. I remember that I slid down a cold pipe to escape from the third floor to the second floor level and onto the ground. There was a little boy, Ivan, he limped when he walked. He was coming behind me crying very loud, and somehow he lost his footing and fell on top of my head. I may have been knocked out for a few seconds. My body acted as a cushion when he fell on top of me. When I came to, there was a crowd around little Ivan trying to ease his pain. Some kids were crying from the freezing cold, and some kids had no shoes on. We had on white cotton gowns that looked like dresses symbolizing little white angels. Finally, Ivan was taken to the Infirmary. Explaining the accident the way I wanted to would have done more damage. I had been strapped much too often for speaking my language and speaking when not spoken too. Gradually, I was learning the no-talk rule, and internalizing an inability to make a complaint. I was taught to fear authority and taught to be silent. This teaching has hurt me all my life, and I used a fist or alcohol to draw attention to what I thought I wanted. My Grandmother was in Residential school as a child, and so was I. Now, my children, who did not go to IRS, also feel the effects of what has come to be called the Indian Residential School Syndrome.

I remember coming home on one of our summer holidays from the school; I may have been nine years old. My brother Eugene and I were playing on a wooden swing gate by the road when our neighbor, a little boy named Jimmy Joe, made an effort to play with us. He went running back up the hill yelling in Odawa "Mama, mama, Gordon is talking funny!" I guess he was frightened, because Eugene and I must have sounded like turkeys to him. It was English coming out of us like we had been born speaking it.

We lived in one of seven satellite areas in Wikwemikong Reserve. Several kids arrived from Spanish Residential School to live and help on the farms. Separation amongst them was usual. Many kids were from different reserves, some with different dialects. One of those kids lived at the Enosse farm down hill from us. He was my friend Stanley Johnson, and was originally from ***Bkejwanong*** Reserve. Stan couldn't speak Native. He's an example of someone who once spoke his language, but could no longer speak it, because of the domination he received at school. He would drop by to visit and we would always talk in English. One day my father got after Eugene and me. He said, "Stop talking English around here. What is wrong with you?" Speaking English was a force of habit, and the fact that I kept forgetting that my mother only spoke the sacred language was not very respectful on my part. How was I supposed to know? I was only a kid. I never forgot one of Stanley's comments. He said to me, "Gee, you got it bad. You can't speak Native in the School, and you can't speak English at home. We both laughed. He was right thought; I couldn't win either way. Stan died when he was 59 years old and he never fully recovered his stolen language. It is good to know that his funeral was in the Traditional form; something crucial to our Native custom.

This is only one important example of what our people went through and are still going through today. Our language is essential to the maintenance of our culture. Facts and information can be stated in any language, but the beliefs, feelings, and way of looking at the world through the eyes of a culture are lost when translated in to another language. The words and structure of a language express the feelings of a people and their culture. Words that are supposed to be parallel in another language do not fully and accurately portray those feelings. Therefore, changing to a different language results in a loss of a part of our culture. The loss of a language also leads to a breakdown in communication between children and their grandparents, sometimes even their parents, and denies children their heritage. Forcing Native children to suddenly give up their language, and speak only English, like we were in Residential school, reinforced the idea prevalent in many of the schools that the Native language and culture are of little or no value, thus effectively destroying the self-concept of many students.

It's funny how one always remembers where they were when something drastic happens. It was in 1954, and I was in the Indian Residential School in Spanish Ontario. We were in Church when the priest announced, "Wikwemikong church burned down." It must have been a sad time for the people back home to see the symbol of their beliefs collapse. I don't remember ever being in that church, but my mother told me I was baptized in it. I clearly remember the priest at the IRS announcing, "There will not be any more drum play in the school grounds. Drumbeats, yelling and chanting is a sign of devil worshippers. This he proclaimed in the church, a place of worship. Many of us kids would play 'Cowboys and Indians' after watching the movies and we would bring into play an old beaten galvanized pail for a drum. We lost our Church at home, and our feeling were not acknowledged, and at the IRS Church we were told what to do and what we could believe and that

our own beliefs were from the devil. There were many drastic events in our young lives.

Our Ancestors practiced laughter, yelling, talking, and crying as gifts of healing. Dancing yelling and singing is a spiritual process deeply embedded in the historic use of the drum. The early 'Black Robes' could not have understood this in their struggle to convert the Native People. Subsequent events at IRS showed us that the Priests panicked when they saw us children playing out cultural activities. Years later in the fall of 1998 on a chilly evening I went to a gathering at Spanish Residential School with Don and Henry Jocko and Joe Bonaparte from Akwesasne Reserve. They were also survivors of the Spanish School. The Residential School had been condemned, except for the church section where the gathering took place. We all sat in a sizeable circle. I felt very uncomfortable, agitated, cold, and I was completely disassociated from my sense of self. This was because long ago in this huge building, time and time again I had experienced an atmosphere of fear and dread of the unexpected. Unwelcome memories were coming back at me, and finally the meeting began with the entrance of the sacred drum. Only then did I feel a sense of strength, and find myself again. I was so proud to see the spirit drum come back to where it had once been mocked and eradicated. That night a number of people slept in the church section of the building. I couldn't sleep there. I had slept in that huge building too long. A sudden fear of more recollections became too disturbing, and nothing could stop me. I went home. But, I learned from the silent messages in my head, that boyhood trauma could play hell with a man's memory.

One Easter Sunday my Mother and Father came to visit. A neighbor drove them 100 miles to visit us, but they could stay for only a short time. Rules had to be followed. My father gave Francis $10.00 dollars to divide between the three of us. As a rule Francis in turn had to give the money to Father Maurice, who was entrusted with the care and spending of funds. I remember I made three trips to the main office to collect a quarter each visit so I could by goodies at the canteen shop. Twenty-Five cents provided me with a chocolate bar, soda pop and few candies. On my 4th visit, I was told I had two other brothers and there was no money left. I told my brother Francis about the situation. He explained to me he also made 3 trips to the main office getting a quarter each visit and was told the same thing, likewise my brother Eugene, so $7.75 was kept back from us. This was a system that never stopped taking; nothing was ever mentioned again about this criminal act till we got older. That experience taught me how close crime and authority work. It seems to work hand in hand, the law and the outlaw.

In 1969, I came home to Wikwemikong from Detroit for the Christmas holidays. My brother Francis and I decided to take a drive to the south side of Wikwemikong known as Deweganing or South Bay. We stopped at one log cabin, where we met two friends, Clarence Petawanakwat and Joe Louise Lavelley. We all went to school at the Indian Residential School at Spanish. We talked about the humorous occurrences we went through at the IRS and the hockey players we idolized during that time. We talked about the guys we knew by their numbers and the intimidating and funny nicknames they were given and the ugly nicknames we were called. We reminisced and joked about the things we remembered at the IRS and we had a good time. Now I understand that we were avoiding the atrocious crime that had been done to us as children. We were laughing, not because it was amusing, but because there was a lot of pain. Reminiscing in a humorous way about our past experiences was our way of coping or adapting to our present situations. Clearly for most of us, the reminiscing experience continues to be painful. We had to ease the pain somehow, and we did by laughing. Two of my relations, Bezhniik and Maaniiyaanh from the community, came in while we where talking about our experiences. Joining in our conversation, Bezhniik mentioned how she had learned how to hem, mend, and sew in the Residential School. She claimed that if she didn't attend there she wouldn't have known how to sew. This was hard to believe because Native women are most excellent in weaving stitches, dress- making and beadwork. They were doing embroidery work before darning needles were ever brought into the country. Maaniiyaanh then stated that if she didn't go to IRS she wouldn't be speaking English today. It is sad to know that today Maaniiyaanh's grandchildren can't speak their Native language. Girl's school may have been a little leaner than the boy's school when it came to painful experiences, but abuse is abuse. Half of that day went by very quickly as we talked and joked. It was certainly stimulating using humor to get past trauma.

This still happens today whenever my brothers and sisters from all across Turtle Island talk about their residential school experiences. We use humor, but underneath all that laughter, there is a deep sadness and there are some really sad cases. We learned to maintain strict composure during beatings, live out fantasies about present and future circumstances in our minds and in total silence, and we idolized those who ran away from school. Some refer to the Residential School their home, but I know from that forced childhood home, we brought back to our family homes "issues." The issues we are dealing with today as a result of being taken away from our "real" homes have created a lot of hurt. The survivors who practiced detachment effectively distanced themselves from the source of hurt, whether by "shutting down," not speaking or hearing, or joking and laughing about the source of their pain. Others reinterpreted negative situations in positive way like Bezhniik and Maaniiyaanh.

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The St. Charles Garnier Residential School was demolished, but it was not a pretty site to begin with. In its place, a huge Monument now sits as a reminder. It gives the entire picture meaning; then and now, past and present, a child and an adult. It is good to have the new monument in place where the school once stood. It tells the truth. The Residential School survivors will not be with us forever, but the legacy of their survival must live on, and never be forgotten.

My father had given me a ***Potawatomie*** name, *Zhaawondenhs*. But when it came time for me to learn the English language at the Residential School, my name was thrown out as heathenish rubbish. Consequently, a new name came about. One day I was out of the boundary line, pocketing fruit under the apple tree. The Prefect Father Orr said that I was out of bounds and running away. I was immediately sent to the second floor of the school. I was crying, frightened and thinking I was going to have my head shaved. Hair cutting and hair shaving was common punishment for a run-away and it was always done at the Barber Shop on the second floor. I was rescued by my friend Henry Jocko, he was the Native student barber that day, and he tried to make me as comfortable as possible, but my weird haircut was still bad. Father Brennan came into the barbershop and in a demoralizing voice said "hello Flat Top." From that day forward the name-calling began to no-end. I was known as "Flat Top" in the Residential School and at the Wikwemikong Reserve. I hated that name. It was powerful how much that name affected my mind. That name took me from the innocence of picking fruit to a sudden meeting of 'dread and fright', and that fright stayed with me throughout my lifetime. The simple act of feeding myself apples represented a challenge to the authority of that priest, more importantly, it was proof that the black-robes possessed the necessary strength to comfort and persecute a student and win, and that they the ability to bring him down to the lowest level.

When I got married in 1965 I came home and was startled to learn that it was Father Brennan who was to perform the wedding in the village. When I came up to meet him, he said "Why hello Flat Top, long time no-see." I felt humiliated by the name he called me in front of my fiancée, and I sensed that nothing had changed. The same force they used at the IRS was noticeable in the black robe that monitored a few activities in the Wikwemikong village. The name Father Brennan gave me in the Residential School was an expression of his power, it was offensive, and represented intimidation and abusiveness. This name is still used today towards me by a handful of people who don't know what they are saying and where it came from. It was something I came to grips with somewhat accidentally, but it was necessary to end my continuing to be afflicted by it.

This is how it happened, one day I was on the school grounds in Wikwemikong. About a block from the Pontiac School Reserve school is a restaurant called the Odawa Inn. It is a popular place for students to gather at lunch hour. Inside are simple unadorned tables and comfortable chairs. It's unpretentious and cozy. I took a walk there at noon hour for some pop and chips. My friends Dave Mishibinijima, Harvey Wassegijig, Tony Shawana and Harvey Bell saw me approaching. As I walked in the place, I could see that the place was packed with teenagers. Dave deposited a quarter into the Juke Box and said we got a song for you Gordon; as it comes on they're all smiles and I'm wondering what it could be. It was a song by Johnny Cash, 'The Tennessee Flat Top Box'. Anything for a laugh with Flat Top in it I guessed, but I realized that my nick-name mentioned in the song reminded them of me and for me it was kind of an uplifting feeling. It took on a new sense, a "feeling-realization, enlightenment" kind of response, and this time I took no offense. The song was a big hit in the country music field and here were these crazy friends of mine clapping their hands and loving it and all of a sudden I realize I'm all for it, and feeling no pain. From then on, every time I heard that song, it made me feel special. I have to thank those boys for the clarification, clearing up the irritating feelings around the Flat Top nickname, and the memory for how it came about. These friends of mine have since gone on into the Spirit World, but I will never forget them. The song they played will always be inspirational source to me, and yes, the history of Flat Top will live on.

Another source of insult came from the Jesuits finding a way for us to escape boredom for an hour or two by watching the popular cowboy and Indian film nonsense. The films taught us that the white man was the good guy and the savage Indian was always the bad guy. When we played outdoors and imitated the actors everybody wanted to be a cowboy and nobody wanted to be an Indian. The Indians massacred people, if not the innocent settlers, it was those passing through on wagon trains. It was something we were obliged to watch and eventually took for granted. We didn't understand that the settlers stole Indian lands. This movie nonsense contributed to my shame of being an Indian (identity = language). I grew up not speaking Ojibwe at school, or to my children once I had my own family.

In the Aboriginal Spirituality course, through which I participated, at the University of Toronto, I learned that "no native can grow to any age without being informed that her/his people were 'savages' and that they had interfered with the march of progress pursed by respectable, loving civilized whites" (Lee, 1959). We were villains of each of the scenario's we were shown in those old movies, and when we were mentioned at all in books, we were absent from much of the progress of

white history except when we were and are calmly, rationally, succinctly, and systematically dehumanized.

In September of 2003, I had the privilege to teach Ojibwe, "examining the morphology of words" at McMaster University in Hamilton under my colleague Mr. Isadore Bebamikawe (Toulouse). The students consisted of those learning to be linguists, and people going into Social Work and Anthropology. These were people who would eventually deal with the physical, cultural, and social development of man, including his origin and behavior. I found it interesting on more one occasion. As my awareness grew, I became lost in thought over my quick first impression at seeing all these people sitting in front of me. I was thinking, "Who stole my talk? Who stole my way of thinking? Why am I teaching Ojibwe to the white man?" I was increasingly conscious that this kind of thinking came from a loss of a normal lifestyle, and from a lack of trust caused by attending Indian Residential School. I can forgive, but it doesn't mean I can forget.

More recently, I have read about Dorothy Lee, an anthropologist interested in how people from different cultures perceive their immediate environment, described what she saw while looking at trees outside her window. "I see trees, some of which I like to be there, and some of which I intend to cut down to keep them from encroaching further upon the small clearing I made for my house" (Lee, 1959). In the same passage, she contrast with her perceptions of Black Elk, a Dakota Native who saw trees as having rights to the land, equal to his own …"standing people, in whom the winged ones built their lodges and reared their families" (cited in Lee, 1959: 1). For First Nations people, everything comes from the *Anishinaabemowin* (native language). It's how we talk, how we walk, and how we think.

In our sacred ceremonies a two-spirited person is thought of as a special person. It is considered a gift to have two-spirits in one body; it is a great honor. Many two-spirited women of the past were warriors and political leaders and many women are those things today, just in different ways. Women warrior today fight against injustice and poverty. Those who are politically minded may become lawyers and join various levels of government, both on reserve and off. The first Europeans had no tolerance for a flexible, Indigenous concept of sexuality and gender. The presence of openly accepted homosexuality went against their deeply held religious beliefs, and gays and lesbians, as well as traditional spiritual leaders and women, were devalued by patriarchal Europeans because of the power and status they held within their Aboriginal communities. Colonization means the loss not only of language and the power of self-government but also of ritual status of all women and those males labeled 'deviant' by the white Christian colonizers". As a result of Christian colonization, the long-held traditions respecting the special gifts of gays and lesbians, as well as their important ceremonial roles, were largely forgotten. Under the Christian Church led Indian Residential School System, Aboriginal children were taught to feel ashamed of their culture, as well as guilt and shame about their bodies and sexuality. For many children, this shame was compounded by the trauma of physical and sexual abuse. The impacts of shame and unresolved trauma are seen today in the reluctance of Aboriginal people to speak openly about issues of sexuality and sexual orientation, leading, in turn, to greater isolation and shame.

Four of my siblings were in the Indian Residential School System, Doris, Raymond, Francis and Eugene. Many of Aboriginal people left the residential school as misguided people and countless died at an early age. Many searched in the wrong places for self-respect and identity and many found self-destructive ways to cope with the outside world. My oldest brother Ray died of exposure from alcohol-related causes. My brother Eugene died by taking his own life along with the bitter memories rooted in experiences Vietnam War. My other brother, Francis, died from what has come to be known as the "legacy disease," the same old blame; Cancer. I thank the Creator for their loan.

Going back to the reserve was not easy, even though it was nice to be home. At the village schoolyard we were known as bad kids, the kids from the institution. I started fighting the other kids because I was angry. All my family values were broken and destroyed in the IRS and now in my community. The traditional ceremonies and medicines disappeared, and our health and cultural/language was in limbo. I had been abused in the IRS and I had a lot of abusive behaviors like anger, rage, impatience, and yelling that I brought home and applied to others. I was violent often; even directing my anger towards my mother. I had become a hyper kid with a troubled spirit. I showed a lot of forcefulness, and got into a lot of arguments and fights. I was an angry boy filled with fear, and fighting was the only way to get rid of the fear. The signs of great inner pain that branded me felt like it was locked within forever. We hold our anger in our bodies, storing it within the organs and tissues. This coping method of repressing anger can lead to illness, disease and eventually death. My brother died of cancer, my brother repressed his feeling too; many of our people died this way.

After the closing of the IRS at Spanish Ontario in 1958, some of the Jesuits went on to work on the Reserves where they became well known and respected. I know the desire to belong and be accepted is an essential human need, but I will not, cannot deny what happened to me and what I experienced in the Indian Residential School during my childhood. The

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Jesuits Priest had a job to do. Likewise, I now have work to do. I understand that healing is a life long journey.

As the years have gone by I have begun to catch a glimmer of what I missed those many years ago. I am immersed in learning about aboriginal spiritually, and learning phrases like, 'sustainable development' and the 'harmony of all living things.' Our Aboriginal cultures are still rich with ceremonies designed to build strength, restore balance and promote healing. Traditional teachings have always included behavior modification, cognitive therapy, and narrative therapy. Our children learn through the stories of the Elders, making connections from the stories to their own life journeys. I began to see more clearly what my Ancestors meant when they said their life was linked to the land. From teachings, we learn to respect and preserve the earth that gives us life. The courage of aboriginal survivors to heal themselves their families and their communities is a source of inspiration. They are living embodiments of the strength, beauty, and resilience of the First Nations People, Inuit, and Métis. They are transforming the pain of their past into hope for a new future.

I left the Reserve at an early age not really knowing my own spiritually well enough to comfort me, but I always felt something was missing. That something was what only my Ancestors could give. I felt isolated, and left home like an undisclosed top-secret package, on the road to a nowhere life. My road ended up being a long, lost tale of confused wanderings and loneliness. It was an experience of city lights, fast living, marrying early, divorcing early and ending up in endless taverns. There were too many years of late night parties, after hour hangouts (bootleggers), fist-cuffs, and never holding onto a job longer than 3 years. Eventually, I turned into an alcoholic, never realizing that I was heading for catastrophe.

Temp Offices were everywhere in USA in the 60s and 70s. No one could ever get stranded anywhere if they wanted to work at temporary jobs. It was good for traveling and staying alive. Temporary work became my specialty. Traveling and living in the Slums of Houston, New Orleans, Buffalo and Syracuse N.Y. and then back to Detroit. Finally, exhausted and stuck between two worlds, I had plenty of work to do on my self. At the age of 45, I had to face and relive my childhood years. I had to go back, and then further back again, to my earliest childhood to find that point of transition and learn how to feel proper.

Today, I feel proud and gratified that I found my Spirituality, that I found my heart, and that I am able to walk the red road with my own people and the Spirits of My Ancestors. I feel like a warrior that helps others who are not able to speak-up for themselves. Many of my thanks go to the Native Horizons Treatment Center, the Rain Dance Society, Susan Aaron's Psychodramatic Bodywork Training in Toronto, Cindy Baskin's Traditional Counseling, and Dr. A.A. Dunlop who is associated with The Canadian Native Center in Toronto. I can also thank Ontario Health Canada and the many Native writers with their brutal honesty, the amazing Naandwedidaa (healing one another) program in Wikwemikong, and all of the Care-Givers that have supported me on my journey to healing and releasing of painful memories.

End of Part Two

Living in the Now…

I keep myself busy today. I look for interesting things to do. My hobby is collecting classic movie videos. Through out my boy-hood days, movies always helped me to break away from reality for an hour or so. I find watching motion pictures a great way to entertain me at home, and I can always turn to my video movies for comfort. They're filled with glamour, romance, excitement, and escape and I get a sense of what it must have been like back then in better places than where I was. The world isn't all bad.

I collect videos at yard sales; flee markets, and antique fairs. It's a hobby that keeps me going because of the running around and looking for them. I get a lot out of the traveling to distant places to find them, trading, doing research, and the sharing with people with similar interest, and the joy of finding good ones. It carries me, and I have no time to think of my pain or illness, and therefore these movie treasures and memories become more precious as time goes by.

The movies that interest me the most represent different cultural expression. They are inspiring and educational. Westerns movies (cowboys and Indians) give an idea, although sometimes wrong, about an important time in American History. Aboriginal people have beat incredible odds in their struggle for freedom. They seem to have a tremendous sense of spirit and express good feelings of reality, especially as that history becomes clearer. When I'm looking for laughs and love, I'll reach for and grab a movie of show business biographies, and watch public triumphs, private failures, career declines and fantastic comebacks. These wonderfully exciting musicals and words put into images what a person feels in his heart. Included in my collection are silent movies, films of the twenties, and thirties, film noir, the fabulous fifties, biographies and Walt Disney's greatest creation Mickey Mouse. All are highly pleasing to me. Buying videos in the market place has come to an end, and finding classic video movies has become more challenging for the serious collector. Many movies have never been released for TV, Video or DVD and are lost to public. For me, preserving classic movies has become a way of preserving history.

My life has change considerably over the years. I don't have a big income, just enough to keep me alive. However, I don't miss money because I began my life without money. I

keep my eyes peeled for saving advertisements and thanks to the Shoppers Optimum card, the more I shop the more I earn points, and the more I save. I have never shopped like this before, but at least it keeps things interesting. I don't own a car, and therefore I don't have to pay for auto insurance or for parking. I don't drink alcohol and I don't smoke cigarettes, and if I did there are already plenty of good reasons to butt out!

There are other interesting things to do in this world. I do volunteer work, and I am a member of the Board of Directors at the Akwa Honsta a non-profit housing company. All of the directors volunteer their time to be on the board. The mandate of Akwa Honsta is to provide safe clean and affordable housing to individuals and families. They have a specific mandate to provide rent-geared to income rental housing in the Aboriginal community of Toronto.

I also take pleasure in doing volunteer work at the University of Toronto, sharing my story in class about my experience as a young boy in the wilderness and at the Residential School. The University students better understand what the Residential School was like from the eyes of a Native Child and my stories of the past raise awareness of Aboriginal culture and history. They are helping to write my story using their writing skills and their knowledge of correspondence and the academic literature. They have been tasked by their Professor, Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux to match their writing as closely to what I say as possible. My story will have more truth when I tell it the way it was directly from my memory and my life. Now they know that for too long our stories have been silenced, and they are willing to help people like me bring them to life.

Some of the things I do, I find are a little difficult now. Staying in condition is not easy, but I go for long walks, do sit ups, and finding the right combination of food is good for my stomach. I make sure I get enough sleep. Sometimes, I'll wake up in the middle of the night and if something comes to my mind, I'll start writing. I write for pleasure, and I am finding that writing can be a form of healing; an active mind is always a healthier mind.

I have a better appreciation for the beauty around me now, and I enjoy listening to many different types of music from the past and by musicians gone by, like the jazz bands of Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman and stars like Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, and Elvis. They are gone, but they will continue to shine for me. I try to understand the Rap music that young people listen to. If the group is expressing their feelings and voicing their concerns more power to them. My favorite Country Artist is Crystal Shawanda, Wikwemikong's own ambassador to Opry Land. I have a daughter named Crystal Shawanda as well and I love her dearly. Obviously, the three of us have never met our great, great Grandfather ***Zhaawonde***, but his name will continue to be heard and it will shine in Crystal's songs under the bright lights of The Grand Ole Opry.

I'm thankful I have a friend back home that I have kept in touch with throughout all the years. Robert ***Takwadjiwan*** and I grew up in Wikwemikong, and we worked in Detroit many years back as well. Once in a while our old drinking days will pop up in our conversation, but we don't dwell on them. Of all the things I miss is there's nothing more pleasurable for me when speaking Ojibwe to my friend Rob. There are always laughs when we speak our own language, our gift from the Creator. English is not the same; words do not carry the same representation they have in the Ojibwe language. This is one reason I enjoy my phone conversations with him and speaking in our Native Tongue. I miss the clean expression and amusement that comes with laughs and admiration in the language of our Ancestors.

Some of my children and my Grandchildren live in another city not far from me.

I feel it's my duty to help and guide them. I'm partly responsible for why they live in the city. Like other families we went through some hard times with racism, alcoholism, drugs and death. Sometimes, seeing some of my grandchildren living in apartment buildings has a negative affect on me. I feel I should be on the Reserve with them where there is clean fresh air and room to grow. Living in the city may be tough for some of us, but we cannot let the Dark Cities frighten us. Once we truly understand about the Earth we walk on, an Aboriginal person can survive anywhere on Turtle Island. To "survive" in North America is the gift we alone were given to use by the Great Spirit. It's our home and our neighbors came later. I will continue to do my best to guide my grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Our teachings stand tall everywhere and I will never again be lost in this Country. In my heart I will always have '***Wikwemikong Mnidoo Mnissing*** Land of the Spirits' alive and remembered in a good way.

End of Part Three

Keeping the Spirit Alive

It was a beautiful afternoon in 1996 and my first year dancing at this ceremony. In the community of ***Wikwemikong Mnidoo Mnissing*** the dance I was doing is called the Rain Dance Ceremony. People came from distant places seeking spiritual strength. They remain inspired by their past and here everything lives. Family, medicines, plant life, animal life, and the sky–spirits, surround them. It is a land full of meaning and mysteriousness, where our Ancestors taught us that Native land goes hand in hand with the Native culture and traditions.

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The Saulteaux (Soo-Too) are here from Saskatchewan to participate in the Rain Dance ceremony and they bring with them the Buffalo Spirit. This is a 4-day event, beginning with the building of a Medicine Wheel, and the sacred lodge. Number 4 is very symbolic in Native Culture, and many things are expressed in sets of four. Therefore, this number has always had special significance in our way of life. In the center stands the tall Sacred Tree surrounded by the four Grandfathers, Waabnong, Zhaawnong, Epnigishmog, and Giiwednong. The doorway faces Waabnong. Everyone attending the ceremony volunteers to help wherever help is needed. No time clock is needed because whatever is to be done in these 4-days will be done. This is the place of re-learning our way of life and feeling the Spirits of our Ancestors. People come year after year and learn new things as they listen and participate. They learn by listening carefully to the songs and words or just by watching the proceedings. It is about understanding the Medicine Wheel of life, through which we learn, grow and change by allowing each person, place, object or experience to teach us. The Medicine Wheel helps us expand our ways.

The drummers offer a prayer by singing, and the dancers begin to dance. Immediately, I notice that next to me is a 12 year old boy who is going to participate in the fasting, dancing, and blowing of the eagle cry (whistle) for 4-days in the heat or rain. The boy tells me his name is ***Zhoolyea.*** One could tell he's been around the teachings; he's very bright, helpful, and very energetic. On the second day I was starting to move slower, but ***Zhoolyea*** seemed to be moving faster. I thought I was imagining things but he really was full of life. I was having a hard time trying to concentrate, my rubberneck was moving here, there and everywhere. In the late afternoon on the second day noticing my actions, ***Zhoolyea*** whispers "come here for second." I bent over beneath his nest (stall), and he tells me "you need to stare at the sacred tree." I said in return, "the clowns distract me," but he says "there are no clowns out there. You have to keep your eyes on the sacred tree, and treat the ceremony with respect." ***Zhoolyea*** kept speaking, "The Elders tell us, give the sacred tree what it needs from you, 'respect.' Show all your feelings, your suffering, and your need to cry. The tree of life will help you and it will give back for your suffering. The sacred tree is giving you a test of physical and spiritual power and when the Rain Dance is over, you will feel the strength and cheerfulness. Just try it, always stare at the tree and pray hard." I thanked ***Zhoolyea*** for his teachings, and I made the fourth day drained with sweat and completely exhausted.

Here was a 12 year old telling me something I didn't know, something that I went on to do and value. In the early Sunday morning on the 4th and the last day, the Thunder beings had brought power and their presence was felt everywhere. They are a symbol of protection and guidance. Spirit wind and Rain remind us that one must honor the Great Spirit and his work in Nature. It is an honor to be part of the Great Mystery and to be a part of performing and guarding the ceremonies. The Rain dance encourages positive growth in all areas of life. The Medicine man ***Epnigishmog*** is there for our help, he is present as a very wise man and he's our guide and mentor during the four days.

I watched a 4-year old boy drumming happily with his Father. The kids start learning the lessons of the drum early. The holder of the Sacred Drum teaches and makes sure that no one will ever contaminate, handle or come near the Spirit Drum, when they are involved with substance abuse whether it is alcohol or drugs. The call of the drum brings powwows all year round to North America, and the circuit has expanded as pride in Native culture has flourished over the last fifty years. Mothers carry babies in their womb for 9 months and when the baby hears the mother's heartbeat they react with comfort. When little babies follow their mothers to practice drum, to ceremonies, and to powwows the sound of the Drum soothingly puts them to sleep. The beat of the drum represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth, and their mothers, and newborns and toddlers know this way of life belongs to them.

Twelve years later I'm at another Rain Dance Ceremony about 400 miles from where I live in Wikwemikong. I have sat in as a Grandfather before. Now, I'm asked if I could find a tree to represent the Tree of Life. It's an honor to be asked. I go on with the proceedings and I find the tree we will use, and I'm hugging the tree, my forehead against the sacred tree praying and crying. I'm apologizing that we have to cut down the tree for a good cause. I offer semaa (sacred tobacco) placing it on the ground for taking its life from Mother Earth. The person that is with me yells out to the people on the sacred grounds four times; we have found the tree. Everybody comes and gathers around the sacred tree. I haven't danced in the eagle's nest for 12 years now, but I will always dance in the lodge with the people who have come for help to pray and dance to the ***Mishoomis*** (grandfather) the Sacred Tree.

It is most important to always give tobacco to one of the four Grandfathers sitting in front of the altar, but it is your choice who will pray for you. Traditional tobacco was given to us by the Creator to use so that we can communicate with the spirit world. Tobacco opens the sacred door to allow that communication to take place. When we make an offering of tobacco, we communicate our thoughts and feelings through the tobacco as we pray for our families, others, and ourselves. When you seek the help and advice of an Elder, Healer, or Medicine Person and give your offering of tobacco, they know that a request has been made and they will complete a

ceremony or prayers for you because Tobacco is most Sacred Gift. Tobacco was the Native's gift to the Newcomers on Turtle Island, or what is now known as 'North America' to the world.

On the fourth and final day I had a rather disturbing experience. When the Rain came, people outside the lodge ran under the trees. I kept dancing and praying and staring at the sacred tree as I had been instructed. As the rain came pouring down, I took off my red t-shirt to welcome the rain. It was something I had learned from watching ***Epnigishmok*** in ***Wikwemukong.*** To welcome the rain with no shirt on is like welcoming a cleansing of your spirit, giving you a new life. As I danced, I heard someone say, "Take your white shirt off" and the second time he said it, people laughed close by him and I recognized his voice. This man is from the woodwind family, he carves flute for a living, and I admire him. I had taken my red t-shirt off and now he saw my fair body color with my brown arms. I laughed, it did sound funny at first. The third time he said it, I knew this man was being a bully and that he wanted attention.

Now, I feel him behind my back laughing and dancing and not realizing what is going on in the Sacred Lodge. I feel that I have my hands tied, but am keeping my eyes on the Sacred Tree in Respect. I kept praying and dancing. I kid myself and try to hang tough and not get angry. I don't want to turn around and stare him right in the eye and give him any satisfaction, but this man is telling me I am different. The people are laughing, not at me, but at him because of the remarks he is making. At least that's what I am thinking and telling myself. I understand however, that those kinds of words produce community lateral violence, bullying, an intentional creation of crisis, and prejudicial discrimination based on race and color. All of which are a direct link to the colonial forces I experienced at Indian Residential School. I am increasingly aware that a part of me has strength and part of me has a weak spot. What happened is this; it was my little (inner) boy who was hurt. It had nothing to do with the man who made those remarks, but eight months later, my little inner child is still feeling the pain. That is how I have become more aware of the ways that the IRS has affected me. I am again a little boy walking in front of jeering boys and a laughing priest carrying a straw mattress to the barn. This is how the Indian Residential School continues to affect me in the Now**.**

It is good to go and see an Elder, to have someone see a situation through their eyes and heart, more clearly than someone who was involved in it. I needed answers, so I talked to a Medicine Person in order to understand where I was coming from. His belief was both of us were troubled, the man who made fun of my skin and me, but neither of us knew it. That man blamed me for his troubled life, and bullied me to make him feel better, and he doesn't know it. I don't respect him for what he is doing, and it means that in turn, I don't respect myself, and I don't know it. I want the younger generation to know these things and know how to heal them, for each other. This story had to come out of me to make it possible. Our young people must be the ones to take the lead.

End of Part Four

I want to thank Professor Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and the students at the University of Toronto for giving me the opportunity to write this story. They gave me the motivation and encouragement to write. They were behind me 100% it was like they wanted to learn more, and we loved it. They got me inspired, and they got me working and they provided me the additional wording I needed. They are my friends who now understand where I'm coming from. Chi Miigwech to each one of you, *GZ*

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Conversational Method in Indigenous Research

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Abstract

In reflecting upon two qualitative research projects incorporating an Indigenous methodology, this article focuses on the use of the conversational method as a means for gathering knowledge through story. The article first provides a theoretical discussion which illustrates that for the conversational method to be identified as an Indigenous research method it must flow from an Indigenous paradigm. The article then moves to an exploration of the conversational method in action and offers reflections on the significance of researcher-in-relation and the inter-relationship between this method, ethics and care.

Introduction

Indigenous knowledges comprise a specific way of knowing based upon oral tradition of sharing knowledge. It is akin to what different Indigenous researchers, the world over, identify as storytelling, yarning, talk story, re-storying, re-membering (Thomas, 2005; Bishop, 1999; Absolon & Willett, 2004). In this article I refer to this same approach as the conversational method. The conversational method is a means of gathering knowledge found within Indigenous research. The conversational method is of significance to Indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral story telling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm. It involves a dialogic participation that holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others. It is relational at its core. In exploring the conversational method, this article first sets the context through a theoretical discussion of Indigenous methodologies as a paradigmatic approach. It then proceeds to a concerted focus on conversation as method. To highlight the practical application of the conversational method, I offer a commentary on two research projects I have carried out using this method. The article concludes with a reflection on the implications arising from the inter-relationship between method, ethics, and care when using the conversational method.

Why a focus on method? In reflecting upon research methods generally Wilson (2001) points out that there are methods that are "useful from an Indigenous perspective" and some which "are really built on the dominant paradigms, and they are inseparable from them" (p. 177). In making this claim, Wilson's argument supports the notion that Indigenous methodologies are a paradigmatic approach based upon an Indigenous philosophical positioning or epistemology. Thus it is not the method, per se, that is the determining characteristic of Indigenous methodologies, but rather the interplay (the relationship) between the method and paradigm and the extent to which the method, itself, is congruent with an Indigenous worldview. From this perspective, one could argue that the focal discussion of Indigenous methodologies ought to be a deep concentration of worldview or paradigm. As an Indigenous academic situated within a western university setting, the political and pedagogical significance of the point I cannot argue. Yet, locating my professional identity as that of a research instructor in first Social Work then Education, I am often engaged with matters of method. In further reflecting upon the experiential aspect of Indigenous approaches to learning and knowing, I recognize that our doing is intricately related with our knowing. We need only to look to the importance of protocol within Indigenous communities to recognize that how activities (i.e. methods) are carried out matter. Protocols are a means to ensure that activities are carried

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out in a manner that reflects community teachings and are done in a good way. The same principle ought to apply to research.

As Indigenous methodologies (and its methods) are relatively recent to western research methodological discourse, presenting ideas herein is meant to contribute to a critically reflective participatory dialogue of what it means to bring old knowledges as Indigenous into places that are new to them as academic research. It is a critically reflective 'think piece' inspired by reflections upon my experience with research involving Indigenous research frameworks.

Manu Aluli Meyer (2001) proposes there is an abundance of "10-dollar words" (p. 101) within academia. Given this particular, oft perilous, situation defining terms can never hurt. This article includes reference to four specific terms: ***paradigm***, ***ontology***, ***epistemology***, and ***methodology***. The term ***paradigm*** as used within a research context includes a philosophical belief system or worldview and how that belief system or worldview influences a particular set of methods. A paradigm is both theory and practice. ***Ontology*** is a theory or set of beliefs about the world (Strega, 2005; Mertens, 2005). The term ***epistemology*** is defined as knowledge nested within the social relations of knowledge production. It has been a term used by Indigenous researchers to express Indigenous worldview or philosophy (Ermine, 1995; Meyer, 2001; Wilson, 2008). It most closely approximates the term of "self-in-relation" as put forth by Graveline (2000, p. 361). Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Mertens, 2005) describe methodology as the process of gathering knowledge by stating that "the methodological question asks, "How can the knower go about obtaining the desired knowledge and understandings?"" (p. 8).

Indigenous Methodologies as Paradigmatic Approach to Research

Because Indigenous methodologies are relatively emergent within western qualitative research (Absolon & Willett,2004; Kovach, 2005) it is useful to explain what exactly is meant by the claim that Indigenous methodologies are a paradigmatic approach. Within a paradigmatic approach to research, the paradigm influences the choice of methods (i.e. why a particular method is chosen), how those methods are employed (i.e. how data is gathered), and how the data will analyzed and interpreted. As Neuman (2006) reminds, a paradigm is a basic orientation to theory and thus impacts method. Within this approach, significant attention is paid to assumptions about knowledge. This is differentiated from a more pragmatic approach (or applied research) which is "not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality"(Creswell, 2003, p.12). In a paradigmatic approach to research, be it Indigenous or otherwise, methods ought to be congruent with the philosophical orientation identified in the research framework to show internal methodological consistency. If a researcher chooses to use an Indigenous methodological framework, the methods chosen should make sense from an Indigenous knowledges perspective.

In clarifying a paradigm itself, discussion of both form and substance are important because they influence each other. In research design, the academic community has adopted an organizational language that gives form/structure to aid in defining knowledge assumptions. Such definitions are commonly expressed through the language of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2006). The expectation is that a researcher will define the ontology, epistemology, and methodology according to his or her perspective and then clearly articulate that particular positioning. (Of course, what appears as a straightforward, definitional task gets deep and messy fast.)

The organizational form becomes akin to a series of boxes, to be filled, with labels marked ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Lincoln and Guba expand upon traditional definitions of research paradigms and suggest that a paradigm must include seven considerations: ethics, accommodation, action, control, truth, validity, and voice (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Boxes within boxes, these categorical definitions, further assist the researcher in clarifying, and hopefully making visible, the belief system guiding the research. Metaphorically, I see a paradigm as similar to a nest holding chicks/hatchlings within it. For example, in a research project which incorporates an Indigenous methodology, the paradigm (nest) would be Indigenous knowledges with specific contextual knowledge assumptions emerging from a particular tribal knowledge base. Thompson's doctoral research is a case in point. She identifies her research as incorporating an Indigenous methodology, as shared among many Indigenous peoples, but based upon the contextual specifics of her Tahltan tradition (Thompson, 2008).

In their writing, Indigenous researchers have, to a certain extent, engaged in conversation on paradigm as form. In articulating the theoretical assumptions of the theory of Tsawalk , which underlies ***oosumich*** a Nuu-chah-nulth research method, Atleo differentiates knowledge assumptions from knowledge organizing systems. He points out that the theory of Tsawalk does not necessarily challenge the organizational form (or language) of paradigm and methodology itself but rather that the theory of Tsawalk holds knowledge assumptions alternative to that found within existing physical sciences (Atleo, 2004). In this sense he is referencing the substance of a paradigm. In her research on Native health, Stewart (2009) articulates the relational assumption underlying research methodology.

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She states that from an Indigenous research perspective the relational is viewed as an aspect of methodology whereas within western constructs the relational is viewed as bias, and thus outside methodology. As with Atleo, Stewart is not contesting the paradigmatic structure per se and is focusing specifically on paradigmatic substance. However, Stewart can be interpreted as stating that within Indigenous methodologies the categorical units (of ontology, epistemology, methodology) are not simply more elastic, but shapeshift to accommodate a worldview outside of western tradition. While certain western research paradigms frown upon the relational because of its potential to bias research, Indigenous methodologies embrace relational assumptions as central to their core epistemologies.

One could argue that Lincoln and Guba's seven considerations of a research paradigm (i.e. ethics, accommodation, action, control, truth, validity, and voice) cited above can accommodate the relational assumption of Indigenous research. However, the relational assumption of Indigenous methodologies seeks equal focus to that which connects the parts as much as the parts in and of themselves (whether it be two, four or eight considerations). It is the oft ephemeral, non-discrete moments that form a lasting inter-relationship of the hatchlings/chicks in the nest that offer knowledge in understanding the chicks themselves, the chicks as family/community, the nest itself, and the world outside of the nest. For some, this is experienced as the spiritual aspect of Indigenous knowledges. Indigenous scholars (Little Bear 2000; Deloria 2004; Castellano, 2000) have effectively utilized this especially western-influenced knowledge organizing system to bring forward Indigenous worldviews. As a result Indigenous knowledges have arrived in mainstream post-secondary research contexts. The nuances and complexities of an Indigenous paradigm may not be fully understood (or viewed as legitimate) by all members of the academy, but few would openly contest, at least in public spaces, that an Indigenous paradigm exists.

When using the term 'paradigmatic approach' in relation to Indigenous methodologies, this means that this particular research approach flows from an Indigenous belief system that has at its core a relational understanding and accountability to the world (Steinhauer, 2001; Wilson, 2001). Indigenous epistemologies hold a non-human centric relational philosophy (Deloria, 2004; Ermine, 1995) and while tribal groups hold differing relationships with place, as evident in local protocol and custom, (Battiste & McConaghy, 2005) there is a shared belief system among tribal groups (Littlebear, 2000). This distinctive Indigenous paradigmatic orientation is a theory of how knowledge is constructed and as such it guides assumptions about what counts as knowledge (Kirby et al., 2006) and offers guidance for research methods. Such methods include sharing knowledge based in oral history and storytelling tradition (Hart, 2002; Henderson, 2000; Smith, 1999) and is collectivist (Deloria, 2004). It assumes that knowledge is transferred through oral history and story (Archibald, 2008) and that knowledge is co-created within the relational dynamic of self-in-relation (Graveline, 1998). The relational dynamic between self, others, and nature is central.

An Indigenous paradigm welcomes a decolonizing perspective. One could (and ought to) argue that a decolonizing theoretical perspective is necessary within Indigenous research given the existing social inequities that Indigenous peoples continue to experience. A decolonizing perspective is significant to Indigenous research because it focuses on Indigenous-settler relationships and seeks to interrogate the powerful social relationships that marginalize Indigenous peoples (Nicoll, 2004). Interrogating the power relationships found within the Indigenous-settler dynamic enables a form of praxis that seeks out Indigenous voice and representation with research that has historically marginalized and silenced Indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999). However, paradigmatically speaking, a decolonizing perspective and Indigenous epistemologies emerge from different paradigms. Decolonizing analysis is born of critical theory found within the transformative paradigm of western tradition (Mertens, 2005). It centres the settler discourse, whereas an Indigenous paradigm centres Indigenous knowledges. While a decolonizing perspective remains necessary and can be included as a theoretical positioning within research, it is not the epistemological centre of an Indigenous methodological approach to research.

An understanding of the relational nuances of an Indigenous paradigm is critical to moving forward with an Indigenous methodological approach. Further, it is central in understanding why the conversational method, which is inherently relational, is congruent with Indigenous methodologies.

The Conversational Method

The conversational method aligns with an Indigenous worldview that honours orality as means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the relational which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition. Story is a relational process that is accompanied by particular protocol consistent with tribal knowledge identified as guiding the research (Thompson, 2008, Kovach, 2009). Indigenous scholars within and outside the Canadian context have referenced the use of story, through conversation, as a culturally organic means to gather knowledge within research (Thomas, 2005; Bishop, 1999).

Reflecting upon story as method within research, Wilson (2001) suggests that story is congruent with the relational dynamic of an Indigenous paradigm. He goes on to say that when you consider the relationship that evolves between sharing story and listening, "it becomes a strong relationship." (p. 178). Thomas (2005) utilized a storytelling methodology in her graduate research on the experiences of individuals who attended Kuper Island Residential School. In reflecting why she chose stories as a method for her research, she reminisces on the stories her grandmothers passed along to her, how these stories shaped Thomas's core being, and that such stories were "cultural, traditional, educational, spiritual, and political" (p. 240). Thomas goes on to state that storytelling has a holistic nature that provides a means for sharing remembrances that evoke the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental. In reflecting upon story as a dialogic method that evokes the relational, Maori researcher Russell Bishop (1999) introduces the notion of "collaborative storying" (p. 6) which positions the researcher as a participant. As both parties become engaged in a collaborative process, the relationship builds and deepens as stories are shared.

In a presentation at the Fourth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, University of Illinois, Bessarab (2008) presented on yarning as method. In her presentation she shares that yarning is a Noongar term for having a conversation or talk. She goes on to say that that there are different forms of yarning which includes social yarning, research yarning, collaborative yarning, and therapeutic yarning. She identifies research yarning as that which is directed around a particular area of curiosity with a specific purpose in mind. From a Native Hawaiian perspective, Kahakalua (2004) comments on the flexibility inherent within a conversational method that aligns with the Native Hawaiian epistemology. "Many of the these conversations were informal, conversational interviews –what Hawaiians call ***talk story***" (p. 24). Certainly, the conversational method is not unique to Indigenous methodologies. It can be found within narrative inquiry, as Barrett & Stauffer (2009) state narrative is viewed as story and is seen as a "mode of knowing" that is involved in knowledge construction, and has recently been accepted as a "method or inquiry" (p. 7). The conversational method is found within western qualitative research. However when used in an Indigenous framework, a conversational method invokes several distinctive characteristics: a) it is linked to a particular tribal epistemology (or knowledge) and situated within an Indigenous paradigm; b) it is relational; c) it is purposeful (most often involving a decolonizing aim); d) it involves particular protocol as determined by the epistemology and/or place; e) it involves an informality and flexibility; f) it is collaborative and dialogic; and g) it is reflexive. The following two research projects illustrate how these characteristics work in tandem with a conversational method to form an Indigenous approach to research.

Two Research Projects Using the Conversational Method

The remainder of this article focuses on two qualitative research projects that I conducted using a conversational method for gathering data and are situated within an Indigenous research framework. The first study presented (Project One) was completed in 2006; the second study (Project Two) is currently in the data analysis phase. After presenting the studies, I will offer a reflection on implications arising from using this particular method.

Project One: ***Searching for Arrowheads: An Inquiry into Approaches to Indigenous Research Using Plains Cree Ways of Knowing***

Purpose: The project was completed in 2006. This research explored the challenges facing Indigenous doctoral researchers of engaging Indigenous knowledges in their research methodology. This study explored whether this group was applying cultural knowledge into their research methodology and if they felt that there was a distinctive methodological approach that could be described as Indigenous. This study sought further clarity into the characteristics of Indigenous methodologies including choice of method congruent with an Indigenous paradigm.

Research Question: To prompt conversation on this topic there were three main research questions posed: a) How do Indigenous researchers understand cultural aspects of Indigenous research; b) How do Indigenous researchers incorporate cultural knowledges into their research methodology; and c) What are the challenges that Indigenous researchers face in integrating Indigenous ways of knowing within western research methodologies.

Sampling and Participants: Criterion sampling was used. Criteria included Indigenous individuals who have carried out research at a doctoral level within Education and Social Work, representation of participants who conducted human subject research for their doctoral studies, and representation of participants who had recent graduate school experience. The participants in the sample included three in-progress PhD candidates, one participant just prior to defense, and two participants who completed. Four participants were of Cree ancestry, one was Anishnaabe, and one was Maori. Three participants were in the field of Education and three were in the field of Social Work. Three were men and three were women. With this sample all participants were given the choice to waive confidentiality and all did.

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Methodology: The methodology for this study was a mixed qualitative approach that utilized an Indigenous methodology based upon Plains Cree epistemology for gathering knowledge and interpretation, and a non-Indigenous approach of thematic analysis for organizing data. It incorporated a decolonizing theoretical lens. A conversational method, congruent with Plains Cree epistemology, was utilized. The conversational method employed is best described as dialogic approach to gathering knowledge that is built upon an Indigenous relational tradition. It utilized open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to prompt conversation where participant and researcher co-create knowledge. It was the symbiotic relationship between the Indigenous epistemology, method, and interpretation that qualifies it as an Indigenous methodology (Kovach, 2009). Congruent with Plains Cree tribal epistemology, relational accountability, and respect for local protocol, this method involved a small gift and tobacco to show acknowledgement of the relationship and respect for the insights being offered. This signified a commitment by the researcher that the research will be used purposefully (Kovach, 2009).

Findings: Findings were presented in two forms. First, the findings were presented as condensed stories which provided context and voice of the participants. To make meaning, each condensed story was followed by a reflective narrative by the researcher indicating key teachings received from the conversations and stories. Secondly, through a qualitative coding process, the findings were thematically analyzed. Though different processes were employed, the reflective narrative and the thematic grouping emerged with similar findings. The study found that an Indigenous methodology includes evidence of a tribal epistemology, integration of a decolonizing aim, acknowledgement of preparations necessary for research, space for self-location, a clear understanding of purposefulness and motivation of the research, guardianship of sacred knowledges, adherence to tribal ethics and protocol, use of Indigenous methods (as conversation and story), and giving back (Kovach, 2006).

Project Two: ***Pilot study of support required by non Indigenous faculty to integrate and enhance Indigenous knowledges within course content at the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan.***

Purpose: This project is currently active. Recent provincial curricular reform in Saskatchewan is moving toward the integration of an Indigenous perspective throughout K-12 and has recently integrated mandatory Treaty education throughout the K-12 curriculum (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009). In part, this move is a means to improve high school completion rates among Indigenous students, a concern that has been documented in the literature (Wotherspoon, 2006; Kanu, 2005). Research shows that a pedagogical approach toward integrating Indigenous perspectives that is beneficial to Indigenous students in the K-12 school system requires an anti-racist, decolonizing knowledge of Indigenous worldviews, community, and cultural norms (St. Denis & Schick, 2005; Weenie, 2008). Given the move toward mandatory integration of Indigenous perspectives, as in Saskatchewan, it is anticipated that post-secondary teacher education programs will have the responsibility of preparing teacher candidates to competently integrate Indigenous perspectives into their teaching practice. Through their instructional choices and actions, teacher educators powerfully influence the extent to which teacher candidates teaching practices uphold Indigenous culture and work to decolonize. Adequately preparing teacher candidates to confidently integrate Indigenous perspectives in their teaching is dependent upon the Indigenous academic community ***and*** the involvement of the non-Indigenous faculty. This cannot be done solely by Indigenous post-secondary education faculty, nor should this group own the full responsibility of this task. Without the involvement of non Indigenous faculty, many of whom teach core courses in pre-service teacher training programs, movement forward will be stymied.

Research Question: This research question asked non Indigenous faculty within the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan the following questions: a) how did they understand Indigenous knowledges and support of Indigenous knowledges; b) how did they see themselves as being a facilitator and/or support to Indigenous students and non Indigenous students who wish to explore Indigenous knowledges in course work; c) what supports, materials, and resources did they find useful, as faculty, in nourishing Indigenous knowledges in their classrooms; d) what did they require from Indigenous faculty, non Indigenous faculty, and administration; and e) what did they see as personal and systemic challenges to integrating Indigenous knowledges into course content.

Sampling and Participants: Criterion sampling was used. Participants were selected with the goal of seeking a participant sample from the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan with representation from faculty who currently instruct undergraduate and/or graduate courses. Because the study was asking for specific insight into non Indigenous faculty experience, this particular group was the focus. Prospective participants were recruited through a letter of invitation from the researcher inviting participation in the research. The letter of invitation was circulated by email to faculty members through a College listserve. In the research design, the goal was to have four to six participants in the study. However, the response

was double and in the spirit of inclusivity all participants who wished to participate were involved. Eleven faculty participated in the study.

Methodology: As with Project One, this research design is based upon a mixed qualitative method approach including Indigenous methodology (Wilson, 2001), born of place, based on a Plains Cree Worldview (Kovach, 2009) for gathering and interpreting data, and grounded theory for data organization. As with Project One a conversational method congruent with an Indigenous paradigm was used. This project incorporated a bi-cultural theoretical perspective for interpreting and making meaning of the participant stories. This included a decolonizing theoretical lens to analyze the power dynamic inherent in the research curiosity. In conjunction, an Indigenous relational theoretical approach was used to offer a relational analysis given that the research curiosity has as a focus western culture's relational intersection with Indigeneity.

Preliminary Findings: This project is at the data analysis phase with preliminary findings suggesting several intersecting relational aspects (self, colleagues, content, students, institution, and community) influencing the integration and enhancement of Indigenous knowledges into core curriculum. The goal of this research is to provide insight on this research question from this group, then to develop recommendations of how to support non Indigenous faculty in enhancing and integrating Indigenous knowledges in core curriculum in a way that works to decolonize.

In reflecting upon the use of the conversational method within an Indigenous methodological approach for the above research projects, it is helpful to identify several similarities and differences between the two projects. Indentifying the similarities of each is useful in illustrating how a conversational method used within an Indigenous paradigm can adapt to the beliefs and values of that particular paradigm. By articulating the differences of the conversational method in two unique contexts, one can see the flexibility of this method in accommodating the particulars of given research projects.

A consistent similarity in both projects was the rationale of using a conversational method because it served a belief about knowledge as a "self-in-relation" (Graveline, 2000, p.361) process. This included an Indigenous holistic sensibility about what "self-in-relation" means. Using a conversational method within a focus group, Lavellee (2009) offers an interpretation of a holistic approach. "In a research setting, although both the focus group and the sharing circle are concerned with gaining knowledge through discussion, the principles behind a sharing circle are quite different. Circles are acts of sharing all aspects of the individual..." (p. 29). In preparing for both interviews and inviting participants, all participants were from a larger Indigenous academic community to which I belonged. I had either met or had already known the individuals that I interviewed, and would continue to have collegial relationships with the participants engendering a clear sense of "relational accountability" (Wilson, 2008, p.97). Dialogue was an effective method to co-create knowledge in a relational context of a conversation. Engaging in conversation with individuals who knew me and whom I knew created a certain level of trust and reciprocity within the dialogue. The majority of participants had a sense of me as researcher including my perspective on colonialism and its impact on Indigenous peoples. While there were semi-structured questions developed to guide and prompt questions, there was flexibility for both the participant and researcher to participate in the form of a dialogue. It was, as Bessarab (2008) states, a form of yarning. In both projects, there was room for the research participant to tell their story on their own terms (Thomas, 2005). Interspersed as researcher, I also shared my story. At times this meant that the conversation veered away from the prompt questions. In both instances participants had opportunities to approve transcripts and remove or revise any information they did not feel comfortable including in the transcript. Because the methodologies in both projects were grounded in Plains Cree knowledge, the protocol of gifting was in place to acknowledge the teachings that were shared. It also signified a relationship of responsibility on part of both the researcher and participant. Other similarities also existed in both projects. Both groups of participants in the two different projects were part of the academic community and both groups of participants chose the sites and times for interviews. In each context, the conversational method, congruent with an Indigenous paradigm, honoured core Indigenous research values of respect, relevancy, reciprocity, and responsibility.

While the two projects shared similarities there were a couple of contrasts that are worth mentioning as they impacted decisions about analysis. For Project One, the research participants were all Indigenous, whereas in Project Two all of the participants were non-Indigenous. While both groups belonged to the academic community, the participants in Project One were members of the larger Indigenous academic community with only two of six participants employed by the same university at the time of the interview. In Project Two all of the participants were faculty members of the same College of Education in one university. In Project One participants were given the option of waiving confidentiality, of which all did. In Project Two, confidentiality has been maintained. In Project One the research participant stories were presented in two ways. The first was through providing a condensed presentation of the participant's story followed by reflective analysis by the researcher. This provided for a more Indigenous

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contextual presentation of knowledge. Given that the research was inquiring into the nature of Indigenous knowledge, and given that Indigenous knowledge is "personal and particular" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 36), a contextual presentation of findings was appropriate. Secondly, the knowledge gathered in the project was thematically grouped. This allowed for a succinct (though non-contextual) analysis of findings. In Project Two the knowledge gathered through the conversational method was solely thematically grouped using grounded theory. A reason for using grounded theory was to build theory on infusing Indigenous knowledges into western core academic curriculum. A further reason for this approach was to aggregate the data as a means of ensuring all identifying information was removed.

In considering the similarities and differences of each project using the same data gathering method, I would like to reflect on some insights I gained along the way. This is presented in less of an academic analysis and more along the lines of 'signposts on the research journey' as it relates to employing a conversational method congruent with an Indigenous paradigm.

The use of a conversational method within an Indigenous research framework has several implications for the researcher-in-relation. For the conversational method, the relational factor – that I knew participants and they knew me – was significant. In each case I had known or met participants prior to the research. With this method the researcher must have a certain amount of credibility and trustworthiness for people to participate in the research. With more trust there is the likelihood of deeper conversations, and consequently the potential for richer insights to the research question. The conversations were dialogic, relational, and reflective. As a result I found that I had to work to be an active listener. As an active listener and participant in the research, the process felt less extractive and one-sided (even with the given that research can inevitably be an extractive process). Because I was a co-participant, my own self-knowledge deepened with each conversation. After the conversations, in reading through the transcripts and post-conversation notes, I was able to identify areas that were of concern to me which I was not fully cognizant of prior to the research. The conversation itself helped to deepen relationships with the research participants who also comprised my collegial community. In all cases, participants shared stories from their lives resulting in a highly contextualized, powerful source of knowledge. In receiving the gift of story, I was ever mindful of the responsibility inherent in research and the reciprocity it entails.

In reflecting upon the conversational method, there is a direct inter-relationship between this form of method, ethics, and care. With respect to research conducted in an Indigenous community, there are specific ethical guidelines that include, but are not limited to, a mutually respectful research relationship; that the research benefit the community; that appropriate permission and informed consent is sought; that the research is non-exploitive and non-extractive; and that there is respect for community ethics and protocol. As a means to ensure ethical conduct in research involving Indigenous communities there have been several guideline documents developed. Such guidelines include the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) Guideline for Health Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples (Canadian Institute of Health Research, 2007); Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) Principles of applied to research in Aboriginal communities (Schnarch, 2004); and the Tri-Council Policy Statement Revised Draft Statement (Chapter 9) (Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2009). These provisions offer guidelines to ensure respect, reciprocity and transparency for all aspects of a research project. Method is one aspect of the research that carries with it its own ethical considerations.

In reflecting on the conversation as method, Haig Brown (1995) makes this important point: "Perhaps because it only rarely that people have the full attention of another adult human being, the interviews often became very intimate … This sense of intimacy may lead the study participant to take some risks" (p. 30). In concluding this article, I offer several reflections on the ethics of using a conversational method in research. Some may apply to some research contexts and not others, but I believe they are important considerations particularly for research in areas as social work, health and education. Preparation for the research is important when using the conversational method. Within Indigenous methodologies preparation may take many forms including western traditional preparation of research that includes review of literature, decisions about design and so forth; however, within Indigenous methodologies preparation also included interpersonal, relational preparation (i.e. participation in ceremony, visiting community). In using a conversational method, that is inherently relational, the preparation is critical to preparing the researcher and prospective participants. Reciprocity, so integral to Indigenous methodologies, begins at the preparation phase (not completion) and it is here where there can be discussions of how the research (and researcher) will give back to the community.

Preparation is particularly important when the research involves sensitive inquiries as child abuse or family violence studies. Individuals may become emotionally triggered. If it is indeed a sensitive topic, the researcher needs to be aware of the supports in the community and how to support research

participants if the need arise. In both research projects that I carried out, the topic did not illicit strong deep-seated emotional responses, but this method (particularly if there is a level of trust) has the potential to evoke strong emotions. In situations where the topic is sensitive, a pre-research discussion could help to prepare research participants, it is also a good opportunity to review consent forms. If emotions do arise in the research, the researcher needs to be prepared to respond accordingly. This may mean turning off the audio-tape, sitting with the participant, and being knowledgeable of support services in the community to suggest to the participant. Again depending upon the research context, it is important to be knowledgeable about professional codes around disclosure of child abuse and neglect, and to inform participants if it might be an issue.

In addition to supporting others, it is important to bear in mind that as the researcher you may be triggered. Self-care is important which means taking the time needed between interviews and having one's own support system in place. Research with Indigenous peoples is holistic for both researcher and participant: one respects self and others by being prepared. This was important for me in both research projects (cited above). Because each project dealt with colonialism, I often had to have quiet time by myself between interviews to process the feelings that emerged for me as a result of the discussion. The conversational method evokes stories, our own and others. As Lynne Davis states (2004), "Stories cement together generations of collective memory, embodying the historical, spiritual, social, and spatial" (p. 3) Stories have the power to holistically engage. Allowing time to process stories is a way of respecting self and others. It is respectful and ethical. It was important to have general support systems in place while conducting research, this is a part of preparation and care.

Prior to concluding this article, I would like to add a brief note about analysis. The conversational method (whether it be in one-to-one discussions or research circles) has the means to generate highly contextualized stories. In using a conversational method that is guided by an Indigenous paradigmatic approach, I struggle in decontextualizing and fragmenting the data. However, in situations where confidentiality is not waived, it can be difficult to present highly contextual data while maintaining confidentiality. Further, to thematically group stories works to fragment data. In this process the researcher maintains the power in determining the analysis whereas in presenting a story as data the research participant's story is intact and speaks for itself. Within Indigenous methodologies, the organization of data for purposes of analysis requires on-going conversation.

In concluding this article, my final thought references back to the inter-relationship between paradigm and method. If the conversational method is to serve an Indigenous methodology (or Indigenous research framework), that has at its core an Indigenous paradigm, then the researcher needs to consistently reflect back upon the inter-relationship between the philosophical values of an Indigenous paradigm and the method being used. So long as both paradigm and method are front and centre (and congruent), the researcher will be effective in serving the research and the research community which includes Indigenous peoples.

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Re-Conceptualizing Research: An Indigenous Perspective

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Abstract

This paper validates the differing ways in which Indigenous people are re-conceptualizing research as a form of decolonization, regeneration of cultures and communities, and ultimately self-determination. Indigenous people are taking control of their own destinies by providing needed solutions from within, as individuals, communities and Nations. This paper provides suggestions to Indigenize the research process. This paper also includes principles provided by Irabinna (Dr. Lester Rigney) of Australia, the need to historicize, politicize, strategize and actualize our beings and our futures. Ultimately, the inspiration to write this paper comes from my Tlingit ancestors.

Introduction

> *From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. (Smith, 1999, p.1).*

Historically, research undertaken since colonization on Indigenous[1] lands and on Indigenous people has resulted in the phenomenon that Indigenous people are the most researched people on earth. Until recently, most of this research has been conducted on Indigenous people, culture and lands without the permission, consultation, or involvement of the people being researched. In its earliest form, this resulted in the removal of Indigenous people from their homelands, the suppression of their nationhood, the replacement of their governments, and the destruction of their identities and cultures (Battiste, 2000). Today it continues through the eradication/marginalization of Indigenous people's right to self determination, through the development of inappropriate or misguided policies, and through programs designed to assimilate – designed to solve "the Indian problem." The general belief persists that problems within Indigenous communities need to be corrected by outside interests.

Despite the pervasiveness of this paradigm, Indigenous people are finding their voices and continuing to resist this oppression. In many ways, this article validates the differing ways in which Indigenous people are recognizing, re-claiming and re-defining their worldviews as part of the process towards decolonization, restoration of our cultures and communities and, ultimately self-determination. Indigenous people continue to take control of their own destinies by providing needed solutions from within, as individuals, communities and Nations. This article acknowledges the diversity of cultures, traditions, and differing, yet related, ways of being, seeing, knowing and doing of Indigenous people worldwide. It provides suggestions to Indigenize the research process. This article also includes principles provided by Irabinna (Dr. Lester Rigney) of Australia to historicize, politicize and strategize

1 The terms Indigenous, Aboriginal and Indian are used interchangeably in this article.

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our beings and our futures, and also explores the concepts of actualizing, decolonizing and re-conceptualizing research. Ultimately, the inspiration to write this article comes from my Tlingit ancestors.

What is Colonialism and Euro-Centrism, and How Have they Oppressed Indigenous People? (Historicize)

Discussion of the need to reconceptualize the research process means we must challenge constructs such as colonialism and Euro-centrism. Colonialism, in its most traditional sense, involved the "gaining of control over particular geographical areas and is usually associated with the exploitation of various areas in the world by European or American powers" (Carnoy, 1974, p. 21). Perley (1993) has identified four basic components of colonialism: 1) the forced, involuntary entry of the colonized group into the dominant society; 2) the colonizing power of adopting policies that suppress, transform, or destroy Native values, orientations and ways of life; 3) manipulation and management of the colonized by agents of the colonizing group; and 4) the domination, exploitation and oppression justified by an ideology of racism, which defines the colonized group as inferior (p. 119). Indigenous people worldwide have continuously been subjugated to invasion, whether violent or under the auspices of "civilizing," "assimilating" or "integrating" in order to expropriate lands, traditions and culture. In Canada, the Indian Act[2], residential schools[3], and the "60s scoop" (provincial apprehension and fostering/adopting out of Indian children to non native homes) are some of the direct results of colonization. The justice system, through the incarceration of our people continues to perpetuate colonialism. The situation is eerily similar across the Americas. In Hawai'i, foreign (American) laws and policies suppressed the original peoples. Trask (1999) stated, "From the banning of our language and the theft of our sovereignty to forcible territorial incorporation in 1959 as a state of the United States, we have lived as a subordinated Native people in our ancestral home" (p. 18). Battiste suggested that Euro-centrism is manifested as the "dominant consciousness and order of contemporary life. Universality replaces diversity. The dominant values become the norm and the minority becomes trivialized and thus devalued or even ignored" (classroom lecture, 2001). Academic policy and curricula privilege Euro-centric perspectives and values.

Little Bear (2000), spoke to these similarities worldwide when he emphasizes that one of the problems with colonialism is "that it tries to maintain a singular social order by means of force and law, suppressing the diversity of human worldviews" (p. 84). Within time, many Indigenous people have learned to embrace this "singular social order" as common sense wisdom, which, in fact, works against their interests and serves those of the powerful– a term described by Antonio Gramsci[4] as 'hegemony.'

Hegemony has affected me greatly through education. I have often come to believe what I was taught, or what I read to be the truth. I was a part of the sixties scoop and, as such, I was fostered out to four non-native homes before being adopted by the last home I was placed in and taught to live my life based on catholic values. My own experience illustrates that due to the pervasiveness of Euro-centric knowledge through colonization, Indigenous people today often do not have many valid methodologies at their disposal that embrace an Indigenous worldview in the search for truth (Battiste, 2000). This is changing today as many of our people are fighting the struggle to free themselves of oppression. Nonetheless, the "truth" that others have conveniently defined (and search for) often results in traditions and aspects of our culture being appropriated from our communities that furthers the mistrust with non-Indigenous peoples. In his article "Putting Words into Action: Negotiating Collaborative Research in Gitxaala," Menzies (2004) illustrated an experience common to many Indigenous people and their cultures when he spoke of research that was supposed to remain with/ensure the survival of the Gitxaala people:

> At the heart of the account was a government sponsored research project into the health and location of abalone conducted in the recent past. The government researchers explained that their project would benefit the local community. This would be accomplished by collecting location and population data that would make the job of protecting the abalone grounds from over harvesting and poaching more effective. After some consideration, community members agreed and a number of surveys were completed. Following the departure of the researchers, a fleet of commercial dive boats turned up on the abalone grounds that had been described to the researchers. The end result was the complete degradation of the local grounds and ultimately a complete closure of commercial abalone fishing on the coast. The community members who had participated in the study felt betrayed by the process (p. 22).

2 This Act singles out native peoples, largely on the basis of race, removes much of their traditional land and property (and isolating people from mainstream society). Many aspects of their lives are placed in the control of the state.

3 Church led schools where over 100,000 native children were mandated to assimilate into mainstream society through 1) moral training 2) domestic/agricultural training and 3) a small form of formal education.

4 Cultural hegemony is the philosophic and sociological theory that a diverse culture or population can be ruled by one social class and the ideologies of that social class.

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Tlingit teachings suggest that in order to have yan gaa duuneek (dignity), individuals must not aspire to know everything. If people try to explain everything or choose to leave nothing unexplored in the world, they will bring tragedy upon themselves, for they are then aspiring to be gods and not humans (Beck & Walters, 1977). Most Indigenous people do not seek out scientific ways of controlling/predicting behaviour or what will occur in the future. Within Indigenous worldviews is the spiritual belief, which acknowledges how powerless humans really are in comparison to the vast and incomprehensible forces of the universe (Ross, 1996, p. 69).

Whereas the Indigenous perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of the spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of being, the Euro-centric worldview perceives these as disparate and fragmented. A prime example of this can be found in government research, which is geared mainly toward its own needs while ignoring the connectedness to community well being. Statistics Canada and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the United States are examples of this perspective – spending millions of dollars annually gathering data on social/economic situations in our communities for their purposes with little return to the community. Years ago, I gathered information on drinking patterns among Aboriginal teens in Whitehorse, Yukon for the territorial government. Although indicators were gathered that identified clear social-economic patterns that could have resulted in meaningful change, the final report failed to mention any strategies for healing that could or should be enacted for the wellbeing of our people. The statistics produced in the final report perpetuated the stereotype that Aboriginal teens consume the most alcohol of any racial group in Canada. Often, outsider "research" fails to focus on meaningful solutions that would directly result in improvement of conditions. Far too often, there is no planning or consultation between the researchers, institutions, or the local community and the service providers in terms of what type of research and services might be needed (Wax, 1991). The result has been that Indians are taught to view themselves as the lowest group on the scale of social indicators.

In other instances, governments merely give the appearance of superficial interest in exploring significant Indigenous issues. The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Indian and Native Affairs Canada, 1996) is a prime example. It was supposed to set the stage for a post-colonial agenda for Aboriginal people in Canada. It was the largest research project ever undertaken in Canada, with a report consisting of more than 4200 pages. Over 400 recommendations were made that were designed to create a new relationship between the state and Indigenous people. Apparent throughout the report's findings was the fact that "the painful legacy of colonial history bears heavily upon Aboriginal people in the form of cultural stress" (Battiste, 2000, p. 8,). What can be done when research reports that articulate injustices and make recommendations for change remain dormant? It is essential that we not ignore or dismiss the real agenda imposed from outside. We have an obligation to each other to fight for change through the sharing of information and by bringing these issues on a collective level to the forefront within our own Nations and Western agendas. It is as much about standing up for and re-claiming ourselves, as it is about challenging colonialism and Euro-centric thought in order to create a future for our next generations. Ultimately, by honoring the Indigenous worldview with the respect and integrity it so richly deserves, we will reawaken the spirit of the original peoples of this land.

The Importance of Oral Traditions (Politicize)

For the Tlingit, as for other Indigenous cultures, it is clear that Indigenous people need to be given the room and freedom to reclaim and recover from colonial ideologies, including the belief that non-Aboriginal researchers can adequately capture and portray a culture different from their own. There needs to be some understanding by all that "oral" traditions do not need to be saved and preserved through written records for Indigenous peoples' own good. We have survived and flourished historically without the printed page (Callison, 1995).

Our teachings are centered on oral traditions; incorporated into the voice of self is the voice of the "cultural collective." Cecilia Kunz, an elder, says that in the Tlingit world, everything—animals, the land, the sky, the rain—is alive. This belief and understanding about the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world become the central idea of our stories (C. Kunz, personal communication, July 12, 2007). Oral traditions encompass abstract concepts such as spirituality and philosophical beliefs that guide and shape Tlingit ways of being. Oral histories offer future generations the path of knowledge that informs their heritage, their ways of knowing and being. They involve "informal story-telling, formal narrative, political discourse, names, songs and prayer" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 9). Oral histories are personal; oral histories are rich and multidimensional. They incorporate notions of a world that is ever-changing, one that includes different levels of existence. They encourage abstract thinking, creativity and imagination, which are building blocks for intelligence. The view here is that it is neither beneficial, nor desirable to impose an alien, colonial reality onto one which is Indigenous. Why is it, then, that Western researchers often

claim their methodology as legitimate and the "true" form of acquiring knowledge? What is clear through Western research is that often all other forms of epistemology are dismissed or minimized (Trigger & Williams, 1997).

Decolonization as a Step Towards Indigenizing the Research Process

> *… Indigenous people now want research and its designs to contribute to the self determination and liberation struggles as defined and controlled by their communities. To do this, Indigenous people themselves must analyze and critique epistemologies that are commonplace in higher education" (Rigney, 1999, pp. 109-110).*

Any step towards decolonization involves examining what "truth" is. This requires re-examining histories and understanding them from differing perspectives. One of the most profound beliefs in Tlingit philosophy is that there is no such thing as one reality, let alone an "absolute truth." This notion is not easy for many non-Indigenous people to accept because it involves a fundamental spiritual and experiential shift in their approach to knowledge. However, those of us who are Indigenous need to locate and re-discover our history as it relates to our Nations. We need to recover/re-claim our culture, ceremonies, language, values and identity whenever possible. Decolonization is about privileging, understanding and sharing our concerns and worldviews. We must then come to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives, for our own purposes (Battiste, 2000). Through understanding, we create and utilize knowledge as a form of resistance to Euro-centrism. Although change is slow, the need to tell our stories "remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance" (Smith, 1999, p. 35).

Towards an Indigenous Way of Conducting Research (Strategize)

> *It should be understood that research in itself is not inherently 'bad,' it is generally the 'people factor'- that is people's intentions, motivations and interests which shape a particular research project. Our task as Indigenous people, is not only to claw back the appearance of control by renaming research as indigenous research; we must also claw back ownership of the control over the intentions, purposes, motivations and interests of the total research process (G. H. Smith, personal communication, 2003).*

As more of our people reclaim our traditional ways of knowing, being, seeing and doing, the face of research will change. Indigenous research involves utilizing core elements of Indigenous worldviews, which are distinct amongst particular locations and groups of people. Today, the respect for Indigenous knowledge has to begin with our people providing the standards and the protections that accompany the "centering" of Indigenous knowledge (Battiste, 2000). In her article "Heart Knowledge, Blood Memory, and the Voice of the Land: Implications of Research among Hawaiian Elders," Holmes (2000) spoke to three realities of the Kupana (elders) and their relationship to centering Indigenous knowledge. It was through the Kupana that [Indigenous] knowledge lodges in the heart of the listener, referred to as "heart knowledge." Heart knowledge links knowledge to connection with identity, values and relationships. Secondly, "blood memory" speaks to the importance of blood, family (genealogy) and the view that experience is essential to knowledge. This is powerful for me because I seek knowledge from my elders partly due to the experiences I have not yet had; they are the living memory based on being, seeing and doing. Thirdly, the elders in Hawai'i speak to the "voices of the land." We have many teachings that flow from the land (mother earth) and we need to return to those teachings, as they are a form of our traditional values, our ways of knowing. Holmes (2000) referred to these three realities as constituting an 'ancestry of experience that "shapes, dreams, desires, intentions and purposeful activities" (p. 47). Indeed, we need to look to the past in order to understand who we are and to know where we are going.

Vital to Indigenous research is that it benefits our people, our communities, and our Nations. All researchers working in an Indigenous context have an ethical responsibility toward the people, their cultures, and the environment. As part of this process, it is essential to include those who have been marginalized through colonization, particularly the voices of our young people, women, and elders.

An important aspect of any research in an Indigenous context is that researchers should be sensitive to the economic, social, spiritual, and general welfare of the individuals and cultures on and among whom they do research. Too many times in the past, researchers have used their role of authority or position of power to oppress those they research, and/or they have disregarded the community's cultural/traditional/ shared knowledge. They provide their own (often false) interpretations of what people have shared. When working on my Master's thesis titled Aboriginal Child and Family Services: A First Nations Analysis of Delegated Services in BC (Ormiston, 2002), I knew the importance of asking Indigenous social workers open-ended questions that would allow them, as participants, the opportunity to expand and speak their minds freely. They began to articulate the problems within the broad policy they must adhere to, and they offered solutions to alleviate or change their situations. I knew I

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had the responsibility to include the people I interviewed when analyzing the data (and what was to be considered public information). As a result, the 12 recommendations I highlighted for emerging Indigenous social work students in post secondary institutions came directly from the participants interviewed. They carried the knowledge that had to be validated. As Taiaiake Alfred[5] stated: "Indigenous people/ communities who are happy, successful, reconnected or have recovered have done so outside of the frameworks that have been built to address those problems (such as external governments, the Courts etc.). It has been through a process of reconnecting with Indigenous people who hold that knowledge and the values that leads to us providing our own solutions" (G. T. Alfred, personal communication, March 22, 2006). Alfred provides a compelling argument that you cannot change a system from within. He contended that you have to confront the system from outside with a different moral base "or else the system will crush you or entice you to be a servant in that system." Who better knows the issues and can provide solutions to those issues than our people?

The Need to Develop Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context (Actualize)

Many communities/institutions and Nations are taking the proactive step of developing guidelines to determine what research may be conducted on Indigenous people/lands. Although these vary among groups and localities, the ultimate goal is for researchers to respect the people and cultures being studied. The Mi'kmaw (First People from what is known as Nova Scotia, Canada) have developed their Nation's Principles and Protocols with the clear understanding that "Mi'kmaw people are the guardians and interpreters of their culture and knowledge system- past, present and future" (Cape Breton University, 2010). These principles were designed to ensure that the integrity and cultural knowledge of the Mi'kmaw people would be preserved. To this end, a Mi'kmaw Ethics watch committee has been formed under the Grand Council, to review any research into collective knowledge, culture, arts and spirituality.

AIATSIS (The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Australia; 2000) undertakes and encourages scholarly, ethical community-based research, has the world's largest print collection on Indigenous Studies material, and has its own publishing house (http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/corporate/about.html). Its activities affirm and raise awareness among all Australians, and people of other countries, of the richness and diversity of Australian Indigenous cultures and histories. The Institute has also developed Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies. These involve 11 principles under three headings to which researchers must adhere when conducting research in an Indigenous context. These headings are: a) Consultation, Negotiation and Mutual Understanding; b) Respect, Recognition and Involvement; and c) Benefits, Outcomes and Agreement (AIATSIS, 2000). Within this document it is clearly articulated that:

> *Research concerning Indigenous Peoples should be carried out with appropriate consultation about the aims and objectives and meaningful negotiation of processes, outcomes and involvement. Relevant communities and individuals should be involved at all stages of the research process, from formulating projects and methods to determining research outcomes and interpreting results. (AIATSIS 2000)*

Similarly, the University of Victoria (2003) in Canada has developed Protocols & Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context. This policy works in conjunction with the University's Human Ethics in Research Sub-committee. However, in order for any research to proceed, final approval must be given by the Indigenous Research Sub-committee, which is made up of Indigenous members. These protocols were developed so that any research on or involving Indigenous people that is sponsored by the Faculty of Human and Social development will give "appropriate respect … to the cultures, languages, knowledge and values of Indigenous peoples, and to the standards used by Indigenous peoples to legitimate knowledge." Community protocols developed by and for individual Nations can work in tandem with University protocols to ensure research is conducted in a respectful, responsible manner. These initiatives are essential to de-colonizing the research process and validating Indigenous ways of knowing, being, seeing and doing.

Re-Conceptualizing Research: An Indigenous Perspective

In essence, a re-conceptualization of the research process from an Indigenous perspective would include the following:

- Less emphasis on the individualistic notion of a "principal researcher" defining a "research question" and more emphasis on community definition/involvement in terms of what needs to be researched (what is transformative about the research for Indigenous people/communities?), and on how this research will be conducted at all stages;
- Inclusion of Indigenous worldviews through methodologies based on the distinctiveness of each "nation";

5 Taiaiake is a Professor of Indigenous Governance at the University of Victoria and is known for his leadership and research in the fields of Indigenous governance, philosophy and history.

- Standards and Principles for their communities/ organizations/ institutions that apply to ALL people conducting research in an Indigenous context;
- Recognition that communities OWN the research conducted. Copyright is to be retained by the community;
- Commitment to Indigenous People conducting their own research whenever possible. Because social science methodology can never truly be "value free," questions arise as to whom Indigenous people are being compared and whether the researchers know the culture or history of Indigenous people (Gilchrest 1997);
- Social movement strategies that ensure responsibility, where the results of research always explore strategies for healing and community development;
- Researchers bringing a "thorough background on the history of colonialism and Euro-centrism and a broad-based knowledge of Indigenous history and culture when engaging in research in our communities" (Gilchrest, 1997);
- Proficiency/ fluency in Aboriginal languages (Battiste & Henderson, 2000);
- Awareness the effects (benefits and risks) the research may have on individuals, communities and Nations;
- Understanding that the elders have wisdom gained through experience, and that they know when it is time for the teachings to be shared;
- Always remembering our values as Tlingit people when conducting research:
    - Respect for self and others
    - Remember our traditions, our families, sharing, loyalty, pride
- Responsibility to future generations
    - Many truths
    - Care of subsistence areas, care of property
    - Reverence. We have a great word in or culture: haa shageinyaa. This is the great spirit above us. (Soboleff, P., personal communication 2003)

As a Tlingit person, I carry the responsibility to conduct research and develop methodologies with the above elements in mind. When it comes to developing an Indigenous academic site (or conducting any research in higher education), it is imperative that Indigenous knowledge be centered. The same assertion for theory can be made (as it is socially constructed). Although this article does not focus on the need to re-conceptualize theory, I believe we need to challenge both research and theory within higher education to ensure our teachings are sustained for generations to come.

Conclusion

For too long, well-intentioned outsiders such as archeologists, anthropologists, sociologists ethnographers and others have produced irresponsible, inaccurate reports, texts and research papers on topics related to Indigenous peoples and cultures. It is essential that we, as Indigenous people, continue to de-colonize ourselves by reclaiming our histories, values, languages and traditions. The path towards self-determination means we will provide our own solutions to our own problems and bring to life the elements of our lives that have sustained us since time immemorial. Today, Indigenous people worldwide are taking necessary steps to initiate research reflecting their own needs and aspirations using Indigenous ways of knowing, being, seeing and doing to maintain strong people, communities, and Nations towards a self-determining future.

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Youth Custody: Exercising our Rights and Responsibilities to Indigenous Youth

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Hadih, I am the daughter of June Wickham, granddaughter of Emily Isaac, the great granddaughter of Julie and Paddy Isaac, and a member of the Gitdumden clan of the Wet'suwet'en Nation. I have been a visitor on Coast and Straights Salish territory while I have journeyed through my education. During my time here I have committed myself to a high standard of academic achievement and community involvement. I believe it is my duty as a visitor to contribute to the local community through my work with youth. I have been involved with high risk youth for the last five years, and youth in custody for the last three years. My education and Indigenous values enforce the necessity to support highly vulnerable Indigenous youth against colonial attacks and abuses. I plan to return to my community to support Wet'suwet'en youth and advance the assertion of a traditional Wet'suwet'en form of governance through our clan system. Based on our clan system I recognize the importance of family and will work towards strengthening Indigenous families to enhance cultural transmission. I attribute my successes as a Wet'suwet'en woman to my family, my ancestors, and the young ones who guide me in my work.

Abstract

Colonization is a common experience amongst Indigenous youth; the effects of which have contributed to an over representation of Indigenous youth in correctional facilities in British Columbia (B.C). Placing youth in custody violates Indigenous values and child rearing practices and advances internalized oppression by focusing on the individual as the problem. In order to counter these effects, Indigenous youth in custody require education and engagement in the areas of colonization and decolonization. This paper discusses how the youth justice system in B.C fails Indigenous youth and how one group of young Indigenous people have acted upon their responsibility to support their incarcerated brothers and sisters.

Introduction

To be sure, the youth 'justice' system in Canada, particularly in British Columbia (BC) does not provide justice for Indigenous people. To accurately describe the colonial system that I am referring to, I will refer to the Youth Justice System as the injustice system. The current Canadian injustice system is based on European values and serves current colonial agendas. Central to the discussion of any colonial institution is colonialism and its effects. It is through a discussion of colonialism that we can analyze the detrimental cost of incarceration on our youth. Indigenous youth have bared the brunt of colonialism's wrath for far too long, through the Residential School Era, the 'Sixties Scoop' and the child welfare system. Currently, various initiatives are being implemented within the injustice system, however, most of these initiatives are focused on preventative measures and integrated systems of Indigenous and mainstream justice. Although preventative measures are vital to the survival of Indigenous nations, Indigenous philosophy demands that no young people are left to be terrorized and abused, a goal that is not being adequately met, as I will discuss. While I recognize the inherent risk of attempting to work within a system of domination, I propose the need to focus attention on the decolonization of Indigenous youth in custody in British Columbia, without engaging in a controlled relationship with the federal or provincial government. It is vital that Indigenous people continue to attack the legitimacy of the colonial injustice system; however, it is also necessary for Indigenous communities to focus on Indigenous youth that are currently in correctional facilities. Although BC has one of the lowest youth incarceration rates, this also contributes to less cultural programming and involvement with Indigenous communities than elsewhere in Canada. Cultural transmission is lacking in BC correctional facilities, and it is necessary for Indigenous people to assert control in this area. By asserting control over the cultural transmission of our stolen children, Indigenous people advance the decolonization process while promoting the survival of our

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young people. The goal is to decolonize cultural programming for Indigenous youth in custody in B.C. To explore this issue, I begin by examining the current condition of incarcerated Indigenous youth and the colonial agenda. Through this examination, I will analyze the existing cultural programming and their effectiveness in relation to Indigenous law and values. As discussed below, it is imperative that decolonization processes are build upon traditional principles like respect and interconnectedness. It is from here that a framework for reconnecting to incarcerated Indigenous youth can occur in a meaningful way that benefits both youth and cultural transmission in general. I use a new program of decolonizing youth in custody as an example of the decolonization that can and must take place; justice must occur in new and creative ways.

In Wasáse (2005), Taiaiake Alfred describes justice as necessary for peace, but asserts that peace is the end objective (27). Justice on its own calls for fairness and moral balance, whereas peace takes the relationship one step further. Alfred says that, "peace is hopeful, visionary, and forward-looking; it is not just the lack of violent conflict or rioting in the streets" (2005, 28). It is not enough for the police to leave us alone or for us to make recommendations within an inherently flawed system. As Alfred says, it is not enough to have a lack of injustices because Indigenous people also have to engage in an extensive healing process. A lack of injustices will allow for the decolonization process more freely, but we are also required to aggressively advance decolonization. Healing must take place traditionally while recognizing that we continue to fight for freedom. We must discover ways to decolonize without negotiating with the current injustice system. Meanwhile, our children continue to kill themselves and the state continues to advance cultural genocide on our nations. Alfred and Corntassel ask in Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism (2005), "[H]ow can we resist further dispossession and disconnection when the effects of colonial assaults on our own existence are so pronounced and still so present in the lives of all Indigenous peoples?" (599).The answer lies in our own experiences as individuals and collectives, which give us the clearest insight into decolonization (2005, 601). My vision of peace looks like this: incarcerated youth have purpose in their lives, pride shines from their smiling faces and they never return to prison; their children do not know the colonial child welfare system, they only know their community, their songs, and their traditions. All Indigenous young people have a right to their culture, land and community. The rest of the Indigenous population has a responsibility to ensure this occurs. Current Condition of Youth Injustice The Injustice System in B.C. Youth injustice is governed through the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) of Canada, which replaced the Young Offenders Act (YOA) on April 1, 2003. The provincial legislation in BC is the Youth Justice Act (YJA). The YCJA outlines the following principles:

- The intended purpose of the YCJ*A is to prevent crime by addressing circumstances underlying youth behavior, rehabilitation, reintegration and meaningful consequences for offences* (emphasis added).
- "Within the limits of fair and proportional accountability," measures should be taken to respect societal values; encourage repairing relationships; "where appropriate involve the parents, the extended family, the community, and social or other agencies; respect gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences, and respond to the needs of Aboriginal youth and youth with special requirements" (Youth Criminal Justice Act Canada Pocket Guide 2008, 2-4).

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is in charge of providing all services for children and families involved in the injustice system. Their role and mandate are as follows:

- Advance the safety and well being of children, youth and adults.
- Advance early childhood development through strategic investments.
- Advance and support a community-based system of family services that promotes innovation, equity and accountability (Ministry Overview 2008).

Youth Corrections in BC are governed by the YCJA's principles, highlighting reintegration and reduced recidivism under the least restrictive conditions possible (Youth Criminal Justice Act Canada 2008). These are lofty goals for a colonial organization based on individualistic philosophies. I will argue that the Ministry of Children and Family Development fundamentally fails in providing culturally supportive services to Indigenous youth in custody. The MCFD does not provide the services necessary to uphold the principles set out in the YCJA. For instance, the YCJA calls for services to address underlying reasons for youth behaviour. The MCFD does not address colonialism, plain and simple. The reintegration of youth is not occurring, nor is the rehabilitation of youth occurring at any sort of meaningful rate. Since reintegration and rehabilitation are the goal, any sort of meaningful punishment would reflect reintegration or rehabilitation as outcomes. As illustrated in the rates of recidivism, this is certainly not the case in BC, or anywhere else in Canada.

In addition, the colonial institutions exclude Indigenous values from their conception of "societal values," they fail to "encourage repairing relationships," and do not meet the cultural needs of Indigenous youth. The principles state that interaction with parents and community should occur "where appropriate," thus ignoring the cultural importance of a relationship between Indigenous youth and their community and family. This

relationship to family and community, as Alfred and Corntassel (2005) point out is crucial to an Indigenous identity. The very denial of this crucial element negates Indigenous cultural needs, and serves the colonial agenda of cultural genocide. Previously, the governmental rationale was that Indian children needed a western education due to a changing economy and western culture. "It is for their own good," they would say. Currently the governmental rationale is that correctional facilities will "rehabilitate" youth into law abiding citizens. "It is for their own good", they say. Doob and Cesaroni (2004), in Responding to Youth Crime in Canada, describe the utilitarian purposes of incarceration that the Canadian government attempts to pass off as justice:

- *Incapacitation*; by keeping youth in custody they are unable to break the law. This proposition requires the proper identification of a criminal, which denies the fact that change is an inherent part of adolescence.
- Deterrence; incarceration will ensure that youth do not ***reoffend*** for fear of prison. This claim has proven false on account of the high levels of recidivism among youth "offenders".
- *Rehabilitation*; youth will be 'rehabilitated' while in custody. This claim is also false. This claim assumes that if an individual is "rehabilitated," outside influences will not be influential (229-232).

These justifications have been disproven time and time again. However, central to the argument here are the underlying assumptions about the young people involved in the justice system. Incapacitation only serves to institutionalize youth. They are separated from the rest of society and labeled as 'bad' people. This is inconsistent with traditional justice values. Deterrence implies that youth will choose to commit crime with the absence of a threat. By focusing on the negatives, youth continue to be seen as inherently deviant. Rehabilitation comes closest to dealing with the causes of youth crime; however, mainstream rehabilitation focuses on the individual, which implies that the individual alone is responsible. In traditional Indigenous justice it is understood that families and kinship networks are responsible for each other. It is also understood that rehabilitation is not an individual task; it takes an entire community. Because of this foreign system, our youth suffer from an individualized attack on their identity, and consequently, the social ills that follow.

Incarcerated Indigenous Youth

Indigenous youth are faced with extreme effects of colonization. They are also more likely to be incarcerated and spend more time incarcerated than their non-Indigenous peers. In 2004, The McCreary Centre Society surveyed youth in all three custody centers in BC (Burnaby, Victoria, and Prince George). The purpose of the research was to profile the highest risk youth in BC in the report, Time Out II: A Profile of BC Youth in Custody. A summary of the average youth inmate, age 12 to 17, involves interaction with drug abuse, alcohol abuse, suicide, disconnection from family, involvement with the child welfare system and violence (Murphy and Chittendon 2005, 5). Although Indigenous youth only account for 8 percent of the youth population in BC, and 4 percent of the total Indigenous population in BC, "47% of youth in custody said they were Aboriginal in 2004 (Murphy and Chittendon 2005, 40). This number is astounding, but unfortunately, is representative of one of the lowest in Canada. According to A One-Day Snapshot of Aboriginal Youth in Custody: Phase II report by Latimer and Foss, British Columbia and Alberta had the lowest Aboriginal custody rates in the country. Although Indigenous youth only made up 5 percent of the total population of Canada in 2003, they made up 33 percent of the population in custody (2004, 3.1). The majority of these youth were placed in remand (awaiting a sentence), while more Indigenous youth than non-Indigenous youth were in secure custody (less privileges, more security) (3.3). In 2003, the median sentence length was 212 days for Indigenous youth and 182 days for non-Indigenous youth (3.6). It is obvious that although fewer youth are incarcerated in general in BC, the rate at which they are incarcerated is not only offensive, but unacceptable. In addition, "only 18% were in custody for the first time, meaning 82% of these youth had been in custody before, compared to 77% in 2000" (Murphy and Chittendon 2005, 13). This means that more Indigenous youth are reoffending and spending subsequent amounts of time incarcerated. The determinants of incarceration are many, but stem from the effects of colonization outlined below. In BC, the incarceration rates are lower than in other provinces, but cultural refuge is not accessible. It is an inherent right that Indigenous people be able to provide cultural transmission to all their children. Cultural needs of Aboriginal inmates are recognized in legislation, yet continue to be ignored. By understanding the colonial agenda, and its effects, we can begin to piece together a decolonization strategy to reclaim our Indigenous youth.

Colonialism

How This Has Affected Indigenous Identity

Colonization serves not only to physically annihilate Indigenous peoples, but also to strip them of an Indigenous identity. The thievery of Indigenous children continues to be the colonialist's main tool. Kirmayer, Simpson, and Cargo say there are cumulative effects of colonialism on cultural identity, making it even more difficult for Indigenous youth to form a positive sense of self (2003, s.18). Jeannine Carriere (2007), in

Promising Practices for Maintaining Identities in First Nation Adoption, has focused her research on the impacts of adoption and cultural identity loss. Carriere concludes that, "Identity was viewed by all 18 adoptees as the main loss that they experienced through adoption" (2007, 54). Similarly, Sinclair (2007) admits that despite some "success stories," we see evidence of traumatic identity crisis, psychological trauma, and behavioral problems. The Canadian government's policies continue to kill Indigenous cultures, which inhibits cultural transmission and cultural survival. Indigenous youth need cultural teachings in order to form a positive Indigenous identity and feel belonging in the world. Academics concur that identity is vital to our survival as Indigenous people (Alfred 1999; Morris 2007; Carriere 2007). A loss of Indigenous identity, through colonial policies, has devastating effects on Indigenous youth and communities.

Of the Aboriginal youth in custody, 76% have First Nations status, but most have never lived on reserve. Only 9% have lived on a reserve for most or all of their life. Aboriginal youth in custody are more likely to have experienced disruption or trauma in their home life than their non-Aboriginal peers, including having a family member die of an overdose (25% versus 11%), violence (23% versus 9%), or suicide (26% versus 10%). And more Aboriginal youth (78%) have been in government care than non-Aboriginal youth (69%) (Murphy and Chittendon 2005, 40). There is an important link to be made here. Most Indigenous youth have been in care of the ministry, have experienced trauma, and are not connected to their home communities. They are lost in a colonial world. Most of the youth in custody did not feel that anyone cared for them while they were in custody. Approximately half of the youth in custody in BC in 2004 felt that someone cared about them. Approximately the same number of youth stated that a family member or parent came to visit them while in custody (Murphy and Chittendon 20054, 37). This means that half of the youth in custody are not visited by family and feel that no one cares about them. This is not alarming since 73 percent had been in care in the past year, with 46 percent having had experienced homelessness in the previous year to being incarcerated (Murphy and Chittendon 20054, 45). Indigenous youth are certainly not being supported in custody in BC, which fundamentally affects the communities they come from.

Aside from the trauma inflicted on children who are raised in non-Indigenous homes, control is taken away from community. Kirmayer, Simpson, and Cargo argue that the higher cultural continuity or 'local control' in an Indigenous community, the less likely that community will experience high rates of suicide (2003, s.18). Communities lose the possibility of cultural transmission each time a youth is lost to the colonial system. The theft and imprisonment of Indigenous youth is an attack on cultural transmission. Alfred and Corntassel (2005) would say that displacing youth is working in favor of the colonial state as a means to culturally annihilate Indigenous cultures (2005, 598). It is painfully obvious that it is not working in favor of the children and families in which it claims to serve and protect. Ross Gordon Green agrees, in Justice in Aboriginal Communities, that criminal law plays a pivotal role in the colonization and domination of Indigenous peoples (1998, 139). The approach that the system takes is individualistic and does not take into account the cultural continuity that is vital to the survival of Indigenous peoples. In addition, the effects of identity loss are compounded when Indigenous people, young or old, are not able to heal together. A healer in Returning to the Teachings said, "We heal best when we heal together" (Ross 20061996, 144). Thus, the continuation of social problems is consequential of the separation of Indigenous peoples. Kirmayer, Simpson, and Cargo also agree that the family and community must be the primary source of restoration and renewal (2003, s.21). This means that the institutionalization of Indigenous youth cannot continue and that Indigenous communities must wrap those youth in a blanket of cultural teachings and love. Otherwise, Indigenous youth will continue to be incarcerated.

Traditional Justice and Decolonization

To be fair, Indigenous people surely had problems with their traditional laws. Traditional laws were passed down from our ancestors, and alterations were surely accepted throughout the centuries. However, Indigenous laws were based on fundamental principles like respect. The focus was on maintaining respectful relationships in order to avoid disruptions in the community or between communities (Ross 20061996, 268). In traditional Wet'suwet'en law, it was the whole clan that put together a potlatch to pay the debt of one member who had committed an 'offence' to another nation. If someone had a grievance the chief or elders would interject, and the entire community would hold a peace-making potlatch. When this was done, peace was made. When compensation was satisfactory, the group sealed the peace with eagle down (kus: meaning eagle down literally and also 'our law'). Examples of traditional law were based on respect for everyone, and were accounted for by the entire kinship web of an individual or by the entire nation. It is these fundamental principles of interconnectedness, respect, and restoration that kept the peace between nations and within nations.

This form of social control focuses on a positive approach rather than a negative approach. The community worked together for the balance of all relationships to form a happy

cohesive group. Maracle described the contrast with the western system of coercive force and control; "I understand that the laws were obeyed not through armed force that was alienated from the people-such as police, army etc.- but rather because the people agreed with the law. In fact they formulated them in the best interest of the community" (1996, 40-41). Indigenous knowledge and values are internalized as a societal code, whereas European laws are externally enforced by police officers, who become detectives of wrongful behavior (Little Bear 2000, 84). Of great importance was instilling children with a sense of self and importance in the community (Maracle 1996, 41). As previously discussed, the youth in need are struggling with the effects of colonization, which include alienation and a loss of Indigenous identity. Because the effects of colonialism attack all levels of being-emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental- understanding these elements is crucial for decolonization to occur. In order for this to occur, we must recognize the colonial assaults, and counter them by modeling Indigenous values and educating youth about colonization.

Existing Programming

The existing youth custody programming in BC is insufficient, ineffective and lacking cultural foundations. Depending on the amount of time that youth are in custody, various services are available, provided by MCFD (Youth Justice Programs 2008). After a few days or a week of being in custody youth are given permission to attend programs. Just over half of the youth in custody were invited to make decisions about their programming while in custody (Ibid, 38). This means that almost half of youth in custody were not consulted as to what programs they would like to participate in. This is incompatible to traditional valuing of autonomy and respect for young people. As stated in Youth Justice Programs (2008) programming is intended to support rehabilitation and reintegration. Such programs include; Basic Programs, like education, religious support, and recreation as well as family visits; Core Programs, like violence intervention, life skills, and substance abuse management which are meant to counteract attitudes contributing to unlawful behavior; Specialized Programs, which includes Aboriginal services, mental health services, services for female youth, and alcohol and drug counseling; and finally Reintegration Programs, which are meant to facilitate reintegration through the Intensive Support and Supervision (ISSP) program or community transition beds (Youth Justice Programs 2008, 6). Of these programs, Aboriginal services are of great concern and should be asserted as core programming. According to the federal legislation, Aboriginal cultural needs are a requirement; however, these needs are not being met. As previously discussed, most incarcerated Indigenous youth come from urban centers and foster care. This fundamentally challenges their previous opportunities to access cultural knowledge. As a result, youth are unaware of their cultural background, and or are happy to settle with whatever the custody centre will provide. Almost half of Indigenous youth said that their cultural needs were being met in custody. Nineteen percent said that their needs were not being met, and 32 percent said that they did not have cultural needs (Murphy and Chittendon 2005, 38). For many young Indigenous youth, colonization has resulted in an internalization of oppression. Alfred, in Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto, says that, "The 'colonial mentality' is the intellectual dimension in the group of emotional and psychological pathologies associated with internalized oppression" (1999, 70). Here Alfred is discussing the co-optation of leaders into professional organizations, but the colonial mentality also permeates youths' vision of hope and cultural knowledge, resulting in internalizing the legitimacy of the injustice system and the devaluing of traditional Indigenous culture. That 32 percent of Indigenous youth reported not having cultural needs speaks to the attempted cultural genocide of Indigenous youth. The number of youth that did not access programs could also be compounded by the half of youth who are not consulted as to which programs they would like to participate in. On the other hand, Indigenous youth did make use of Aboriginal programs to some extent. In fact, of the 72 percent of Indigenous youth that participated in Aboriginal programming, 63 percent found it useful and 9 percent did not (Murphy and Chittendon 2005, 38-42). It is difficult from this data to determine what cultural programming means to Indigenous youth in custody, or what types of cultural programming exists at each youth custody centre in B.C. For some custody centers, cultural programming consists of a monthly sweat lodge ceremony and occasional arts and crafts. This is insufficient.

A Framework for Reconnecting

All Elements of Being: Relationships and Mentors

> *"Before I can understand what independence is, I must break the chains that imprison me in the present, impede my understanding of the past, and blind me to the future" (Maracle 1996, 40).*

The chain that impedes Indigenous youth is the continued attack of colonialism and its effects. In order to begin the process of decolonization, the colonial system must be understood and resisted. It is not enough to assert control over Indigenous cultural transmission while participating in the oppression of youth. Indigenous people must act in accordance with traditional justice values in direct contact with youth. Otherwise, we will continue to accept colonial authority over

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the lives of our young people. Latimer and Foss report on what youth view as solutions to problems within custody and reintegration (2004, 4.3): Indigenous youth identified the need for cultural assistance in all four areas of health; mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional. They called for sweat-lodges (physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional), talking circles (emotional), smudges (spiritual), crafts (physical), pow-wows (physical), as well as singing, drumming, and dancing (physical, spiritual). The youth also requested knowledge about their history and languages from an Indigenous perspective, and more interaction with Elders (Latimer and Foss 2004, 4.3.1). These are all things that every Indigenous child has a right to. Many of our youth understand what they need to survive, and they have made a request.

Decolonizing cultural programming in custody must be based on traditional values within a political context. "Whether or not decolonization actually occurs,...depends to some extent on our ability to understand events and dynamics; to anticipate difficulties and obstacles and to ensure that all parties develop a vision, policies and strategies based on these understandings" (Taylor-Henley & Hudson 1992, 14). Although traditional justice did not have to deal with the many effects of colonization, Indigenous people must still take the values inherent in the traditional systems and discover new ways to decolonize. Alfred (2005) argues for the decolonization of Indigenous people in Wasáse. He says Indigenous people need a "culturally rooted social movement that transforms the whole of society and a political action that seeks to remake the entire landscape of power and the relationship to reflect a truly liberated post-imperial vision" (27). Everything we do as Indigenous people is political. We must never forget the colonial relationship. Alfred asserts the need to struggle against colonialism in our totality, without compromise. Indigenous people need to engage incarcerated youth within an Indigenous framework to decolonize all elements of being.

"It feels good to be Indian Today"

Recently, a group of Indigenous young people have taken on the task of facilitating a decolonization project at a BC youth custody centre. This cultural programming focuses on educating youth about colonization, its effects, and how to counter those effects (decolonization). This program was founded by six Indigenous young people who have experienced the multiple effects of colonization such as displacement, adoption, foster-care, intergenerational effects of residential schools, violence, and drug and alcohol misuse, among others. These young people have taken it upon themselves to engage and support incarcerated youth where little support was available. The program is currently being piloted based on the following themes: relationship building, land, spirituality, and families. In, "Colonialism and State Dependency," Taiaiake Alfred states that, "The elements of a meaningful Indigenous existence are land, culture, and community" (2009, 26). He goes on to say that throughout history, spiritual and cultural regeneration have been key components in recovering dignity and self-sufficiency (2009, 7). Generally, the program focuses on decolonization, advocating for an Indigenous way of being in the world within a colonial context. For six weeks, two or three of the volunteers (per week) develop an interactive session to engage youth on a particular topic, using real life experiences, and to discuss decolonization initiatives. As previously stated, it is necessary to not only educate our young people about colonization, it is also necessary to model healthy relationships and behaviour creating a sense of community. Throughout the following discussion I will outline the purpose and content of the first six sessions of the program and how they are working to decolonize the youth in custody and provide an alternative discourse to internalized oppression and an unjust system. During an introduction to colonization session, facilitators outlined the effects of colonization by discussing issues such as land, families and spirituality. In order to illustrate these topics we drew upon our own experiences with residential schools, foster care, language, cultural loss, and land loss. We soon discovered, as had been expected, that each of the youth had experienced these same effects of colonization. Now, they can begin to decolonize: to acknowledge the systems of domination and oppression that rule our lives and land as Indigenous Peoples. It is only when we understand the system that has affected us that we can begin to unravel the levels of oppression that can lead to self-hate and destruction. When we educate youth about what has happened to us and why, the only question left is: What do we do about it now? This engages youth in decolonizing their own lives in whatever capacity they can. We have asked them to identify their colonial experiences through media images, and to also identify an act or way of thinking that counters these experiences of colonization. By involving Indigenous volunteers who have experienced many of these same things, we lead by example. By engaging youth on these topics we begin to model the values which have been taken away from us; we begin to rebuild those relationships and act like a traditional community would have. We must recognize the colonial assaults that have landed Indigenous youth in this position, we must recognize our political positions as Indigenous nations and then we must take control of the cultural transmission to our youth in custody in order for decolonization to occur. We must achieve this goal for the survival of incarcerated Indigenous youth, beginning with respectful relationships.

Relationships

Interconnectedness necessarily requires respectful relationships. It is these relationships that must be rebuilt upon traditional cultural foundations in order for communities to thrive. Youth have called for relationships with Elders and community members who they have something in common with. Similarly, Alfred and Corntassel consider relationships to be central to an Indigenous identity. They see relationships as, "the spiritual and cultural foundations of Indigenous peoples" (2005, 609). In order to survive we must strengthen these relationships and nurture to health our young people that have fallen, so that they can grow up to know what freedom is. In *The Book of Elders*, by Johnson (1994), Janet McCloud offers her own knowledge about young ones. She tells Johnson that if Indigenous people want their children to have a better future, they had better remember that children learn by imitating, thus we must all be the teachers. If Indigenous people want the next generation to resist the colonial system and to live healthy lives, we must show them what that looks like (Johnson 1994, 62). Let us not assume the strength of the colonial system. Let us focus on our own strengths as Indigenous people. These relationships must nurture all elements of being; mental, physical, emotional and physical.

The facilitators invited local Elders to participate in a relationship building session. It is critical that we model appropriate protocol to the youth, as many of them, including volunteers, are not residing on their traditional territory and have experienced displacement. In addition, inviting Elders to the session bridges the gap between cultural knowledge holders and youth. It is important for youth the see the intergenerational effects that colonization has had, and the caring that multiple generations have for their well being. We also took this time to allow the Elders to talk about their culture and experiences on the territory and/or with colonization. The purpose of this initial session was to become comfortable with youth and to open the doors of communication. The elders brought a drum, and songs were sung. The session ended with a "check out" round that invited the youth to say one word that described the engagement we had just experienced. One youth said, "It feels good to be Indian today's a good day to be Indian." This type of engagement is critical in empowering the youth to see the many conditions of colonization that have contributed to their experiences.

Families

Traditional justice was effective because each individual was socialized with the values, customs and philosophies of the group. These values served as a means of social control. The laws were the practical application of the philosophy and values of Indigenous peoples (Little Bear 2000, 79). Traditionally, kinship ties were the locus of social control, which meant that these interconnected relationships provided strength among the group. The breakdown of families due to the continued theft of children must be considered in any decolonization project. Little Bear (2000) acknowledges the values of sharing and strength as ways to sustain balance among the group. Today, many of the youth in custody have come from the foster care system or have been impacted by residential schools or the sixties scoop. By educating young people on the effects of colonization on our families they are less likely to internalize their experiences. As previously discussed, the effects of colonization on youth in custody are compounded by the injustice system and perpetuate internalized anger, shame, and the oppression of each other. In addition, by focusing on families, we can educate youth on the effects of residential schools and the colonial legislation that often lands them in foster care. A critical part of this education about Indigenous families is to provide youth with an alternative. While it is critical to educate youth about colonial assaults on our families, it is also critical to provide them with a sense of hope. Many of our young people do not see an alternative way of living and have only known the worst effects of colonization. By providing them with a glimpse of a healthy way of life as an Indigenous person, they will be provided with hope for breaking the cycle. To do this, the facilitators often use their own life stories as examples of how we, as young Indigenous people, are able to break the cycles of abuse our families have suffered. Youth have expressed the need to connect with people that understand their struggles. One youth says, "I would rather go somewhere to talk to someone that I can trust, the certificate or degree doesn't matter, I would rather someone who will understand" (qtd. in Latimer and Foss 2004, 4.3.2). Youth assert their desire to engage with positive influences and people who can understand their experiences. Youth have stated their needs for Indigenous support, including spirituality.

Spirituality

Indigenous youth also stated their need for spirituality (Latimer and Foss 2004, 4.3.1). Through relationships with youth, spiritual practices can be reintroduced and strengthened. Alfred identifies spirituality as the root of the struggle. Without grounding in a strong spiritual connectedness successful recovery of our territories and political power will be meaningless to the survival of our people (2005, 38). Traditional spiritual practices will strengthen the spirituality that is necessary for a balanced life. "These traditions were displaced and actively suppressed by successive generations of Euro–Canadian missionaries, governments and professionals. Revitalizing these traditions therefore reconnects contemporary Aboriginal peoples to their

historical traditions and mobilizes rituals and practices that may promote community solidarity" (Kirmayer et al. 2003, s.16). It is vital that each and every youth have the opportunity for this spirituality. Indigenous young people have a right to their spiritual practices, and we have a responsibility to provide access to them.

It is critical that we spend an entire session on how our spirituality has been affected by colonization and explore ways that we can decolonize this aspect of our lives. This can begin by discussing the role that spirituality plays within a traditional way of being. For example, spirituality has become disconnected from secular living and therefore also disconnects individuals from other life forms. This aspect of colonization impacts our relationships to the spirit world as well as our relationships to each other and most importantly land. It is important to demystify spirituality for youth. It is not a question of whether or not they will understand what spirituality is, but that spirituality often becomes seen as religion instead of a way of life. A good forum to discuss these issues is through story telling. By engaging youth through a story, whether this is a real life story or in the form of poetry, youth can begin to see how spirituality is situated within the context of every day life. It is necessary to unpack the differences between religion and spirituality so that spirituality does not remain a mystifying concept left to shamans and Elders. It is necessary to learn why our spiritual practices have been lost, but also to have the courage to reclaim a way of life that has sustained not only humans, but all of creation since time began. For Indigenous peoples, spirituality was integrated into the culture and relationship to the land; it is necessary for youth to understand this concept and how our way of life is necessary tied to our territory.

Land and Physical Impacts

The physical effects of colonization that Indigenous youth have experienced are reflected in their health and the health of our homelands. The two are intricately interconnected. All of the above themes relate back to our physicality and land. It is not enough that we should physically survive and have control over our land base. As Alfred (2009) asserts, our disconnection from land has caused Indigenous people to become physically unhealthy and dependent on the state. The importance of land must be identified as one of the most important aspects of Indigenous identity. One of the major challenges that youth in custody face are that most come from urban environments and may not have an existing relationship with the land. Although spirituality occurs within Indigenous peoples themselves, culture is very much based within the context of homelands. Sean Kicummah Teuton, in Red Land, Red Power, asserts that without land it is difficult to hold the body of knowledge used to maintain cultural identity (2008, 44). This also includes language, and the importance of coupling language with homelands. This means that it is critical for Indigenous peoples to secure and protect their homelands in order for culture and language to survive. Indigenous peoples have lived in harmony with the land and its beings since time began, which has necessarily impacted our way of knowing and living. Therefore, land and culture are inseparable. Not only is it critical that Indigenous young people understand the negative affects caused by our displacement from our lands, and the resulting anomie, but we must also provide them with a sense of reconnecting. If young people do not have an investment in the land, they would have no desire to maintain it. It is critical that youth understand the role that land has played from the beginning of colonial contact to the current context. For instance, land is the prized possession of the colonizer. In contrast, Indigenous families have particular roles in caring for the land and keeping humans in harmony and balance with our territories. Most importantly, land must be seen as an interconnected aspect of all Indigenous life. Without it we would all cease to exist. It is all at once, life giving and uniting. Despite our languages, spiritual practices, and protocols, all Indigenous peoples share a deep relationship to land, and have experienced the same effects of displacement from that land. This knowledge can give youth the hope and determination necessary to walk each day towards reclaiming not only our homelands, but the relationship to that land that has sustained us since time began.

Conclusion

There are thousands of incarcerated Indigenous youth in Canada. BC has nearly the lowest incarceration rates, yet our children continue to be stolen at heartbreaking rates. It is imperative that Indigenous people struggle against the colonial institutions that continue the thievery of our children. There are countless initiatives and strategies to keep our Indigenous youth out of correctional facilities. This is necessary, but also, not enough. Traditional justice worked because people were socialized with Indigenous values and beliefs. The colonial injustice system not only undermines these beliefs, but also leaves youth without a positive Indigenous identity. Not only are Indigenous youth suffering the worst effects of colonization, but they are further degraded in custody centers. We must not accept the degradation of our youth in systems opposed to Indigenous values and philosophies. Our people are struggling in the realm of self-determination, child-welfare- as a great concern- and land disputes with the provincial and federal governments. I realize that we have been worn thin in many areas, but this must not impede our struggle; it never has. Indigenous people have always resisted the thievery of children,

and have always continued the struggle against colonial domination. We are getting stronger. Issues of child thievery must continue to be attacked at all levels. Prevention is ideal, but we must remember those who have fallen. The families that have already lost their children, and the children and communities that are suffering the loss. We cannot abandon those young people in colonial institutions; it is inconsistent with Indigenous values and teachings. Indigenous young people need to be educated about their history through direct contact with mentors and Elders. This knowledge is not reaching them through mainstream education, and they are unlikely to have access to such knowledge holders given the high percentage of youth in care or on the streets. Awareness of the colonial condition and mindset will allow for the mental health of Indigenous youth and the decolonization process to strengthen. What is needed is a holistic healing and educative program. How many times have we heard people say, "It takes a community to raise a child?" Based on value systems of interconnectedness we must work towards an Indigenous framework based on Indigenous values. This education must include knowledge about our histories and language as well as spiritual, physical, and emotional support. Most Indigenous people agree that mental, physical, emotional and spiritual realms must be balanced for a healthy Indigenous identity. This must occur in order to strengthen Indigenous people in the struggle for peace and freedom. We all need to call back the youth; the effects of colonization have been weighing on them for too long.

By engaging traditional principles, Indigenous peoples must take control of cultural programming in youth correctional facilities. Relationships based on respect can be the vehicle for the transmission of spiritual health, mental health, physical health, and emotional health. Programs initiated by Indigenous people who have experienced these same effects of colonization are necessary. Every youth in custody has a right to relationships built on respect and cultural values. Youth have requested this and know they need them to survive as Indigenous people. Every Indigenous person matters to the strength of the whole, and through experience, we will learn more and more ways to resist, and we will achieve freedom for all Indigenous young people. As communities of Indigenous people, we will gain strength through our relationships and we will strengthen our emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental selves so that we can all be whole.

Change Happens one Warrior at a Time- our people must reconstitute the mentoring and learning-teachings relationships that foster real and meaningful human development and community solidarity. The Movement toward decolonization and regeneration will emanate from transformations achieved by direct-guided experience in small, personal, groups and one-on-one mentoring towards a new path (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 613).

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"Home and Native Land": Aboriginal Young Women and Homelessness in the City

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Abstract

The homelessness of Aboriginal young women takes place in the historical context of lost homes and lost homelands. This article focuses on homeless Aboriginal women in the city of Edmonton and explores their perception of this experience. Involving nine young women who were interviewed over a two year period, researchers further investigated the historical profiles of their families and their attempts to transition out of homelessness. Part of a larger study of the homeless experience of eighteen girls and young women in Edmonton, this article breaks out data that focuses on the experience of Aboriginal participants and contextualizes their discourse in light of enforced home loss in western Canada. While their experience overlaps with the non-Aboriginal participants in our study we also find significant cultural and historically located differences.

Preface

Bre describes herself, at 8 years old, as losing everything in an accidental house fire; her family lost the new house that represented a new beginning in their community. Life before the fire was difficult; sometimes the family lived in the city of Edmonton; sometimes they returned to live in their home community. During that time her extended family experienced numerous deaths and serious accidents. Bre and her brother found an older brother in an attempted hanging in their house; unable to get him down, Bre stayed behind while her brother ran to get their parents. Considered haunted by the family, at this same house Bre acquired a "guardian" who helped her many times. Bre's dad, a regular crack user, wasn't really involved in their lives; her mom had a serious drinking problem and some of her uncle's were abusive. Nevertheless, Bre describes her troubles as beginning after the fire, as she puts it: "And ever since our house burned down we've been kinda homeless — my whole family."

Following the fire, Bre lived in over-crowded housing with her grandmother who had thirteen children of her own

and, most of them now adults had many grandchildren living with her. The provincial child welfare department, eventually, removed all the children due to overcrowding; Bre was placed initially with an uncle and then in a foster home. At thirteen she was sent from the foster home to live with an aunt, described by Bre as abusive, before finally settling in Edmonton with one of her older brothers who she knew cared for her. However, even there tension with his girlfriend affected her; with up to thirteen relatives living in a four bedroom house it was crowded there as well. When her brother's girlfriend kicked her mother out of that house after a house party and a fight under the influence of alcohol Bre, now 17, also left. She joined her younger brother living homeless "on the street;" her mother, now staying in a low rent downtown hotel with Bre's uncle, could be found in the same milieu.

Background

Traditionally, Aboriginal families in central Alberta, where this study took place, found home on the land and in culturally patterned relationships of reciprocity, learning, ceremony and knowledge; these interacting factors served as interconnection with each other and with all beings found in their environment. Home was found on the land and its life-ways; the basis of identity was found in family and community as based in culture, language and nation. Following the signing of Treaty 6, in 1876 and Treaty 8 in 1899, many Métis and other native peoples took script payments offered, while First Nations people in central and northern Alberta, began to be settled on reserves rather than, for most part, living in seasonal and flexible interrelated groups depending on hunting, trapping and gathering, strategies carried out across traditional lands. The need for permission from the Indian agent in the form of a pass to leave reserves greatly restricted strategies available for making a living at home and also mandated that First Nations people locate home only on reserves. Western authorities often labeled these homes as "unsafe," as sites of disease, of ignorance, and thus, viewed as a "threat" to non-Aboriginal populations. This rhetoric was one justification behind the enforced movement of children from home to residential schools, where household skills aimed at "cleanliness" and Western gender roles were stressed, as part of the overall effort of assimilation that kept children separate from both their relatives and the larger society (Forsyth, 2005).

At the same time, for those who attended residential schools, locating home, was often a difficult process. Raised in tightly regimented mission schools, many children had little contact with their own families and communities; returning to reserve communities at the end of their "schooling" was often a culturally confusing and stressful experience for both returning youth and their relatives (RCAP, 1996). The autonomy sapping lifestyle lived in these institutions was described by one survivor as a process of "domestication" diminishing the autonomy enhancing values and responsibilities of traditional lifestyles (Standing Committee, 2005). The result of frequent physical, sexual, mental and emotional abuses, including being told repeatedly that their families, as savages, were shamefully uncivilized, ensured that many former students felt isolated or "homeless at home". The social consequences of this institutionalization process led to deficits in parenting and relationship models; self-doubt, shame and anger and, too often, internalized perpetuation of abuse cycles maintained this historical process inter-generationally (Morrissette, 1994). At the same time, government agents, missionaries, medical personnel and RCMP were busy establishing places of safety and security rooted in their own vision of "Indians," images that included a determination to isolate, plow under, stamp out the "wildness" of native places, home and landscapes (McCallum, 2005; Ruttan, 2005).

Most cities in western Canada are situated on lands used traditionally by Aboriginal peoples. The current location of Edmonton is at the site of a river-bend widening in the Saskatchewan River valley used as a camping place for centuries and later as the third site of the HBC's Edmonton House. In the first half of the twentieth century, some Aboriginal peoples in central and northern Alberta lived in and around the economic centres that developed at traditional places and fur posts. For others, the signing of Treaties 6 & 8 led to settlement on reserves for First Nations peoples and in rural villages and later specified settlements for Métis communities. Following WWII, partially related to returning Aboriginal veterans along with population increase, Aboriginal people began to move into urban areas with greater frequency, often going back and forth between cities and their home communities. Increasingly, women, who through marriage could no longer live on their reserves due to loss of status under the Indian Act, settled in the urban centre of Edmonton. This demographic shift parallels a national trend: half of all Aboriginal people in Canada now live in urban centres, with women holding a slightly larger portion rather than men (Peters, 2005).

Today, the nature of home, in urban Aboriginal spaces located on formerly native homelands, is a dynamic process. While mainstream services are available, both these programs and daily interaction with the mainstream community are all too often affected by racism and judgments on culture that perpetuate stereotypes and colonial dynamics (Alfred, 2009; Cooke & Belanger, 2006). At the same time, across urban spaces, community connections and family networks are maintained; churches and Aboriginal organizations provide

social, spiritual and service centres. In many ways, comfort, safety, and Indigenous networking continues to develop in this reoccupied place/homeland. Issues of privilege, and socioeconomic dynamics in urban contexts, are actively contested by Aboriginal peoples. However, whether we look at conditions on reserves, in rural communities or in urban centres, inadequate, overcrowded and environmentally unsafe housing associated with poverty and often powerlessness is central to the experience of dispossession that accompanies many Aboriginal peoples in Canada, including that of homeless young women (UNICEF, 2009).

Aboriginal youth

Canada has a higher poverty rate than many other industrialized countries (OECD, 2008). Pertinent to this study, is the fact that rates are exceptionally high for female headed families and for Aboriginal people (Raphael, 2009); half of Canada's Aboriginal children live below the poverty line (Bennett & Blackstock, 2007; UNICEF, 2009). In Canadian urban centres (over 100 000), fifty percent of Aboriginal children live in low-income housing as compared to 21.5% of non-Aboriginal children (UNICEF, 2009). Poverty, along with poor quality housing (CMHC, 2003), underlies health and wellness disparities at all ages and in all populations. Critically however, Aboriginal children and youth face increased social and familial vulnerability rooted in the cumulative effects of historical oppression, ongoing structural, health and social inequities and threats to cultural continuity (Adelson, 2005; Kirmayer, Brass & Tait, 2000) in spite of the cultural and relational strengths available. The Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples concluded in 2003 that: "Aboriginal youth living in urban areas face major disadvantages in comparison with other Canadian youth when measured against every social and economic indicator" (p. 86). As Blackstock (2009) notes, Aboriginal children and youth are marked by experiences of social exclusion, discrimination and oppression; systemic dynamics that remain unexamined.

The Aboriginal youth population (under 25) in Canada is currently growing at a rapid rate and at fifty percent represents a much higher proportion of the total population than for any other group in Canada (Townsend & Wernick, 2008; Beaujot & Kerr, 2007). Currently, Aboriginal youth as a group become parents earlier and have higher fertility rates than other Canadian youth (Beaujot & Kerr, 2007). Elders, First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders point out the potential in this growing youth population; at the same time, to access this potential, Bennett and Blackstock (2007) remind us that "housing for Aboriginal youth is needed to ensure their health and ability to participate as productive members of society" (p. 6).

Many Aboriginal youth are uprooted repeatedly throughout their childhoods, influenced by difficulty paying rents, poor quality housing and placement in child welfare care (Berman, Alvernaz Mulcahy, Edmunds, Haldenby and Lopez, 2009; Baskin, 2007; Clatworthy, 2008). Other socioeconomic factors affecting urban Aboriginal housing stability include low incomes, the racism of some landlords, social disruption as a result of family conflict related to overcrowding and addictions, and to the continuing search for more acceptable and affordable accommodation. Frequent moves and school changes disrupt children's school performance in ways that may perpetuate poverty (Clatworthy, 2008). Aboriginal youth describe a cyclical pattern; removal from home, returning from foster care if their parent/guardian complies with demands for often culturally irrelevant treatment or parenting programs; re-placed if parents "fail to accede;" placement in other relatives homes if they prove "difficult" in care, often followed by group custody if their parents or relatives, in the eyes of social service agencies, resist required programming or "slack off" in any way (Baskin, 2007).

Aboriginal children in care: Initial homelessness?

In Canada, percentages of Aboriginal children in foster or group home care range from one third to over 40% of the over 60 000 children in care (Farris-Manning & Zandstra in Blackstock, Trocme & Bennett, 2004; Jones & Kruk, 2005; NCSA, 2000). Aboriginal children, despite being similar in overall functioning to non-Aboriginal children reported to child welfare services, are vastly over-represented in care as a result of a focus on the parent and the family socio-economic conditions rather than on the child's behavior and capacity (Blackstock, Trocme, & Bennett, 2004). Further, Aboriginal children are removed more often than non-Aboriginal children for neglect rather than physical or sexual abuse (Blackstock et al, 2004).

Historically, removing children from Aboriginal families destabilized identity (as residential schools were designed to do) and left traumatic scars (Morrissette, 1994). The "60's scoop," which resulted in the placement of great numbers of children for adoption or transfer to long-term foster care with non-Aboriginal families throughout Canada and the United States, continued this process (Blackstock and Trocme, 2005; Sinclair, 2007). Rates of adoption and foster care remain high today, serving as a continuation of assimilationist policies as placement usually results in separating children from family and community, cultural disconnection and painful experiences (Blackstock et al, 2004; Brown, Knol, Prevost-Derbecker & Andrushko, 2007; Richardson & Nelson, 2007).

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Frequent moves while in care increases the risk of behavioral and mental health problems for all children (Rubin, O'Reilly, Luan & Localio); and since frequent moves are the norm for Aboriginal children and youth in foster or group care risk increases as a result. Further, young adults, involved in the system as youth, often find themselves in situations that parallel those experienced by their parents; they face economic and housing challenges including unaffordable rents, poor housing quality and/or homelessness, child welfare involvement with their own children and, as well, a lack of culturally appropriate support programs (Brown, et al, 2007).

Aboriginal youth and homelessness

Aboriginal people as a whole are also over-represented in the homeless population in Edmonton (ranging between 43% and 38% - self identified) (Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing, 2002, 2008). Aboriginal youth experience a higher risk of becoming homeless as compared to other youth in Canada; they are greatly over-represented in the homeless youth population and the rate of concealed homelessness is high (Baskin, 2007). Youth make up a third of the homeless population in Canada, the proportion of Aboriginal youth in the homeless youth population is uncertain. On the street, they experience high rates of mental health concerns, including depression and conduct disorders (MacNeil, 2008; Whitbeck et al, 2008). Earlier onset and a higher percentage of adolescent substance use disorder (male and female) is reported in some communities, a factor that adds to the other array of risk factors linked to low economic status (Boyd-Ball, 2003; Whitbeck et al, 2008). Given the social and historical factors, Van der Woerd, Cox & McDiarmid (2006) state that Aboriginal female youth are identified as "at increased risk" for specific behavioral, social and health concerns that include aggressive behaviors and the likelihood of contacting STDS and HIV at a younger age (Banister & Begoray, 2006). Poverty places Aboriginal women further in harm's way as it often "leads to compromises which can perpetuate the risk of contact with child welfare services" (Harris, Russell, & Gockel, 2007, p. 23).

Based on her research with eleven homeless Aboriginal youth, Gilchrist (1995) concludes that reasons offered for the initiation of homelessness and the strategies used to survive cross ethnic backgrounds for all homeless youth. However, Aboriginal homeless youth backgrounds include different cultural, historical and structural factors that lead to differences in entry paths. For example, Aboriginal young women frequently enter from child welfare system and once there report more intense experiences of prejudice by authorities than other homeless youth experience. In an earlier article we reported that of the nine Aboriginal young women in our study, all but one had family members and caretakers with residential school backgrounds (Ruttan et al, 2008). Aboriginal girls have reported "uprooting as a pervasive and recurrent feature of their lives (Berman et al, 2009, p. 423). For instance, Brown et al (2007) found that several of the Aboriginal youth in their study had a family history of homelessness, that temporary living situations were normative, and that homeless youth had concerns regarding personal safety, a lack of sufficient autonomy and the need for support networks. Cultural connection for homeless Aboriginal youth is a key factor in healing and recovery; disconnection leads to street entrance and reconnection to healing and leaving (Baskin, 2007; Brunanski, 2009; Ruttan et al, 2008).

Research Background

This analysis is based on data from a larger study conducted by faculty from the Department of Human Ecology at the University of Alberta and a community research partner, Native Counseling Service of Alberta (NCSA). The larger study addressed the needs of homeless female youth and young women in Edmonton, Alberta and the assets they used to survive while homeless and to make transitions of homelessness (Munro, LaBoucane-Benson & Ruttan, 2007; Munro, LaBoucane-Benson, Ruttan & Cardinal, 2008).These assets were compared to the assets used in the schedules developed by the Search Institute's 40 Assets for Youth Development model (Scales, Benson, Leffert & Blyth, 2000) and a model of street specific assets developed. The research project was approved by a University of Alberta ethics committee as well as by the ethics review process of the community partner (NCSA). A qualitative approach to the overall research question was used in order to explore the complexity of the experience of homeless young women over time. In the case of the cultural analysis a qualitative approach allows us to interview individuals while exploring issues relevant to their experience of culture and of others responses to their culture and identity, particularly while homeless (Ratner, 1997).

As part of a separate analysis of the data from the nine Aboriginal participants reflected in this article, we looked at how experiences related to residential schools, historical trauma and cultural revitalization affected their journey in an earlier article (Ruttan et al, 2008). We found that the impact of historical trauma (Brave Heart, 2004) was significant and in many ways contributed to youth homelessness. At the same time, the possibility of reconnecting with stories of community and culture in terms of interconnected narratives of both history and futures offered a vision of hope and home to these youth, especially in the context of their goals for their

own children (Ruttan et al, 2008). This article focuses on issues related to where these young women did or did not find home growing up, how they perceived their experience while homeless and where they looked to find homefulness in the context of relations between reserve and urban community and between identity, tradition and contemporary culture.

Sample

Participants in the overall study included eighteen young women suggested by service agencies and other youth as beginning to transition out of homelessness. Purposive sampling was used in order to select informants who meet criteria for appropriateness and expert knowledge on the phenomenon under study (Morse, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1998); we hoped to include Aboriginal participants in similar proportions as represented in the actual population. Nine, or half, of the study participants self-identified as Aboriginal including First Nations, Métis and non-status identification; as representative of the region, all but one participant had Cree or Cree/Métis backgrounds; a number had fathers and grandfathers who were of non-Aboriginal backgrounds. Two participants grew up on reserves, several went back and forth from city to the reserve; however, most participants (5) grew up primarily in an urban setting. Participant's ages ranged between nineteen and twenty-six years (av. 22. 4) at the start of the interviews, however, they first became homeless at between thirteen and eighteen years of age. Four participants entered quite young (13-14); these young women described themselves as having actually left home much earlier: at three to six years of age. To explain what they meant by this, they gave examples of child welfare apprehension, a mother's death, not getting along with parents or as having parent's who they described as ambivalent about having them in the first place. Foster or group home care was common for all participants as was living on and off with relatives, including relatives other than their parents or grandparents. Self-reported reasons for becoming homeless as adolescents included family tensions and fighting, being tired of their role as a family scapegoat, a parent's death, abuse by parents and/or other relatives, unstable housing, being passed around from relative to relative, aging out of or becoming fed up with foster or group care, relationships with boyfriends and due to losing their place at home in response to their own or others substance abuse. Five of the nine participants had children, and two others mentioned loss through miscarriage; two participants had one or more of their children in child welfare custody at the start of the interviews.

Methods and Data Analysis

Research participants were briefed on the research project and appeared quite motivated to participate; they indicated that they hoped their contribution would help others. After signing consent forms, they began a process of interviews held as close to bimonthly as possible; the interviews were conducted by a student researcher and took place over a one to two year period. Researchers connected with participants by phone and by leaving messages with friends, relatives and agencies they typically kept in contact with. Interviews addressed their backgrounds, both prior to homelessness and while on the streets, along with their current experience. Due to the overall research focus, the strategies and internal and external assets used to survive and the challenges and rewards participants experienced in attempts to leave homelessness were stressed. Held between May, 2005 and March 2007, the numbers of interviews per participant ranged from three to nine, on average six interviews of fifty to ninety minutes each were conducted with the participants. Interviews took place in coffee shops or fast food restaurants of the participant's choice with a meal or snack provided. Data included demographic data sheets, interview summaries and transcripts, charts made of assets used, timelines and closing summaries. This rich data set was then analyzed for themes and validating data for all participants. Following the larger analysis a separate qualitative analysis of the Aboriginal participants was completed. In this analysis we looked for similarities and differences in experience from the larger population and developed a set of core categories that shed light on their circumstances, and along with review of the literature, led us to the conclusions and theoretical material discussed in this article (McCann & Clark, 2003). The results are presented thematically followed by discussion of the issues involved.

Results

Many of our participants indicated that their family was homeless or at least somewhat homeless while they were growing up; several participants mentioned having felt homeless their whole lives. Jackie never knew her dad, but between her four siblings and her mother, she indicated they were all homeless at some time in their lives. Multiple moves were common along with periods of living with extended family members who often took on a variety of flexible family roles. As one participant explained, "Well, me, my mom, my brother, my aunties, my cousins, we all lived in this one house, and my grandpa, he was like my dad … he filled in the position of my dad." For others multiple moves including those from family to the child welfare system worked less well. One participant described living with her grandma and grandfather for a few years growing up, and then following her mother's death, living first with her aunt, then with her grandparents, then in foster care and group homes, then to live with another aunt and from there she hit the streets; as she describes: she

"liked it best at my grandparent's place, because of my grandma, who I felt raised me as a child."

In a way that was different from the non-Aboriginal youth we interviewed, there was a less distinct boundary to homelessness. Many youth went back and forth from siblings, grandmother's or auntie's places to periods on the street. Several participants indicated that being at least "somewhat homeless" was not unusual in their community and not something that made them feel different than others. To find shelter many young women told us they, "would just go stay with whatever friends and family would let them." Many of the Aboriginal young women involved in our study did not see themselves as truly "homeless" or as street people in contrast to the non-Aboriginal participants who, for the most part, accepted this identification. Interestingly, those Aboriginal participants who identified themselves as "street people", tended to live with street families of mostly white youth rather than looking for places to sleep at relative's homes.

Another difference from the non-Aboriginal participants was that, several of the young women had other family members living on the street, including parents and siblings. For example, at the time she entered the street. Bre's mother and brother were living on the street; as well, she got to know several cousins she barely knew while living in the street community. For these families supporting each other economically or in terms of emotional connection while homeless was common; they hung out with each other and did not seek street families. Jackie mentioned how her mom, also on the street, but with more income than she had through E.I. (Employment Insurance), would often meet up with Jackie and her three children, get them something to eat and then give Jackie a break for a little while.

Nevertheless, while homelessness did not necessarily disrupt family ties often severe drug abuse led to estrangement. When drug usage became severe, addictive and continued over time it resulted in loss of trust and a redefinition as unsafe to have around. Youth were then told to leave places with relatives and were estranged, for the time being, from family members who had homes. In general, however, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins homes were usually places available when needed and used as places to clean up, get something to eat, sleep at times and store things; only when drug abuse was severe and the associated behaviors causing serious risk for others were these resources no longer available. At the same time, any indication of trying to do better usually resulted in relatives opening their doors again. For example, after attending a treatment centre due to abuse of crystal meth, Bre went back to her brother's house; she described herself as happy about it indicating: "they can see that I'm smarter now, my family actually likes me now." This process of eventually closing doors due to the perception of danger for others typically occurred later in the addiction process than for the families of non-Aboriginal youth we interviewed. The tolerance of Aboriginal families was higher and doors tended to re-open earlier possibly due to values regarding the importance of the extended family and the significance of helping each other.

Melanie indicated that most of the time she was homeless on the reserve rather than in the city as most of the other young women in our study were. Saying she wasn't too worried about being homeless there because there was always another aunty or cousin that she could go to. Melanie described many people on her reserve as being in the same situation and, also, that even though they may have had their own house it was often in bad shape resulting in insecure and often unsafe housing. For Melanie while she wasn't worried about finding a place to stay she wondered if she'd every find a stable home. Later when she began living in a transitional housing project in Edmonton, Melanie, like others, remained worried about other relative's homelessness, in this case her grandmother:

> *'Cause after my grandpa died, my grandma's been pretty much homeless . . . Like, she's never really had a steady home since . . . she stays with friends and family . . . Well, she did go into this place about five years ago, but then she got evicted. My brother and cousins moved in and they partied and stuff and she got evicted. I always wanted to help my grandma get her own place.*

In another pattern that was distinct for the Aboriginal participants, multiple deaths in the family and community and the resultant grieving often contributed to homelessness. Our research participants described instances where either they or the people they were staying with returned to their reserve or community for funerals and then stayed longer than they had initially expected to; this process usually meant loss of or change in accommodation in the city. Bre mentioned the death of a three month old nephew, her grandmother and an aunty over a two month period during which she lost her place at her brothers; a few months later two of her cousins died in an alcohol-related quad accident. This constant cycle of deaths, each one triggering memories of earlier deaths and the often unresolved emotions involved, frequently resulted in increasing emotional stress and family tensions which could end up in fights, substance use and some people having to leave.

Most of the young women knew from childhood experiences, and those with children had this perception reinforced, that their homes were not totally private — that their homes could easily be invaded by authorities, typically, child welfare workers and police officers. Historically, Indian agents, missionaries and police officers entered Aboriginal homes pretty much at will. Some of these young women

find this still the case with child welfare, police and housing authorities; they expressed both resentment of and fear regarding this possibility. As Melanie recalled:

When she (daughter) was about six months, well, we were fighting, and he (boyfriend) broke the door down or whatever, and the cops came, and said that if I didn't leave him they'd take my baby away. And from there I wasn't in the right state of mind and I ended up in the [psychiatric] hospital.

After the couple reunited six months later, Melanie remained quite fearful that apartment neighbors would call child welfare authorities as their daughter, now a toddler, was hard to put to sleep and made noise late in the evening. Another participant, Jackie, homeless with three children, reported being constantly on the watch for child welfare authorities. After the birth of her first child and a visit by social workers Tanny assumed they were there not to help but to take the baby and immediately left the city and her housing. Mothers mentioned being fearful regarding the surveillance and home invasion involved in meeting standards for food, cleanliness, relationship stability and abstinence requirements set by social service workers. Participants who were in care as children believe that being in care is especially hard for Aboriginal children; they described their social workers as uncaring and as expressing attitudes that communicate little hope for or interest in Aboriginal children.

Stress in new "Homes"

Those young women who went through periods of homelessness and eventually acquired a place to stay, a "home", indicated that having a home was often stressful, sometimes more so than not having a home. Reasons given included the high costs of rent, the often poor condition of apartments available though either public housing programs or affordable private rental, budgeting and planning given very low incomes, frustration regarding the sharing of responsibilities with partners and/or roommates including housework and childcare, the use of substances by others in the home and the influence of friends and relatives who wanted to stay with them. Melanie indicated that although she and her partner were happy to finally get their own place and are now attending school, they are struggling to make ends meet. For example, she described herself as having to come home from school, then clean up, make dinner, clean that up, and by then she's too tired to do her school work. She said she ended up feeling that she wasn't getting enough support from her boyfriend and found herself feeling angry; as an illustration she mentioned her boyfriend coming home late and then wanting supper, while the next day he was out all day drinking with his cousins who were staying with them, while she did the laundry and childcare.

Being open to relatives who need a place to stay is normative and is something that helped these young women while they were homeless, however, for those with children and now in social housing, this dynamic often caused additional stress. Having relatives stay with them while they are trying to get their feet on the ground can result in tensions in trying to maintain the expectations of social service and housing institutions. Different sleeping schedules for those working and going to school or getting children up for school caused conflict; as well, despite relatives talking about paying for rent or groceries it doesn't always happen. Melanie and other Aboriginal young women involved in this project who were trying to leave homelessness, were using their own limited resources to support family even when they are not living with them, an expected aspect of family relationships but not of social assistance programs. This situation is experienced as impossible, culturally, to explain to child welfare or social assistance workers resulting in additional stress and leading to a repetition of the cycle that they lived themselves, asking people to leave when substance involvement becomes too severe. Melanie pointed out, however, that her perspective changed over time, that even though she was helped this way by relatives herself, she now wants her own space; she no longer feels comfortable at home, or in doing her homework, or raising her daughter without fear with so many people staying at her place.

Aspects of motivation

At the same time, for almost all participants at least some family members were credited with supporting them, with getting them to think about transition, not only in terms of a place to stay but also with support for healing and productive activities. They spoke of family as their motivation for recovery, particularly in terms of respecting ones relationships, roles and responsibilities. For example, two young women spoke about their nephews and their responsibility as aunties as what motivated them to straighten up. While many of their own parents were still struggling, they spoke of the hurt their behavior was causing their grandparents and, importantly, of the needs of their own children. Several young women mentioned wanting to help parents with their own substance abuse or disabling health conditions by moving in with them, however, in this study doing so typically led to disappointment and a return to the street.

Most participants in the larger study, both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal, mentioned the role of spirituality in leading them through survival and on towards leaving homelessness. As examples, the Aboriginal participants mentioned partaking in sweat lodge ceremonies while at treatment centre's, remembering and being helped by the "guardians" they had experienced as a child, creating their own ceremonies of

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healing, smudging and praying and attending services at a local church which relied on both Roman Catholic and Aboriginal ceremonial practices. Belief and praying were cited as getting one though when they were estranged from their families, “at least you’ll know someone cares.” Dreams and dream visits by relatives who were deceased were also mentioned as meaningful. Explaining her belief that the spirit moves on after death, it returns to the Creator until it is needed again, Tanny, with one of the most disruptive and traumatic backgrounds, went on to say that “our family that pass on can come back when we need them in our dreams … they come to visit” and that this comforts her.

Finally, programs offered by Aboriginal service agencies and based in Aboriginal culture were preferred. Culturally-based treatment programs were described as key, not only to recovery from addictions, but also to beginning to understand how history continued to influence current situations including their own experiences; these treatment programs and culturally-based programs in the community, now that they were ready for them, blended the role of culture, development and spirituality in opportunities for wellbeing (Ruttan et al, 2008). Aboriginal parenting programs run by Aboriginal service organizations were cited by Jackie and other mothers transitioning from homelessness as programs they not only looked forward to attending but also believed would “actually help” them.

Discussion

Safe and secure homes and home places contribute to health and identity for all people. In Canada, Aboriginal people have a history of lost homes, of dispossession, and of removal from lands integral to cultural safety, with grave consequences for health and identity as a result. This reality cannot be divorced from any discussion of Aboriginal homelessness whether for youth or adults, men or women, urban or reserve settings. Factors involved include the loss of traditional lands, the long term effects of colonization and the Indian Act, the impact of residential schools and child welfare institutions, poverty and the provision of inadequate housing, and the effects of racism in multiple contexts. Repeated uprooting and displacement play a large part as routes to Aboriginal women’s homelessness in western Canada. As the young women in this study experienced, the impact of removal of children from homes, begun with residential schools, continued with the 60’s scoop and the placement of children in foster and adoptive homes across North America continues. This dynamic is evident in the ongoing overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and youth in child welfare custody. For the young women we interviewed, finding a safe place, given loss of home in family pasts, led to forms of homelessness both as children and as youth.

Poor quality accommodation, poverty and racism all impact stability in housing including, in this case, both as children and later in finding housing in order to transition out of homelessness. In this context, Bennett and Blackstock hold that “poverty is the new colonization” (p. 5); the homelessness of the participants in this study is an aspect of this process. We found, as did Baskin (2007), that structural factors affect Aboriginal homeless youth in ways that vary from other homeless youth. Some degree of homelessness and/or poor quality accommodation is not unusual in the background of the participants in this study; the impact of structural factors is ongoing in their lives as young women; child welfare agencies are perceived as a particular threat both as children and later as parents.

Raphael (2009) notes that, “poverty leads to material and social deprivation and an inability to participate in various societal activities” (p. 8); a dynamic which affects these young women. Stigma and social exclusion, for most of the young women in our study meant that continuing to interact in networks of family and community while on the street, including gangs for some, was the safest approach. For others, more assimilated within the larger society, joining street families of mostly white youths was a preferred route. At the same time, these same youth who, as part of recovery, began to reclaim Aboriginal identity often pointed out the underlying racism in the attitudes of some of their street peers and in their own earlier beliefs. For example, Brittany, who has a non-Aboriginal parent and whose Aboriginal family members live in eastern Canada, described herself as earlier ‘feeling really native, but in a bad way.” She indicated that she felt “oppressed” her whole life; later, coming out of street life, she referenced what she has learned regarding the importance of native culture to her identity and connection with self, family and other Aboriginal youth as a source of pride and good feelings. Baskin calls for healing approaches’ which deal with the history of colonization and its impacts along with a focus on strengths (Baskin, 2007). The implications of this study supports that view and suggests programs which take into account the particular experiences of Aboriginal young women, including their strengths, in becoming homeless, while homeless and while in transition are most likely to be effective.

Honouring and respecting relationship and connection is a key aspect of life, important to all youth, it is perhaps even more essential to Aboriginal youth as it is a key value, way of seeing the world and an important aspect of resilient identities for Aboriginal individuals, families, and communities (Ruttan et al, 2008). The social and economic factors we have addressed

are key and must be acknowledged. However, as Anderson & Ledogar (2008) report the key for Aboriginal youth, even when all types of negative social factors are at work, is support: parental, peer and community-wide. Having someone significant in your life show they care, who one can talk to and got to in crisis is essential; they suggest that communities can address this need even when parents or peers are not available or helpful. For some this meant support from formerly homeless youth now working in street support agencies. Many of the youth is this study found necessary support from some family members throughout, from a wider circle once they took initial efforts toward health, in a growing interest in spirituality and culture and in activities that engaged their creative talents.

Conclusion

Finding home is haunted by historical factors which mirror the dispossession and relocation that took place in Aboriginal homelands. In that context Aboriginal families have maintained and developed important strengths; they have also been and continue to be affected by many losses including home loss. We found that when we analyzed the Aboriginal participants in our study separately, while they shared many experiences with non-Aboriginal youth, they nevertheless, experienced a number of factors distinctively. Homelessness itself was defined differently as were circuits of moving in and out of family places in both urban and rural or reserve settings. The participants in this study indicated that their homes as children were, at times, unsafe often due to environmental factors including poor quality housing and also due to neglect, sexual abuse, and drinking parties. As a result, they experienced multiple moves including very difficult periods in foster care or group homes. Given that background along with family disruption, grieving and the need to find what seemed like a safer space than where they were was one aspect of moving to the streets for our participants.

We also found that finding home in efforts to transition out of homelessness is difficult; it means beginning to address these issues. Additionally, maintaining that home in the manner expected by agencies that authorize ones continuation in that place is a challenge. Owning a home is not something that most of these young women experienced in their own families and was not a goal for them but, maintaining safe and stable homes in order to raise their children in a good way was. The participants of this study indicated they did not want to continue to be home-lost even if it sometimes meant asking relatives when they threatened the way they were now trying to live to leave; safe places in which to raise their children without interference from what they experienced as non-supportive mainstream agencies was essential to them. Finding ways to do so was supported by engagement in programming with an Aboriginal focus in ways that mainstream programming could not. At the end of the study, most of the participants were beginning to place themselves in a new understanding of family and community that, despite traumatic backgrounds, allowed for a place to connect with healthier practices and with a deeper understanding of self, spirit and culture.

In a video produced by the second author of this article, Blackfoot Elder Leo Pard says that learning the answer to the question," Where you come from?" is an essential place to start in dealing with questions of identity and home for Aboriginal youth (Bearpaw Media, 2006). Where you come from connects peoples, relationships and the knowledge of being in place, at home. Homelessness for these young women is an aspect of continuing home loss. However, an aspect of coming out of homelessness and transitioning to successful life roles is found in locating and understanding home spaces, not only personally, but as families and peoples with particular historical and cultural backgrounds (Ruttan et al, 2008). Where you come from is not identical with having a place to stay, but it is an important aspect of understanding that allows for beginning to understand home loss and, for our participants, to move towards homefulness. As these young women have experienced, this issue has become complicated for many Aboriginal youth affecting the balance necessary for secure homes and healthy identities. Youth in our study look for answers in order to move out of homelessness and find homes and enhanced futures for themselves and their families. While there are limitations to this study in terms of sample size, the policy implications of these findings are significant and need to be addressed in future research.

Afterword

Bre, once again at her brother's home at the end of the study, reported that her goal is to work and save money in order to get her own place with her boyfriend. Melanie describes herself as no longer passive and fearful; she indicates that her boyfriend now realizes that they need to think about the future, not just for themselves, but for their daughter; now when they are stressed they often smudge together. While Jackie still struggles with many challenges, she is attending parenting classes at an Aboriginal organization which she finds meaningful. Brittany is active in the positive youth movement in the community through engagement in dance performances. Making a special pair of moccasins that depict her experience of 7 years of homelessness, Phoenix beads her way through the experience as an aspect of healing. Several of the participants are now attending advanced educational programs and, at the same time, continuing the spiritual practices they have reconnected

with during their transition out of homelessness. While still facing many obstacles, many of them systemic, these young women connected identity, re-storied relationships, community support and safety in place, fostering their journey towards homefulness.

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Diagnosis as a Naming Ceremony: Caution Warranted in Use of the DSM-IV with Canadian Aboriginal Peoples

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Abstract

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition (DSM-IV; APA, 1994) is the primary tool for diagnosis of mental disorders used in the field of mental health. Despite the widespread use of the DSM-IV there are limits to its applications, particularly with Canadian Aboriginal people. This paper draws parallels between the process of diagnosis and an Aboriginal naming ceremony used by the Coast-Salish people in British Columbia. Caution is suggested when applying Western based diagnoses to Aboriginal people due to the lack of cultural relevance and recommendations are made for appropriate use.

> *"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."*
>
> *Shakespeare; Romeo and Juliet (II, ii, 1-2)*

Although the truth of Shakespeare's words apply in many respects, this paper contests that in the field of mental health a name, or diagnosis, can have a profound effect on an individual, particularly those of Canadian Aboriginal backgrounds in whose cultures naming is an important ceremony. In mental health services the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th Edition) Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR) that is published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA; 2000) is where the criteria, names and classifications for diagnoses are found. This paper refers to the DSM-IV(APA; 1994), rather than the DSM-IV-TR, because the majority of available literature addresses the DSM-IV. This paper explores the use of the DSM-IV with Aboriginal populations and parallels the process of diagnosis with that of naming ceremonies. The paper concludes with implications for mental health services.

Mental health has been defined as the absence of disease (Stewart, 2007) rather than focussing on the wellbeing of the individual. However, the definition has evolved and a recent rendition from Health Canada (2000; as cited in Stewart, 2007, p. 54) states that "mental health is the capacity of the individual, the group and the environment to interact with one another in ways that promote subjective well-being, the optimal development and use of mental abilities (cognitive, affective and relational), the achievement of individual and collective goals consistent with justice and the attainment and preservation of conditions of fundamental equality." The most recent definition goes well beyond the absence of disease and talks about mental health as it might be seen from a holistic perspective. Yet, the definition does not refer to connections with physical health or spirituality; which, from an Indigenous perspective neglects to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the individual as the cohesive whole described in the Medicine Wheel teachings.

The Medicine Wheel teachings depict the person as composed of four facets: the spirit, the emotions, the intellect and the physical (Bopp & Bopp, 2001). Though these components are distinct from one another they are inextricably interconnected; one component cannot be affected without affecting the others. For example, consider a person who is depressed; researchers have noted that depressed patients exhibit a change in their thought patterns (Beck, 1991) which reflects the impact on intellect. The impact on the physical body is seen in changes in sleep patterns, feelings of fatigue and pain (Greden, 2003; Leahy & Holland, 2000). Emotions are perhaps the most prominently affected by depression as

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the person often feels overwhelmed by feelings of sadness, inadequacy and hopelessness (Leahy & Holland, 2000). Duran (2006) suggests that the spirit is also affected as the person is visited by the spirit of sadness. As such, one can see that when one part of the person is afflicted by an illness or injury there is an impact on every aspect of the person. Consequently, it seems reasonable that healing should address all aspects of the individual rather than focussing on only one component.

The term Indigenous paradigm refers to the shared cultural attitudes and beliefs of Indigenous people while the term Western paradigm refers to dominant attitudes and beliefs that are informed by and based on Western European philosophies and practices (Stewart, 2007). According to Vicary and Bishop (2005), Aboriginal conceptions of health are holistic and include both a cultural and spiritual aspect that is often ignored in the Western paradigm. One of the most conspicuous differences between Western and Indigenous approaches to health, and to the world in general, is the Western model's penchant for compartmentalization while Indigenous models focus on cohesiveness and interconnectedness (Steinhauer, 2002). The entire Western health care system is set up in this way; there is a psychiatrist to help with difficulties of the mind, a cardiologist to help with heart problems, a gastroenterologist to help with problems of the digestive system, and the list goes on. This is not to say there is no role for specialized knowledge or specialists yet when they focus on one aspect of the person to the exclusion of the rest of the person it is hard to reconcile the process with an Indigenous paradigm.

There are significant and numerous differences between Western and Indigenous paradigms and these differences are thought to contribute to the underuse of services by Aboriginal people in Canada, despite the high levels of mental health problems documented (Kirmayer, Brass & Tait, 2000; Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo, 2003; Stewart, 2008). The problems include, but are not limited to: alcoholism, suicide, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, post traumatic stress disorder, and conduct disorder. Furthermore, as Kirmayer et al. (2000) point out, the prevalence of these problems is underrated because of the fact that Aboriginal people are not using the mental health services that are currently provided. Although the incongruence of Western and Indigenous worldviews contributes to the underuse of services, several authors (Duran, 2006; Kirmayer et al., 2003; Stewart, 2008) also suggest that the legacy of colonization and historical trauma are correlated with decreased service use because current services are not culturally relevant. Stewart discusses how the majority of mental health services available to Aboriginal people are based on Western conceptualizations of health and healing that may not value the worldview of Aboriginal clients. Stewart goes on to suggest that for healing to occur a cultural approach to mental health and healing needs to be developed. Finally, Stewart concludes that for Aboriginal clients, healing from colonialism continues to be a significant mental health concern.

Colonialism, as outlined in the article by Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003), is an ongoing process whereby dominant cultural groups subordinate or regulate Aboriginal populations. As a result of colonization, Aboriginal people in Canada have suffered innumerable injustices; one of the most prominent and destructive examples of colonization is the residential school system (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). The residential school system has not only influenced those who attended the schools but their families, friends, communities, and the following generations. A term that has been used to describe the continued deleterious influence of residential school is historical trauma. Historical trauma is "the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations and encompasses the psychological and social responses to such events" (Evans-Campbell, 2008, p. 320). Research suggests that clinicians in the field of mental health need to acknowledge and understand the impact of historical trauma, especially residential school, on all Aboriginal people in order to work with them in a culturally sensitive way (Duran, 2006; Duran, Firehammer, & Gonzales, 2008; Kirmayer et al., 2003; Stewart, 2008). Neglecting to acknowledge the impact of historical trauma has been described as psychological oppression (Duran, 2006) and continued colonization in the field of mental health (McIntyre, 1996; Stewart, 2008).

Stating that there is psychological oppression or colonization within the mental health field may seem an extreme statement but when taking a closer look it seems less radical. A mental health practitioner, although well-intentioned, using therapeutic interventions that are Western-based and not responsive to Indigenous values or worldviews is, in effect, promoting mainstream values and encouraging conformity to these values (Duran, 2008; McIntyre, 1996; Stewart, 2008). As a result, the continued colonization is more often due to a lack of cultural sensitivity, knowledge and understanding, than as a result of malicious intent. However, many interventions and clinical tools, such as the DSM-IV-TR, neglect to thoroughly address the cultural component and, as such, this problem is ingrained into the current systems and process.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders was first published by the American Psychiatric Association in 1952 (Grob, 1991) and the most recent

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revision the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Fourth Edition) Text Revision became available in 2000. The text revision did not change any of the diagnostic criteria or categories of the DSM-IV; however, supplemental information was added to many of the current categories (APA, 2000; Dziegielewski, 2002). Nonetheless, the majority of the available literature refers to the DSM-IV rather than the DSM-IV-TR. The APA (2009) describes the DSM-IV as "the standard classification of mental disorders used by mental health professionals... for use across clinical settings (inpatient, outpatient, partial hospital, consultation-liaison, clinic, private practice, and primary care), with community populations." The DSM-IV is what one might call a gold-standard in the field of mental health when it comes to the diagnosis of mental disorders. According to Dziegielewski (2002) psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, social workers, and other mental health professionals all utilize the DSM-IV in clinical practice.

The DSM-IV consists of a list of disorders each of which has a set of symptom criteria and descriptive text (APA, 2009). The DSM-IV typically requires five or more symptoms to persist for two or more weeks in order for a diagnosis to occur (Leahy & Holland, 2000). The DSM-IV (1994) has five clinical axis which are: Axis I, clinical disorders, including major mental disorders, as well as developmental and learning disorders; Axis II, underlying pervasive or personality conditions, as well as mental retardation ; Axis III, Acute medical conditions and physical disorders; Axis IV, psychosocial and environmental factors contributing to the disorder; Axis V, Global Assessment of Functioning. The DSM-IV-TR contains codes for all of these disorders which are used in the medical insurance billing process in the United States and are also widely used as diagnoses for medical insurance purposes in Canada (Kirmayer, 1998).

The DSM-IV attempts to include culture in four places within the manual (Kirmayer, 1998). The first is within the introduction where the manual makes reference to the importance of culture. The second place is in the text description that accompanies the disorders. The third place is in the "Outline for Cultural Formulation" in Appendix I and the final component is the list of culture-bound syndromes, also included in the appendix. Good (1996) describes the list of culture-bound syndromes as a "glossary of cultural terms" (p. 128).

The "Outline for Cultural Formulation" includes five processes, or steps, in which the clinician is to engage (Manson, 2000). The first step is for the clinician to inquire about the client's cultural identity, asking questions about language preference and use, religious identity and cultural reference group. In working with Aboriginal people this is very important given the heterogeneity of the communities that are given the title of Aboriginal (Kirmayer et al., 2000). In Canada, Aboriginal people are the only group whose identity is legally defined (Gibbins, 1997 as cited in Offet-Gartner, 2008); the definition is provided in the Indian Act of 1876. In Canada there are three main group of Aboriginal people which are First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003).

Next, the clinician's role is to discuss and explore cultural explanations of the illness. According to Kirmayer's (2004) report in the British Medical Journal, 20-40% of adults use various forms of complementary and alternative medicine. As such, it is important to talk to clients about their pre-existing notions of what is afflicting them and what they may have learned from traditional healers within their community. The third step is to consider the relevance of cultural factors within the psychosocial environment of the client. In working with Aboriginal people this is a place where the clinician may consider the impacts of historical trauma because it significantly impacts the psychosocial environment in a detrimental manner (Evans-Campbell, 2008). This is also an opportunity for the clinician to explore cultural and community support systems, in addition to assessing the level of functioning as well as the disability. An examination of the relationship dynamics between the clinician and client is the fourth step in the Outline for Cultural Formulation. This entails examining the differences in status, both culturally and socially; it involves the clinician taking a careful look at the power imbalances present in the system and considering the impacts it may have on interactions with the client. Finally, the clinician is asked to synthesize all the previously gathered information to render a cultural assessment to go alongside the diagnosis and discuss the implications for treatment and care. For a clinical demonstration of the use of the "Outline for Cultural Formulation" see Novins and colleagues (1997).

Strengths and Limitations of the DSM-IV-TR

The clinical utility of the DSM-IV-TR is displayed by the prevalence of its use in both Canada and the US (Dziegielewski, 2002). Mental health practitioners are able to use it in a formulaic manner to arrive at a diagnosis for clients; if a client displays symptoms A through C for the duration of X weeks then she/he has disorder 1. The DSM-IV-TR is designed to remove the subjectivity from the diagnostic process in order to provide consistent diagnoses (Dziegielewski, 2002).

The inclusion of codes for disorders in the DSM-IV simplifies and helps to standardize the reporting procedures and process, especially in the US where health care is privatized (Dziegielewski, 2002). This allows health care practitioners to

reduce the time spent filing paper work and the streamlining of the diagnostic process is a significant benefit of the DSM-IV. Rather than a health care practitioner spending time developing an individual diagnosis for each client, they are able to asses a client's history and current symptoms to determine whether a client meets the criteria for a diagnosis of a particular disorder. Once a diagnosis is made, the clinician is able to determine the appropriate treatment. For example, once a clinician determines that a client meets the criteria for depression, he or she may investigate the options for taking antidepressant medication and/or undergoing cognitive-behavioural therapy (Leahy & Holland, 2000). In this way the DSM-IV saves time and promotes the development of effective treatments for the symptom clusters that are known as disorders. Furthermore, the DSM-IV enables uniform and standardized diagnosis (Dziegielewski, 2002).

The DSM-IV is beneficial because it provides a systematic description of disorders and does capture the features of disorders that are common across cultures (Csordas, Storck, & Strauss, 2008). As Csordas et al. (2008) point out, the DSM-IV is the best categorization method available at this point and as such should be used. Nonetheless, with the ability of the DSM-IV to capture common themes across cultures practitioners must also be cognizant of the coinciding limitation: the categories and classifications used are a product of Western cultures and their generalizability must be critically examined before being applied to people of diverse cultural backgrounds, such as individuals from Aboriginal cultures.

The DSM-IV is based in a Western-scientific positivist model (Kirmayer, 1998). Although this may be a strength when working with people in Western cultures, it is a limitation when working with people of Aboriginal ancestry because the values the DSM-IV is based on are incongruent with Aboriginal values and worldviews. For example, the categories in the DSM-IV are based on scientific and empirical knowledge where there is only one truth, whereas in Aboriginal cultures there are multiple truths depending upon who you consult with (Steinhauer, 2002). Moreover, knowledge can be derived from multiple sources which include traditional teachings, empirical observations, and revelations (Castellano, 1999). Kirmayer (1998) suggests any changes made to the DSM-IV must be supported by large-scale epidemiology and clinical validation studies, which limit the research that can be included simply because the costs of the research are astronomical. As such, the DSM-IV only recognizes the Western ways of knowing and ignores Indigenous Ways of knowing, particularly those pertaining to the spiritual aspect of people.

Manson (2000) discusses the idea that the DSM-IV needs to incorporate a more holistic conception of the individual. The DSM-IV considers the mental, emotional and physical aspects of the person yet ignores the spiritual aspect of the person. Spirituality is a central component to Aboriginal worldviews and values (Steinhauer, 2002) and to disregard it is to disregard an integral component of the individual. A study by Csordas and colleagues (2008) attempts to bridge the gap between the clinical diagnoses provided by the DSM-IV and the understanding of illness provided by traditional healers in an Aboriginal community. The authors suggest that attention needs to be paid to connections between spirituality and mental health because the DSM-IV does not address them. However, this lack of acknowledgement for spirituality may be a reflection of how healing practices and spirituality are currently conceptualized in Western cultures and in the Western medical system which produces the DSM-IV.

The DSM-IV is also limited as it only includes large scale research and excludes research findings potentially relevant to a smaller proportion of the population (Kirmayer, 1998). The DSM-IV contains a category for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), yet does not contain a category for historical or intergenerational trauma; authors describing historical trauma argue that historical trauma is distinct from posttraumatic stress disorder and has a different impact on people (Evans-Campbell, 2008; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt & Chen, 2004). According to Evans-Campbell, PTSD does not address "the additive effects of multiple traumatic events occurring over generations" (p. 317) nor does it explore how trauma can be transmitted within a community or down through the generations. Evans-Cambell, among others, would suggest that disregarding the impact of historical trauma on mental health is doing a great disservice not only to Aboriginal peoples but to other cultural groups which suffer from intergenerational trauma, such as holocaust survivors and newcomers from war zones.

As opposed to earlier versions of the manual, the DSM-IV made a concerted effort to include culture (Good, 1996). However, the DSM-IV's "Outline for Cultural Formulation" is included as an Appendix at the back of the manual, rather than at the front following the introduction where Kirmayer (1998) suggests that it would indicate the importance of placing diagnosis in a cultural context. In this way, culture is treated as an add-on to mainstream practices rather than being valued as a significant influence on the mental health of the individual. This de-valuing the influence of culture is a continued form of oppression and colonization (Duran, 2006). Strengths and limitations notwithstanding, the DSM-IV-TR is a widely used clinical diagnosis tool that has the potential to be immensely helpful if used in a culturally appropriate manner.

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Diagnosis as Naming

There are a number of parallels between the process of being given a diagnosis and a naming ceremony in Indigenous cultures. These parallels should give mental health care practitioners pause when they use diagnostic tools and labels, such as those evidenced in the DSM-IV, with Indigenous peoples. Given that naming ceremonies are traditional practices there is not an abundance of literature on the subject. However, based on the description provided by Thom (2003) in his presentation on Coast-Salish First Nations communities, analogies can be made between the processes and procedures, how the name/diagnosis is meant to describe the person, and how the name is given to the person by someone of significance.

A naming ceremony, among the Coast-Salish First Nations communities, occurs as formal ceremony in which certain prerequisite performances, such as sxwayxwey mask dance, are completed before the name is given (Thom, 2003). These prerequisite performances can be likened to the interview and assessment process that occurs before a diagnosis is given. In a naming ceremony an Elder or family spokesperson then announces the name and calls on the older generations present to bear witness (Thom, 2003). This is analogous to the process whereby a clinician formulates a diagnosis and then consults with other clinicians (and possibly reference manuals such as the DSM-IV-TR) to confirm and validate the diagnosis. It is interesting to note that the names given accord the bearer certain privileges, much the same way a diagnosis can secure a client certain social services and accommodations (Dziegielewski, 2002). As Dziegielewski explains, certain diagnoses qualify clients for more agency services and without a diagnosis a client may not qualify for services at all. Dziegielewski also notes that some clinicians are inclined to give a more severe diagnosis to allow the client to qualify for increased services while other clinicians are inclined to provide the least severe diagnosis to avoid stigmatizing and labelling clients.

The stigma that results from labelling is a significant concern in the field of mental health; the level of concern is reflected in the fact that there are entire theories, such as Labelling theory (Markowitz, 1998), to address the impact of labelling. Labelling theory, according to Markowitz, contends that individuals who are labelled with a diagnosis expect to be discriminated against and devalued as a result of stereotypic beliefs about people who are mentally ill. As a result, these beliefs act as a self-fulfilling prophecy and can impact psychological well being and life satisfaction. Van Den Tillaart, Kurtz and Cash (2009) suggest that diagnosis not only stigmatizes people, but also serves to marginalize them. Furthermore, this is especially troubling for those clients who are considered to be part of a marginalized population before they receive a diagnostic label.

One of the strongest parallels between a naming ceremony and a diagnosis is the fact that the name is given to an individual by someone who occupies a position of respect and power. In the Coast-Salish tradition an Elder or family member gives the name (Thom, 2003). In the mental health field a diagnosis is given by a registered mental health professional such as a psychologist or psychiatrist. Both parties are assumed to have the knowledge and wisdom to gives names appropriately and with careful consideration of the characteristics of the person who is to receive the name.

Duran (2006) also provides insight into the parallels between diagnosis and naming ceremonies. Duran discusses how naming ceremonies are meant to provide people with spiritual names that are reflective of their individual identities. These naming ceremonies can have a transformative effect on people. Diagnosis can act in much the same way, when a person goes to a mental health professional seeking help and advice, they are often looking for a name for whatever is afflicting them. Mental health practitioners provide a name in the form of a diagnosis and this diagnosis often acts to shape the individual's identity. A client will often say "I am depressed" as opposed to "I suffer from depression." In this way, the client is identifying himself or herself as the diagnosis, rather than suffering from a disorder. Thus, both the naming ceremony and a diagnosis elicit a sense of identification with the name given to the individual.

Naming ceremonies and diagnosis do not overlap completely and it is these differences which may be of greatest concern. First of all, the names given in an Indigenous naming ceremony are honoured names (Thom, 2003) and are meant to enhance the person's sense of identity. Diagnoses, though they are meant to help the person and other understand what is going on, are often shameful names and can be deleterious to the person's sense of identity (Duran, 2006). Manson (2000) discusses how Aboriginal people who seek treatment fear being called a mental patient based on the diagnosis; this is reflective of the negative stigma attached to diagnostic labels as opposed to the positive associations with names given in a naming ceremony. A further difference is that names given in an Aboriginal naming ceremony are meant to reflect the holistic being (Duran, 2006) whereas a diagnosis is meant only to describe the part of the person afflicted by the disorder. This is problematic because an Aboriginal person who understands the diagnosis as a name being given to them will likely focus on the pathology of the name and may perceive it as describing their whole being rather than a specific part. This can make it more difficult for the person to cope because they believe they are the problem.

In the Coast Salish people's tradition only one living person is given an honoured name (Thom, 2003) whereas a single diagnosis is used to describe numerous people. Diagnoses are not reflective of the unique characteristics of an individual whereas names given in a naming ceremony are designed to be unique. Furthermore, the names given in a naming ceremony are culturally relevant and based on the history and ancestry of the people (Thom, 2003). The diagnoses listed in the DSM-IV-TR are based on the history of the mainstream population, which is predominantly of white-European ancestry (Grob, 1991). As a result, the diagnoses given are not culturally based or appropriate for use with Aboriginal peoples.

The parallels and incongruence between diagnosis and a naming ceremony outlined above suggest that mental health practitioners must be careful when using diagnoses with Aboriginal people because of the underlying implications. A diagnosis given to someone from the dominant culture does not have connections to a traditional practice that is equivalent to a naming ceremony in Aboriginal cultures; consequently, when giving a diagnosis to an Aboriginal person it may carry more weight and meaning to the individual because the process resembles a naming ceremony (Duran, 2006). Conversely, the differences between a naming ceremony and being labelled with a diagnosis suggest that the practice of diagnosis is culturally inappropriate and potentially harmful (Duran, 2006). The limited literature on this topic suggests that many practitioners may not be aware of these parallels between providing a clinical diagnosis and an Aboriginal naming ceremony and as such it increases the potential for harm when working with Aboriginal clients, in the same way that any practice which is culturally inappropriate can be harmful (Duran, 2006; Stewart, 2008).

Future Recommendations

As Duran (2006) suggests, diagnosis is not completely without merit, it can serve a purpose in the healing process. Nevertheless, for diagnosis to be useful when working with Aboriginal people the diagnosis given must reflect Aboriginal worldviews, values and beliefs. The idea of having diagnosis match the values of Aboriginal people is daunting because of the vast heterogeneity of the people and cultures described by the term Aboriginal (Kirmayer et al., 2000; Stewart, 2008). Developing diagnosis to fit the unique aspects of all the different Aboriginal cultures may be impossible; however, a reasonable starting point would be to create diagnoses or a diagnostic system that respects values that are shared among Aboriginal cultures. Examples of such values are: the interrelatedness of all things; multiple realities and the lack of a single definitive truth; holistic conceptualization of people and health (Bopp & Bopp, 2001; Steinhauer, 2002). One of the primary experiences Aboriginal people share that needs to be recognized and included in the DSM-IV-TR is the concept of historical trauma. Both Duran (2006) and Evans-Campbell (2008) note this absence from the DSM-IV-TR and Duran suggests that by ignoring the impact of historical trauma that mental health professionals are unwittingly continuing to colonize clients.

The current process of review and revision of the DSM-IV emphasizes clinical evaluation studies which may not capture the intricacies of cultural influences (Csordas et al., 2008). At present the process of revision for the DSM-V is being conducted by 13 working groups of mental health professionals (APA, n.d.); yet, the working groups are relying on conference presentations and publications to formulate the new manual and there is very little opportunity for community consultation. The only opportunity for community consultation is a website where "the wider research, clinical, and consumer communities... could submit questions, comments, and research findings to be distributed to the relevant work groups" (APA, n.d.). Perhaps, the publishers of the DSM-IV-TR should reconsider the type of evidence they require for a particular disorder to be included in the manual if they want to better serve the diverse cultural populations which the manual attempts to address.

This article is not meant to argue that mental health professionals are maliciously attempting to colonize their clients; it is, however, arguing that mental health professionals must become aware of their impact on clients when they use tools and techniques that do not coincide with Aboriginal values and worldviews (Duran, 2006). Increased awareness may lead to the formulation of techniques and approaches that are congruent with Aboriginal values and worldviews. Both McCormick (1996) and Stewart (2008) discuss the implications for incorporating Aboriginal values and worldviews into counselling practice, which has the possibility to extend to other areas in the field of mental health. One way to increase awareness is through education; when mental health practitioners are educated, particularly at the post-secondary level, they should be taught about the colonial history of Aboriginal peoples and the deleterious impact of historical trauma. Moreover, practitioners should be encouraged to get to know the history of the Aboriginal people in the area in which they practice and familiarize themselves with the customs in order to better understand their clients (Duran, 2006). Progress has been made in this regard, as the Canadian government issued an official apology for the legacy of the residential school system (Offet-Gartner, 2008) and there is a growing body of research on historical trauma. For the practitioners who have completed their post-secondary education, information

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should be available through professional bodies and courses in continuing education. Literature and research will continue to provide an avenue for increasing awareness and providing educational opportunities.

The inclusion of the Outline for Cultural Formation in the DSM-IV is a useful starting point to encourage mental health professionals to think about the impacts of culture in the diagnostic process. Nevertheless, its placement in the Appendix section of the text does not give it the merit it deserves. As Kirmayer (1998) suggests, the Outline for Cultural Formation should be placed at the beginning of the text following the introduction to indicate its importance rather than being an add-on in the form of an appendix. So often suggestions for working with Aboriginal populations is an add-on to interventions based on mainstream values (Duran, 2006). In a field as important and strife with difficulties as mental health, professionals should be striving toward providing interventions that integrate Aboriginal worldviews and values, rather than positioning them as subservient to mainstream values by making any reference to them an add-on to existing systems. When working with Aboriginal clients, Aboriginal worldview and values, such as interconnectedness and respect for Elders, should provide the core to the interventions.

The changes suggested are not likely to happen overnight and the process to instate these changes is likely to be difficult and met with resistance. It is understandable that even mental health professionals who are reticent to using DSM-IV diagnoses may need to use diagnostic labels in order to help clients access resources and services or due to the requirements of the agency at which the mental health practitioner is employed. In the meantime, however, there are choices that mental health practitioners can make to reduce the negative impact that the diagnostic process is having on Aboriginal peoples. Duran (2006) suggests that a therapist can help a client re-name themselves or return to a name that was previously given to them and let go of the diagnosis as a defining part of his or her identity. This idea resonates with a tenant of Narrative therapy which suggests that the person is not the problem, the problem is the problem (Corey, 2005). This allows clients to dissociate their identity from the diagnosis and work with the problem/diagnosis is a new way (Duran, 2006). Duran also suggests using alternative terms for the diagnosis, such as "the spirit of sadness" when referring to depression (p 80). This places the diagnosis in more culturally relevant terms. Clinicians are encouraged to formulate strategies to work with Aboriginal clients that acknowledge and reflect the significance of the parallels between diagnosis and a naming ceremony. Development and application of these strategies is an important area to be addressed in future research.

Summary and Conclusion

There are numerous concerns about the mental health of Aboriginal peoples due to the high rates of mental health issues present among Aboriginal populations when compared to the Canadian population as a whole (Kirmayer et al., 2000; Kirmayer et al., 2003) There are existing barriers to service use which have been attributed to differences in Aboriginal and Western worldviews, while others suggest that historical trauma also impacts service use. Nonetheless, Aboriginal people who are accessing mental health services face a unique set of problems as a result of the diagnostic system in place.

The DSM-IV-TR is a clinical diagnosis tool that is based primarily on research within the dominant culture and the cultural components to the manual are presented in such a way that they seem to be add-ons rather than important concepts when dealing with Aboriginal peoples (Kirmayer, 1998). The lack of cultural relevance of the diagnoses provided in the DSM-IV has been a criticism, however, the newest inclusion of the "Outline for Cultural Formulation" represents movement in a more helpful direction.

Caution is warranted when using diagnostic labels with Aboriginal clients due to both the similarities and the differences between an Aboriginal naming ceremony and the process by which a person is given a diagnosis. Duran (2006) suggests using alternative terms and explanations for disorders that are culturally appropriate rather than relying solely on the DSM-IV diagnosis. At present, the DSM-IV is a tool based on in a Western model of healthcare; the need for culturally appropriate interventions and practices is becoming increasingly apparent. As the healthcare system evolves, so too will its tools; perhaps the upcoming revision, the DSM-V, will continue to incorporate culture into its structure and as Good (1996) points out, the inclusion of culture in a document such as the DSM continues to be a tremendous undertaking yet it has the potential to benefit many different groups of people, including Aboriginal peoples. It is also recommended that diagnostic labels, such as those provided in the DSM-IV-TR, be used primarily in documentations rather than with clients until more culturally relevant names and definitions can be found; nonetheless, when diagnostic labels are used clinicians must take the time to discuss these labels with clients to reduce the potentially negative impact and to address the significance of the label to the individual.

The changes suggested can occur at the level of individual mental health practitioners, by refraining from use of diagnostic labels and learning about Aboriginal history and culture, and also at a systemic level, such as changing the DSM-IV and the education of practitioners. Despite the difficulties that may be encountered when pursuing these changes the end result is the

provision of mental health care that is accessible, relevant and respectful to Aboriginal people.

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Symbols and Strategies: Acts of Métis Resistance - Using the List of Rights as a Framework for the Reclamation of Indigenous Child Welfare in British Columbia and Canada

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Abstract

This article engages the reader in comparing the Métis List of Rights, originally authored by Louis Riel, with the current state of Indigenous child welfare in British Columbia and Canada. The relationship between children's resiliency and cultural resiliency is explored. Using a critical lens, a framework defining the progression of social regulation is presented. This paper begins by setting out the framework with its accompanying nine aspects: profit, competition, self-interest, justice, rights, duties, love, compassion and devotion. The discussion acknowledges children as sacred which allows us to move beyond conservative and socialist ideals. Then there is a discussion on the aspects of the Métis List of Rights with comments respecting the symbolic and literal application of the aspects to reclaiming Indigenous child welfare. Finally the article ends with recommendations for an holistic pathway for reform.

Background

In June 2009, contracted to complete a large literature review on social welfare reform and Indigenous children, I holistically examined contemporary changes, (still underway), involving Indigenous children and families in Canada and more specifically, British Columbia. While researching the category of "Neglect," I became interested in the parallels between the aspects of a child's resiliency and those of cultural, specifically Métis, resistance. Integrating my analytic observations with indigenous child welfare policies in British Columbia and Canada, I posed the question; if resiliency in children resembled cultural resiliency, what could be learned from the history of the Métis Nation, specifically it's successes in resisting colonization?

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As social evolution, or revolution, of the Métis Nation continues, examples of Métis resistance to imposed policies and ideologies flourish. Through an examination of the Nation's definitional platforms, in particular the List of Métis Rights, symbolic and conceptual similarities between the List and social work practice are identified. I asked myself, what aspects of the Métis movement could we adapt to the child and family welfare movement? In order to answer this question, I introduce my analytic framework, briefly describe the discourse of holistic movement in society,[1] provide insights with respect to the List of Métis Rights, and finally, propose a path forward.

Indigenous perceptions of child welfare acknowledge children as sacred and the corresponding responsibility to honour their sacredness. This is not a new perspective, rather, it re-captures traditional values as we move forward. Through this recognition, I hope to avoid the "trait" trap. Instead of trying

1 My preference is the discourse captured in an essay by Subhash Sharma, "A Vedic Integration of Transitions in Management Thought: Towards Transcendental Management" (2005) 1 Gurukul Business Review at 5 (Sharma, 2005).

to define what traits people and nations possess, this process attempts to examine the relationships between the oppressor and the oppressed. Throughout my paper, I have utilized the presumptions inherent in anti-oppressive practice models to define oppressor/colonizer and oppressed/colonized. The danger of this approach may be the readers who are not Indigenous may feel they (by default) are the oppressor. The purpose of the use of this language is that by examining the historical system and parts of the current system reminiscent of it, allows our examination of the problem to transcend these dichotomous relationships on the path forward[2].

To view a child as sacred is to see children as human beings that deserve love and compassion. They are not a number, or a resource in a 'for profit' childcare model and foster care system. Conceptualizing children as sacred recognizes their needs for holistic care, which requires more than "healthy parenting relationships". We must focus on children's wellness in respects to their mind, body, spirit and physical wellness. In addressing these rights holistically, we acknowledge familial bonds, cultural identity, and spirituality, as integrated aspects of wellness. In general, this form of wellness speaks to Indigenous perspectives and in most cases not a contemporary Canadian or Provincial government and institutional standards.

In practice, what would holistic solutions in child welfare and legal reforms look like? In order to answer that question I sketch out a holistic framework and then I examine the tenets of the List of Métis Rights. It is my hope that the resiliency evident in the List of Métis Rights will be closely examined for their significance by the reader. In requesting this 'deep reading' I also challenge the reader to apply their observations to policies of indigenous child welfare reform. I have chosen this author-reader engagement and reflection format to stimulate a discussion of new paths forward while honouring the connection between micro-individual resiliency and macro-community resilience.

About the Author

My name is Daleen Adele Thomas. I am the great great great great great (x5) granddaughter of Nostisho Nestichio[3,4], daughter of Isaac Batt, the first white Hudson's Bay employee killed by an "Indian" in present day Saskatchewan in 1791. In that same year, Nestichio legally married James Spence Sr. at the York Factory, Manitoba after marrying according to Indian custom "at least as early as the 1780's (Brown, 1980)". In 1793, the Hudson's Bay Company placed James Sr. in charge of the Buckingham House at York Factory. I am located seven generations later in direct descent from Nostisho Nestichio.

Samuel Hearne's journal notes that one of the wives of Isaac Batt[5], she was "forced to suckle a Young bear" (Bingley, 1803) after losing a child. For me, this genealogical artefact represents the extent to which Indigenous women's lives were documented and scrutinized by the colonist. My great grandmothers suckling of a bear cub may bring strong disdain and confusion from the "civilized" community. However, we know from indigenous narratives and oral history that the domestication of bears served a specific purpose within a particular society.[6] The ways in which we interpret the story depend on our cultural knowledge and our relationship with both the story and its characters.

A Métis or Indian wife, often labelled the "country wife" (Brown, 1980, p. 76),[7] gave life to new generations of mixed blood children. Within the family, mother acted as cultural broker, taking on such roles as peacekeeper, mediator and interpreter (Van Kirk, 1983). As the person responsible for her children's socialization processes, the Métis mother protected them and her Indian family, finding commonalities between cultures and creating a path for Canada to move forward. From a young age, I have also felt compelled to reconcile the multiple cultures that inform me, and to find harmony within and amongst them.

This paper flows from two presumptions and two objectives. The first presumption is that the area of social welfare is itself r/evolving[8] and dynamic. In this paper, I elaborate nine re-volutionary aspects. Not only is this a dynamic area, but I maintain that current shifts reveal a transcendental or holistic movement in society, and that this shifting is represented in the reclamation and reconciliation of our Indigenous People. One example is the Human Rights claim, *First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations* v. *Attorney General of Canada* (representing the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs) (in courts January 18 – 20, 2010).[9] If successful, this claim could positively impact our people and our treasured children within weeks or months. Another transcendental development in our community is the potential[10] of Jordan's Principle.

2 If the terminology of colonizer or oppressor triggers something in you, further individual examination of why this is happening is essential when moving forward as part of the reclamation process.
3 Nestichio's mother was a "full-blood indian", this makes Nestichio the first "mixed-blood" offspring on the native branch of my family tree.
4 Genealogy notes from Dianna Mortenson, http://www.ojibwe.info/Ojibwe/HTML/notes/n00000ic.htm#I27718 "her name is a Cree name, "Nestichiwub," meaning "three persons in one," i.e. that she has three guardian spirits."

5 There is speculation that there were more than one.
6 If any readers have any stories or comments please contact the author dathomas@uvic.ca.
7 Means, married according to Indian custom. "I was married after the custom of the country myself…When I took a wife as above mentioned, I made a solemn promise to her father to live with her and treat her as my wife as long as we both lived" (*Johnstone et al. v. Connolly* 1869: 285-286).
8 The hyphenation of this word indicates the ability of the reader to substitute evolution or revolution depending on their belief.
9 Be a witness http://www.fnwitness.ca/.
10 "Potential" because we have yet to see the widespread, proactive,

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The second presumption flows from the love, compassion and devotion that inform the spiritual relationship we have with Mother Earth and other living beings. These relationships are not located in a single religion. Rather they arise from a spiritual principle that evokes the recognition that Mother Earth is a living being at the centre of the spiritual/religious realm. This position confronts the official discourse on Nature in the Judeo-Christian paradigm; that the Earth is a non-living, inanimate resource provided by God for the use of man – currently for exploitation and profit. Underlying the centrality of the Earth's spiritual importance, are new tenets that acknowledge Earth's central role, such as principles of sustainability, especially with respect to intergenerational and inter-societal equities (Cordonnier Seger, 2006).

Holistic reforms and pantheisms reject the notion that children can be "owned" by any "one" person or in some cases, families. Instead, they insist upon a respect for all aspects of the child, themselves, their siblings, their parents, their uncles and aunties, their grandmas and grandpas, their clan, their community, and their nation.[11] The operation of pantheism in child welfare would demand the interwoven healing needed for our people, our families, our communities and Mother Earth. An elder from Taku River Tlingit once told me: "We find poisoning in our people, and in our rivers."

My two objectives focus on the Métis List of Rights and the areas of child welfare reform that will benefit from that framework. I have written this exchange in a simplified manner. It is my hope that you (the reader) will contemplate each subsection of Rights and identify additional uses for these Métis symbols and strategies of resistance. Not coincidentally, I hope that you will learn a bit about Métis history as well.

The Ground Work - Theory of Transcendental or Holistic Movement of Community

The idea of an evolving movement in society is captured in Subhash Sharma, "A Vedic Integration of Transitions in Management Thought: Towards Transcendental Management" (Sharma, 2005). Although Sharma published his article with a focus on Management philosophy, I adopted this transcendental theory in my major paper at law school with respect to Indigenous People and a Right to Set[12]. The concepts are simple and easily transfer to other areas of societal governance, such as child and family welfare and the State.

This transcendental movement in society is grounded in an analysis of the r/evolution of social thought and management that shifts our society from its intense adherence to capitalist ideals alone, to one that is also considerate of both socialist and holistic or transcendental ideals. The value shift that accompanies this ideological shift moves from capitalism, which "considers human beings as 'economic units' and is rooted in Adam Smith's[13] philosophy of Profit, Competition & Self-Interest (PCS) (Sharma, 2005, p. 5)," to the transcendental tradition which "considers human beings more than social beings and considers them as a bundle of qualities. Some … consider human beings as 'divine beings'" (Sharma, 2005, p. 5). This focus is "rooted in the philosophy of Love, Compassion and Devotion" (Sharma, 2005, p. 5)and is not limited to any one "religious" or "spiritual" doctrine[14].

The socialist, or intermediary philosophy, tends to focus on "human beings as social beings for whose benefit society exists (Sharma, 2005, p. 5)" and is "rooted in the philosophy of Justice, Rights and Duties (JRD)" (Sharma, 2005, p. 5). In my estimation, the recent transformations in Canadian Indigenous Child and Family Welfare focus on the Justice, Rights and Duties of the family, child and social worker. It is my hope this paper will provide the additional dimension of how to develop holistic pathways forward in a transcendental and holistic manner.

An example of how my theory views child and family welfare is to visualize a continuum of colonization at one end and self-government at the other end. Initially, child and family welfare in Canada appeared to be concerned primarily with the self-interest or colonialist agenda of the State. Grounding values were capitalist in nature, that is to say they focused on Profit, Competition and Self-Interest. At the other end of the continuum, we see (still the primary current phase), the Rights and Duties of children, parents, grandparents and communities. The values of this socialist perspective demand the consideration of the Duty of the State, hopefully finding Justice in the solutions.

A transcendental theory of Indigenous child welfare in Canada (and resulting long-term solutions), requires more than consideration of those first six aspects (Profit, Competition, Self-Interest, Rights, Duties, Justice). It also demands intentional values of love, compassion and devotion incorporating both ends of the spectrum. This changes the continuum into a triangular relationship and places the three categories in relation to one another.

routine use of the Principle.

11 I note that this list is not exhaustive.

12 Yet unpublished, written in Summer 2008, supervised by John Borrows.

13 It should also be noted that Adam Smith's Eurocentric classification of human societies presented in his 1766 "Private Law" lectures, correlated stages of development of the society with the degree of sovereignty they should have over their lands. Intentionally he excepted Indians from his order of hunters, pastoralists, farmers and businessmen. Penikett, *Supra* note 25 at 32.

14 It is vital that the spirituality/religion underlying this movement is not exclusive in doctrine supremacy and is holistic in nature.

Métis Resistance and Louis Riel

" It is almost refreshing to notice the ability, the energy, the determination which up to this point has characterized all the movements of the originator and mainspring of the movement, M. Louis Riel. One hates so much to see

a thing bungled that even resistance, although it borders upon rebellion, becomes respectable when it is carried out with courage, energy and decision."

(Captain W.F. Butler,[15] Riel: A Life of Revolution, Maggie Siggins, p. 171)

The area of children's care has entered a time of change. Awareness of the plight of our Indigenous children demands we no longer sit in silence while the oppressor prepares its inventories/assessments, its guidelines and implements its own practice. The time has come to reclaim our Nations by protecting our sacred children, who need to be safe and healthy. Next to protecting our children, writing our own guidelines, and implementing and funding them, have become the most difficult tasks at hand.

A definition of resilience assists in identifying the acts that embody it. Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000), suggest a two part definition of resilience: 1) has there been exposure to "significant threat or adversity" (p. 543) and 2) is the result a "positive adaptation despite major assaults on the developmental process" (p. 543)? With this definition in hand, we can ask ourselves: What aspects of the actions of the Métis and Louis Riel transcended the "significant threat or adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000, p. 543)? While answering this question, attention to what threats and adversities they (the Métis) have faced (are facing) and how they have positively adapted to major assaults on their Nation and movement, will provide a complete picture of the culture of Métis resistance. The essence of this culture is vital for Indigenous reclamation movements.

Before I focus on the List of Demands and their aspects, it is important to recognize Louis Riel as one of the first true Canadian heroes.[16] At the very least, the diversity of who he was and what he stood for, enforced an acknowledgement of our diverse demands on the Canadian government that has greatly benefitted our Nation. Without him, we, the Métis people and our Land, may not have entered the Canadian Confederation.

"The very essence of Louis Riel is contradiction. He was a handsome, smartly dressed, highly educated prude who enthralled his adoring constituency, the illiterate, risk-taking, pleasure-loving Métis buffalo hunters. His was a conservative political philosophy and yet he led a desperate, violent rebellion against the very political establishment he had once supported.

He was a devout Catholic, yet his heart-felt religion was laced with Indian spiritualism, and he didn't hesitate to

thumb his nose at meddling clergy, who promptly labelled him a heretic. Most important: only one branch of the Riel family shows Indian heritage - his paternal grandmother was a mixed-blood, all his other ancestors were French-Canadian - and yet he symbolizes to this day the courage, pride and accomplishments of what is now seen as the Métis golden age." (emphasis mine) (Siggins, 1994, p. 3)

In 1869, Riel composed a List of 14 items to be incorporated into a List of Rights for the Métis People of the proposed Province of Assiniboia.[17] Peers and opponents (both English and French) reviewed this list. Revised at least four times, Canada received the third and last revision of the List on March 22, 1870. Below, I reproduce the complete List of Rights of Riel's Provisional Government, 1870. Offering the List in its entirety before I examine it in subsections, facilitates the ability of the reader to feel the depth of its considerations and design. In other papers, and in books on the Métis, this list is consistently relegated to the Appendix portion of the paper. This document is not a footnote; it is the conversation. Therefore, the list is embedded in this discussion and must be read in its entirety.

The principles of this list were incorporated into the Manitoba Act, May 12, 1870. This is analogous to the state of child welfare in British Columbia where Indigenous policy makers are being asked to construct policy that could potentially guide the law. The List of Métis Rights is a concrete example of policy leading law.

LIST OF RIGHTS (Congress of Aboriginal People (CAP online), Appendix III - List of Rights - Metis Provisional Government 1870)

- 1. THAT the Territories heretofore known as Rupert's Land and North- West, shall not enter into the Confederation of the Dominion of Canada, except as a Province; to be styled and known as the Province of Assiniboia, and with all the rights and privileges common to the different Provinces of the Dominion.
- 11. THAT we have two Representatives in the Senate, and four in the House of Commons of Canada, until such time as an increase of population entitle the Province to a greater Representation.

15 It is noted in Siggins biography of Riel that Captain Butler "was hardly a friend of the Métis; in fact he had nothing but contempt for anybody who wasn't of British stock" (Siggins, 171).

16 This recognition includes the respect for any inner struggles Riel may or may not have had with respect to mental illness and/or disability.

17 I will not be calling the Province of Manitoba by name in this discussion as it is clear in the List of Rights, the Metis wanted the Province to be called Assiniboia. I have not researched this significance but there is a strong commitment in our culture to respect names and the importance of what we call our own ideas and places.

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- 111. THAT the Province of Assiniboia shall not be held liable at any time for any portion of the Public debt of the Dominion contracted before the date the said Province shall have entered the Confederation, unless the said Province shall have first received from the Dominion the full amount for which the said Province is to be held liable.
- IV. THAT the sum of Eighty Thousand (80,000) dollars be paid annually by the Dominion Government to the local Legislature of this Province.
- V. THAT all properties, rights and privileges engaged by the people of this Province, up to the date of our entering into the Confederation, be respected; and that the arrangement and confirmation of all customs, usages and privileges be left exclusively to the local Legislature.
- Vl. THAT during the term of five years, the Province of Assiniboia shall not be subjected to any direct taxation, except such as may be imposed by the local Legislature, for municipal or local purposes.
- Vll. THAT a sum of money equal to eighty cents per head of the population of this Province, be paid annually by the Canadian Government to the local Legislature of the said Province; until such time as the said population shall have reached six hundred thousand.
- Vlll. THAT the local Legislature shall have the right to determine the qualification of members to represent this Province in the Parliament of Canada and in the local Legislature.
- IX. THAT in this Province, with the exception of uncivilized and unsettled Indians, every male native citizen who has attained the age of twenty-one years, and every foreigner being a British subject, who has attained the same age and has resided three years in the Province, and is a householder; and ever foreigner, other than a British subject, who has resided here during the same period, being a householder and having taken the oath of allegiance, shall be entitled to vote at the election of members for the local Legislature and for the Canadian Parliament. It being understood that this article be subject to amendment exclusively by the local Legislature.
- X. THAT the bargain of the Hudson's Bay Company with respect to the transfer of the Government of this country to the Dominion of Canada, be annulled; so far as it interferes with the rights of the people of Assiniboia, and so far as it would affect our future relations with Canada.
- Xl. THAT the local Legislature of the Province of Assiniboia shall have full control over all the public lands of the Province, and the right to annul all acts or arrangements, made, or entered into, with reference to the public lands of Rupert's Land, and the North West now called the Province of Assiniboia.
- Xll. THAT the Government of Canada appoint a Commission of Engineers to explore the various districts of the Province of Assiniboia, and to lay before the local Legislature a report of the mineral wealth of the Province, within five years from the date of our entering into Confederation.
- XIII. THAT treaties be concluded between Canada and the different Indian tribes of the Province of Assiniboia, by and with the advice and cooperation of the local Legislature of this Province.
- XIV. THAT an uninterrupted steam communication from Lake Superior to Fort Garry be guaranteed, to be completed within the space of five years.
- XV. THAT all public buildings, bridges, roads and other public works, be at the cost of the Dominion Treasury.
- XVI. THAT the English and French languages be common in the Legislature and in the Courts, and that all public documents, as well as all acts of the Legislature be published in both languages.
- XVII. THAT whereas the French and English speaking people of Assiniboia are so equally divided as to number, yet so united in their interests and so connected by commerce, family connections and other political and social relations, that it has, happily, been found impossible to bring them into hostile collision, - although repeated attempts have been made by designing strangers, for reasons known to themselves, to bring about so ruinous and disastrous an event; - and whereas after all the troubles and apparent dissentions of the past, - the result of misunderstanding among themselves; they have - as soon as the evil agencies referred to above were removed, - become as united and friendly as ever; - therefore, as a means to strengthen this union and friendly feeling among all classes, we deem it expedient and advisable, - That the Lieutenant-Governor, who may be appointed for the Province of Assiniboia, should be familiar with both the French and English languages.
- XVIII. THAT the Judge of the Supreme Court speak the English and French Languages.
- XIX. THAT all debts contracted by the Provisional Government of the Territory of the North-West, now called Assiniboia, in consequence of the illegal and inconsiderate measures adopted by Canadian officials to bring about a civil war in our midst, be paid out of the Dominion Treasury; and that none of the members of the Provisional Government, or any of those acting under them, be in any way held liable or responsible with regard to the movement, or any of the actions which led to the present negotiations.
- XX. THAT in view of the present exceptional position of Assiniboia, duties upon goods imported into the Province, shall, except in the case of spirituous liquors, continue as at present for at least three years from the date of our entering the Confederation and for such further time as may elapse until there be uninterrupted railroad communication between Winnipeg and St. Paul and also steam communication between Winnipeg and Lake Superior.

Aspects of the Métis List of Rights, 1869 - 70

Next, we will examine in part, the contents of the List. For ease of discussion, I have chosen to use subsections identified by the Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online ("CBO"). I offer the CBO subsection as a locater, and comments on the content and implications of the section follow. A piece of scrap paper might be handy to record any thoughts or relationships these strategies or demands elicit from the reader.

"that a province be established, not liable for any portion of the public debt of the dominion; (Laval, 2009)"

Ensuring that the establishment of the province of Assiniboia would not be accompanied by inherited debt was motivated by self-interest. The practical message of this provision is not to assume any debt when reclaiming our children and families through new structures and policies of child and family welfare. Symbolically there is a refusal to assume the negative aspects of the current child welfare system in British Columbia when taking these fresh new steps. What aspects of our current system do we not want to integrate in the future system?

"that during a term of five years it not be subject to any direct taxation except for municipal purposes; (Laval, 2009)"

This provision served a couple of purposes for the Métis. In one sense, it provided social protection for the Métis during the initial years of the "amalgamation". In another, it ensured that the oppressoe coluld not use the tool of taxation as a weapon. This strategy, when implemented in reforming other acts of decolonization (such as child welfare reform), requires us to ask, which weapons or tools of the oppressor cause us (and our communities) the most amount of societal damage? One example is less reliance on the operation of the court system and an assumption on an alternative family circle (case conferencing) as the norm. This will make family wellness plans more relevant and less costly.

"that a sum equal to 80 cents per head be paid annually to the province by the Canadian government; (Laval, 2009)"

This provision was squarely rooted in a conservative ideology, centred in providing funding to the Métis people directly proportional to the number of Métis in the province. This formula represents a tangible equation for funding. The Métis placed an additional, important stipulation on this money. Once the population of Assiniboia reached six hundred thousand, the sum was to cease being paid. The question we can ask ourselves is, at what point, which milestones, can we fully fund our own child and family services? Can we or should we have the responsibility in the future to fully fund, or should the Government of Canada and British Columbia forever hold a stake in the wellbeing of all it's citizens?

In a more symbolic sense, it asks us to discover our touchstones in our own communities?[18] How will we identify our successes, and our/or missed opportunities?

"that it have control of the public lands; (Laval, 2009)

On one hand, this codicil appears to be firmly self-interested. At the time this list was written, settlers were homesteading on historic Métis lots and claiming them for their own. The question of who owned the land, and/or who could settle the land, had become the fire in the belly of the Resistance. This statement, simple and short, demands that the people of the Assiniboia, the Métis, retain, reclaim or remain the owners, of the lands.

Can we ignore the significance of our connection to the land while we attempt to resolve the issues of child and family welfare in British Columbia? How, if one believes in, and lives, our physical, religious and spiritual connection to the land, can we heal our children and families, while our "rights" to the land are neither codified nor declared? In a reciprocal manner, how does our Mother's health affect the health of our children and ourselves? Riel found the answers to these questions in all members of mixed people. Our answers lie with the members of our community. The Elders will have vital input, the parents and middle aged will have input, and so will the children. Who are the stakeholders?

On a macro level, this proposition asks us to re-contemplate the control of our Lands. On a micro-level, it might be asking us to set up presumptions of home ownership in the names of our children when relationships dissolve. This form of centering the children within the dispute (in family law) is called nesting. When parents are unable to resolve marital conflict, the non-custodial parent removes him/herself from the domicile, leaving the custodial parent and children in their familial home. With visitations, the non-visiting parent leaves the home. The result is less confusion and disruption in the children's lives with a commitment to providing as normal a life as possible for those permanently affected by marital dysfunction or family violence.

On the other hand, this demand reflects justice, rights and duties. It clarifies exactly who will hold public lands in the province. Importantly, (this is?) there is yet another dimension to land - aboriginal spirituality. To me, this demand is deeply rooted in transcendental and holistic notions which,

18 This is in reference to the Touchstones of Hope project already underway in child welfare reform.

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when acknowledged, will assist in a true wellness of our People and Nations. Sadly, our society defines the role of our governments as one concerned with capitalism, corporatism and conservative ideologies. It is not within the scope of the capitalist model to consider love, compassion and devotion. This does not mean we have to accept the constraints of the government. We have the power to define how we are governed.

Demanding access for our children to their homelands so that their connection to their People and Nation remain strong is a logical extension of our requests. In the same way that we should not be denying stability to our children and families in transition, we cannot ignore the significance of land and our connection to it when we speak of reforming child and family services in Canada.

"that treaties with Indians accord with the wishes of the province; (Laval, 2009)"

This provision was in fact stated, "by and with the advice and co-operation" of the Government of Canada, treaties would be settled with the Indians. This signifies the importance of the duty of Government (of the duty of the government of Assiniboia, with the advice and cooperation of Canada, to enact treaties with First Nations) to reach Treaties with the Indians. The strongest element of this provision is it's demand for the unity of process resolution for all Indigenous people of Canada, Métis and Aboriginal. A united front amongst Indigenous peoples in Canada is much more powerful than piecemeal, antagonistic, competitive processes. True leaders in our communities will demand unity amongst Indigenous brothers and sisters.

It is disgraceful that this demand, made in 1870, has not been adequately realized by Canada or British Columbia.[19] By remarking on this process in their List of Rights, the Métis are showing solidarity for their brothers and sisters. The question we can ask ourselves in reforming child and family services is, which other processes of healing for our people can we voice support for while negotiating our own change?

We should be reminded that while we are looking forward to change in this specific area, we can also look sideways and publically support others struggling next to us. Areas of reform that come to mind with respect to this tactic are violence against women, fetal alcohol syndrome and effects (spectrum disorder), and residential school claims/healing. Statements for and against certain proposals, law reform, and proposed cuts to funding, can be (and should be) made publically. There are many tactics available to realize this goal, we can send out news releases, we can publish position papers, and resolutions can be made at every level of governance.[20]

Eventually, when agreements are determined to be illegal by our own Nation's lawyers, we should be initiating (and have been, in limited cases), legal action against the oppressor. I believe firmly we should seek a legal opinion on the obligations of Canada with respect to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other international legal instruments and laws (including customary laws). This will inform us as to the obligations Canada has for all Canadian children and the additional or special obligations for its Indigenous children.

" that uninterrupted steam communication from Upper Fort Garry to Lake Superior be provided and that all public buildings, bridges, roads, and other public works be paid for by the federal government; (Laval, 2009)"

The reference to provision of railway service from and to parts of the Métis territory and other various essential routes of transportation, highlight the fundamental necessity for the Métis to travel freely throughout Assiniboia. The importance of infrastructure to the success of the Métis as an independent Nation within Canada lies in its ability to facilitate successful capitalist trade, and its fundamental role in the cohesion of community and strength of families. Movement also has sacred and historical elements for the Métis.[21] The ability to travel had kept the citizens of Métis Nations safe from the grip of the colonizer for nearly a hundred years. Indeed, movement underlies the current day spread of the Métis throughout present day Canada.

This provision is holistic as it addresses all three paradigm shifts: capitalism, socialism and transcendentalism.

Questions to ask ourselves today are; considering our agenda of reform in child welfare, what infrastructure is essential? How can we demand preservation of those aspects of the system currently working well, and those required for full independence or self-government? Which aspects of our relationship with the colonizer have protected us? How can we retain those? The tactic of colonization; divide and conquer, plays a significant role in this discussion. For a more cohesive and permanent healing of our communities, I believe it is vital for First Nations to come together and share their own successes together with challenges. On a larger level, we could

19 Only a handful of Treaties exist in British Columbia, the majority of them the Douglas Treaties on Vancouver Island.

20 In much the same way we see municipal governments making resolutions at their Provincial level meetings, our Nations can come together in Assemblies and Coalitions to publically endorse or speak against any relevant initiative.

21 Seasonal communities and following the buffalo are two examples of this but it is much greater than this.

achieve our mutual goals through a collaboration on funding applications, and the sharing of healing resources.

"that the English and French languages be used in the provincial legislature and courts and in all public documents and acts; that the lieutenant governor and the judge of the superior court should be familiar with both the English and the French languages; (Laval, 2009)"

The Métis were in fact, at this point in time, comprised of two separate mixed blood communities: the Métis of the French and the Half-breeds of the (Scots) English. In fact many of the half-breeds were not "English" per se, but rather (In all: far more (tribal) Highland Scots than Orkney men – the dominant combinations are Cree or Ojibwa with French or Scots) Orkney men. (My family falls primarily into this group. Just footnote this observation) As Riel reformed his List of Rights, with input from other groups and individuals, he intentionally presented this List to both an English speaking Métis group and a French speaking Métis group. I argue that this collaborative, transcendental approach to document design informs the rationale underlyinh the acceptance of many of its tenets into the Manitoba Act. It is my belief that this deliberate, intentional building of a document with equal participation, canvassing all affected, is one of the most poignant aspects of the List.

The significance of language, both literally and figuratively, also cannot be ignored. Reclaiming our Ways and ourselves requires reclaiming our languages. Can we request family circles spoke in our native language? Can we tell our children our feelings in our own language? Can they understand?

In a symbolic sense, modes of communication, art, singing, ceremony, drumming, are the languages of our people. When we design our models for child welfare, in what language will we speak of them? In the North, the Carcross First Nation has incorporated language, traditional law, oral teachings and ritual/ceremony into one document. The result is a Family Act of codified tribal law which is intended to guide its own citizens, the social workers/lawyers, and the State.

When building new practice standards we can ask: Who are the parties affected by our reform? Has everyone had input (including children, elders, government workers)? From a content perspective we would ask, what literal language should we employ? How do we define our keywords? What is the meaning of our words?

"that an amnesty be extended to all members of the provisional government and its servants; (Laval, 2009)"

This provision demands surrender of actions against "all members of the provisional government and its servants." This provides protection for those at the highest risk of retaliation from the Canadian government. We might ask ourselves, who in our communities are most at risk (from institution? Clarify and bring it home)? Who requires protection? How can we reclaim those already harmed by the colonizer's institutions, ideologies and social frameworks? How can we protect those who are victims of violence (this is doubly significant, because here you are protecting those who may have become violent due to institutions, ideologies etc, or have experienced violence at the hands of the state/institutions. Yet they are also members of our community who do violence to other members. These are questions of healing on multiple levels) or other forms of abuse?

One aspect of this provision is that a positive obligation is imposed on the government to provide amnesty to its people (it does not say "refrain from charging or arresting"). How can we charge our governments to protect those at the highest risk during reforms? For example, if a nation seeks custody of a child, how can we ensure that B.C. would consent and not oppose that suit in certain cases (or most cases)? Would British Columbia agree to provide our communities with information that would allow us to locate our genetic family members (who were removed in the past 50 years)? This provision addresses the potential occurrence of a feared outcome, thus it asks us to identify our fears. What is the worst that could happen? How do we prevent that?

"and that no further customs duties be imposed until there was uninterrupted railway communication between Winnipeg and St Paul. (Laval, 2009)"

This last provision again speaks to self-interest and preservation and is a conditional demand. It provides a benefit for Canada (imposing further custom duties) once the rail way is complete. What incentives can we bring to the table? How can we reward Canada and British Columbia with our success? What contingency requests would benefit our people?

Additional Considerations

It is interesting to note that once the third revised list was presented to Canada, two additional requests were added. This fourth List included, doubtless with Riel's and Taché's blessing, a provision for separate schools paralleling the system implemented in the province of Quebec, and outlined the structure for a provincial government" (Laval, 2009).

The integration of additional key requirements signals the necessity that the List be fluid and non-exhaustive. My research on these two elements does not extend to how each

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were defined in relationship to one another, but my imagination wonders; if government officials set out potential provincial government structures, did Riel (or his friend), use additional requirements for education as a lever with the government of Canada? In any case, the supplements to the original submitted list reveal that Riel remained attentive to the needs of his people, even after he had sought their input. In the end, his addition of the separate school clause ensured that a significant for the potential protection of culture and language existed within the State. Ironically, the history of the Métis people in Canada is nearly non-existent in our Province (BC).

The reading of the List in this article may represent a reader's first awareness of the Métis' contributions to Canada and our historically stipulated Rights. The nature of these demands illuminates aspects of healing that Riel and his community believed would heal their People, their Nation. Briefly, I have compared the symbols and strategies of this List with our own reforms and concerns. This is a difficult task. It is abstract and at times strained by the two differing ideal outcomes: 1) the Métis' achievement of Nationhood and 2) the Indigenous child achieving Personhood.[22]

In reality, these two movements dialectically speak to one another. On one hand, people live with splintered cultural and spiritual personalities/identities, on the other, children and families are fragmented by family dysfunction/unwellness and/or lack of community wellness.

> *"I don't think that anyone, without having gone through the fire, can understand the feeling of being Métis. Belonging to both, but in reality to neither. Growing up in Fort Norman in the 1950's, I went through the fire. White and Indian accepting you on the surface, but rejecting you from the heart and soul.*
>
> *Imagine the feeling of a person being called a "Goddamned Halfbreed." So for a while we did what we thought was a smart thing: when with the Whites, we were White; when the Indian came, we became Indian, but this could only go on for so long without splitting ourselves apart trying to be two people."*
>
> *Rick Hardy, former president of the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories at the Berger Inquiry (1974-77) (Weinstein, 2007)*

Holistic Path Forward

The holistic path forward in the evolution of social work respects all aspects of our societal movement: profit, competition, self-interest, justice, rights, duties, love, compassion and devotion. Identifying these aspects assists us in transcending the antagonistic relationship between capitalist and socialist philosophy. If we deeply contemplate the relationship of children with their families and Nations as successful when defined by love, compassion and devotion, our infrastructure, both social and physical, takes on new dimensions. Riel's Métis Resistance stood for, (even for his critics) and defined courage, energy and devotion. Each of us has a task in this r/evolution, each of us holds part of the key in solving the problem of child and family welfare in our communities, our Province and our Country.

Where do we find the Key?

There is a new movement in the area of reforming Children's lives that demands the centering of Children. In his new book, Child Honoring, How to Turn this World Around, Raffi (yes, baby beluga Raffi!) proposes a societal revolution based on compassionate values.[23] In Chapter 7, Lorna B. Williams of the Lil'wat nation describes in detail what "Honoring All Life" looks like in practice. Looking through her own lens as a residential school survivor, she posits that intention, naming, tradition, play, ritual, and training are all essential in Lil'wat child-honoring practices. It is by "rebuild(ing) respectful caring societies" that our children will heal. She states on page 88:

> *"Healthy, caring communities produce healthy, caring, responsible children. And healthy, caring, responsible people create healthy, caring communities. First Nations worked at living life in a respectful, responsible, relational manner by practicing humility and acknowledging that we are only a small part of a greater whole. When each child in a community is honored and treated in an honorable way, all life is honored. While we can not go back in time to relive the past, we can still learn from First Nations and other Indigenous people how they cared for and honored children to create healthy communities that cared for and honored all its members" (Cavoukian, 2006).*

When we look to our communities, how do our Elders describe our traditional ways of caring for our children? What can we learn from other nations? The answers to these questions assist in building policy and legislation from the ground up, in a compassionate and culturally relevant way.

On October 11, 2001, Dr. Henrietta Mann (Elder, Mentor), gave a lecture at the University of Victoria. She is a respected Elder of the Cheyenne nation and holds many

22 Also not canvassed in this paper but essential to the rights of the child are a right to counsel and a right to dignity. Both of which are classical components of Personhood (Margaret Jane Radin, Reinterpreting Property (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993)).

23 I encourage everyone to read this book and I have written a book review available online at http://www.livingproofnutrition.com/files/Liv%20Tru%20Fall%202009%20-%20Final.pdf (pages 5-6).

distinctions including a Ph.D. I asked her this question: How do women who are of two worlds, those who may be returning to the teachings and find truth there, how do these women become leaders and remain true to all their ancestors? Dr. Mann replied:

> *"writing, reading, critically, analytically, the world is missing how to get along with each other. You can continue to be a bridge between them. Women are leaders, in the potlatch we take the leadership role, we share the wealth, and take care of the people. Remember that everything is in pairs*[24] *and so are speech and silence."*

She ended her response with the Spirit Powers in Council:

> *"The Council had the human power-potential because the humans could not handle it. The Council decided to not let humans run rampant. They first considered sinking it into the deepest part of the ocean. But one of the members said "Oh no, they are too resourceful, they will find it there."*
>
> *The next suggestion was the deep earth, and hopefully they would learn how to use it before they found it. It was decided the humans would find it too easily there as well. The third suggestion was to place it on the highest mountain, but they all agreed the humans were clever enough, they would find it there as well. They asked the Great Spirit, we have this dilemma, Where should we hide the human power-potential?*
>
> *The Great Spirit answered them: Humans will find it when they can handle it. Hide it within each of them, it is the last place they will look"(emphasis mine).*

As we look forward on this path of reform, we acknowledge that a holistic approach requires a new framework. Using this self-reflective paradigm, we are able to justify grounding the movement in love, compassion and devotion. By transcending the supposed polar opposites of colonization and self-government, we will bring healing and wellness to our Indigenous families. These changes will transform child welfare while reclaiming the old ways.

All my relations.

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Why is Adoption Like a First Nations Feast?: Lax Kw'alaam Indigenizing Adoptions in Child Welfare

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Abstract

Have you ever wondered about how to be culturally-sensitive in adoption approaches with Aboriginal people? Have you wanted ideas on how to more effectively engage First Nations adoptive parents? Did you consider how leadership for social workers could assist in adoption outcomes for Aboriginal children? This article chronicles a study of the adoption experiences of the members of a First Nations community in Northwestern British Columbia, Canada. The results indicated that despite an overwhelmingly negative history with the adoptions and child protection system, many First Nations people are not only open to adoption but perceive it as an integral part of their traditional parenting practices. There is an overarching desire to have children who have been previously adopted outside the community returned to their hereditary lands. A series of recommendations for a more culturally-sensitive adoption practice were identified including: 1) improved information, 2) on-going community-government consultation, 3) cultural preservation, 4) social work training, and 5) government policy changes. The article will encourage curiosity regarding social work leadership and how this framework can be instrumental when working with Aboriginal culture. The implications of the study for the role of social workers as leaders in the creation of a new, culturally-sensitive adoption practice are discussed.

Introduction

In Canada, Aboriginal adoption has a long and tumultuous history which has historically been known for taking Aboriginal children away from families and communities. A vast majority of these adopted Aboriginal children grew up with little connection to their birth family or their culture. No sooner had the residential "schools" begun to close their doors, then Aboriginal families and communities were subjected to a wave of state-initiated child apprehensions during the "60's scoop." The term "60's scoop" was coined to describe the seemingly random apprehensions of 'Indian children' by Provincial social workers who, on the slightest pretext, literally scooped children from reservations in order to 'save' them from poor living conditions (Timpson, 1995). Keewatin (2004) was more gracious in describing the "60's scoop" as "a clash in ideologies and adoption practices [which] contributed to Aboriginal children being taken from their homes" (p. 27). There was a belief that Aboriginal families were inferior and unable to care for their children; over 11,000 children were removed and placed in non-Aboriginal homes from the 1960s to the 1980s (Snow & Covell, 2006). The inappropriateness and suffering of Aboriginal families and communities through

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decades of government intervention was acknowledged on June 11th, 2008 when the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper officially apologized, on behalf of the government of Canada, to the Indigenous, Inuit and Métis people.

Canada presently has a higher number of Aboriginal children in government care than in any other era in this country. Today, a disproportionate number of Aboriginal children enter government care, for example from 1995 to 2001 the number of Aboriginal children in care rose 71.5 per cent nationally (National Council of Welfare, 2007). Many of these children are placed in non-Aboriginal foster care without serious consideration about adoption by Aboriginal family or community members. Children who remain in foster care experience an average of sixteen different foster placements by the time they reach adulthood resulting in moves into different communities, families, cultures, schools, religions, and routines. After years of foster care, many Aboriginal children have little birth family or cultural connections left. With no family to return to, many Aboriginal youth 'age out' of foster homes only to become acquainted with the justice system (National … etc, 2007).

> *The sad fact remains: the state [government] as a parent notoriously lacks sensitivity and imagination in dealing with its children. Besides, bureaucracies are allergic to speed … if contractors fast-track kids from foster homes into adoptive homes … this is a far cry from the status quo, which, in effect, rewards … keeping kids in no man's land (Webber, 1998, p. 209).*

Non-Aboriginal adoptive parents often argue that a permanent home for Aboriginal children is better than no permanent home at all. They believe that a safe and loving home, of any culture, can meet all of the needs of the Aboriginal adoptee; the result being a form of "colour-blindness". Fogg-Davis (2002) disagrees stating that pretending not to notice colour is not the solution, reducing "racism is not colorblindness but a strong commitment to nondiscrimination as a moral principle that extends beyond equal-protection law into the realm of private racial choices" (p. 9). The question of culturally- prioritizing adoption placements remains divisive between non-Aborignal adoptors and Aboriginal children, families and communities.

Research on the long-term effects of "culturally-foreign" adoptions [where Aboriginal children are adopted to non-Aboriginal parents] are much less controversial. Sinclair (2007) revealed that 85 per cent of Aboriginal children adopted into non-Aboriginal homes break down during the child's adolescence resulting in the adoptee leaving their non-Aboriginal adoptive parents. One reason proposed for the high percentage of these adoption breakdowns is the lack of skills non-Aboriginal adopting parents have in supporting the Aboriginal child through systematic racism and the denigration of Aboriginal culture.

Is there really a paucity of caring Aboriginal families to adopt Aboriginal children? Research examining the pre-adoption views of perspective Aboriginal adoptive parents is scarce. A 2004 survey by the Dave Thomas Foundation (Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Canada, 2004), however, found that adoption is considered twice as often by Aboriginal people than by non-Aboriginal people. This begs the question as to why Aboriginal people remain under-represented as adoptive parents for Aboriginal children?

As a Caucasian adoption social worker in a small northern British Columbia (BC) community, the first author has observed that Aboriginal children display a unique desire for cultural connection throughout the process of adoption. A profound example of this involved watching a very young Aboriginal girl who, during her last visit with her non-Aboriginal foster mother, stood silently, and stiffly beside her before being placed with Aboriginal parents. This same girl transformed into a happy, active and engaged girl when she was with her Aboriginal adoptive parents. She caressed the face of her Aboriginal adoptive parents. She began to crawl, laugh and relax around them. Prior to the adoption, the young girl was referred to the children's hospital for a full assessment for extensive behavioural problems in the foster home. After three months in her adoptive home, the girl quickly adjusted to her new Aboriginal adoptive parents and consequently professionals withdraw their assessment recommendations -- the child no longer needed behavioural interventions services! Finally, the cultural significance of adoption is evident in the pride and symbolic significance that occurs when Aboriginal children are adopted back into their community; these are frequently celebrated with a community feast.

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Literature Review

Historically, child welfare practice and policy has been rife with Eurocentric, mainstream assumptions and cultural misunderstandings. Contemporary legislation has attempted to redress these shortcomings. The Child, Family and Community Services Act (1996) and the Adoption Act (1996) prescribe that within child welfare practice, and particularly adoption, Aboriginal children must be given special attention in the planning of their cultural identity and heritage. In 1991, the BC legislation unanimously ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which holds that the right to cultural participation is fundamental to the best interest of the child. Despite the noble rhetoric, the current child welfare system continues to fail Aboriginal people through cultural genocide which perpetuates the "new Western colonization disease" (Crichlow, 2003, p. 89).

In 1847, the senior levels of government and churches collaborated to begin the establishment of residential schools for Aboriginal children from 6 to 16 years of age (Bennett, Blackstock & DeLaRonde, 2005, Keewatin, 2004). In 1857 it was law for an Aboriginal child to attend residential schools with the enactment of the Gradual Civilization Act (Assembly of First Nations, 2009). Over the next 149 years, more than 80 residential schools emerged in Canada and involved a gradual devolution of child welfare responsibility of thousands of Aboriginal children to church members. This practice was particularly pronounced in the province of BC.

> *Nowhere in Canada was the instrument of the residential schools used more brutally and thoroughly than in British Columbia … where the schools endured longer than anywhere else … clerics mounted a concerted assault on the spiritual and cultural practices of the First Nation by taking away their most valuable and precious resource, their children (Fournier & Crey, 1997, p. 50).*

The period from 1950 to 1970 has frequently been termed the "Indian Adoption Era" in Canada (Halverson, Puig & Byer, 2002, p. 323). These decades saw 20 to 50 per cent of Aboriginal children being removed from their homes and communities. The vast majority of these children were placed in non-Aboriginal homes (Halverson, et al., 2002). The Canadian Welfare Council and the Canadian Association of Social Workers provided recommendations through the Joint Submission for expansion of child welfare services to First Nation people on reserve, however funding for services did not follow (MacDonald & MacDonald, 2007). Supervision of these displaced Aboriginal children was woefully inadequate; for example, in the 1960's social workers labored under enormous case loads -- nine social workers are reported to have held a case load for 179,000 reservation residents (Crichlow, 2003).

Another factor which is believed to have influenced the frequency of Aboriginal adoptions was the significant decline in the number of Caucasian infants available to Caucasian adopters. The proportion of Caucasian infants was 19 per cent of total adoptions in 1960 and dropped to 1.75 per cent in the early 1990's. The cry for infants was met by Aboriginal children being adopted into Caucasian homes.

> *To date, Canadian provinces continue to administer adoption programs with little or no consideration to the inherent rights of First Nation children. Canadian policy places the issue of adoption and First Nation children within a context of cross-cultural adoption, failing to recognize the contradictions in this practice. The issue is not about race, color or national origin; it is about the preservation of First Nation self-determination within a continuing colonial context (Carrier, 2005, p. 24).*

Without federal involvement and funding, some authors' worry that adoption will become reduced to nothing more than one more program in the provinces, 'crisis-driven' child welfare system(s) (Riggs, 2003, p. 2). As it stands, there is a typical two year waiting list for perspective adoptive parents to complete their home study due to a shortage of social workers (Collier, 2002, p 55). With a mainstream-centered adoption screening process, long waiting lists for perspective adoptive parents, and limited Aboriginal support services, the result is an adoption practice which diminishes the ability of Aboriginal families to care for their children (Carriere, 2007).

Even if government funds were provided to increase Adoption workers, would this result in an adoption system which was more responsive/sensitive to Aboriginal peoples? Or, would this result in a perpetuation of existing practices including an unwillingness to consider perspective adoptive parents who do not fit into the typical mainstream categories?

> *Social workers have traditionally maintained an excessively narrow model of adoption practice. Traditionally, they have selected as potential adopters white, middle-class couples of conventional behavior and values with good material standards. Black and Native communities particularly have failed to meet such criteria (Bagley, Young & Scully, 1993, p. 10).*

In BC, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) maintains a list of over 1,000 children waiting for adoptive homes. Many perspective adoptive parents hold fantasies and idealized notions of "charib-like" children who will complete their longed-for dream family. In reality, most of

the children in care available for adoption have been scarred by maltreatment and years in the child welfare system.

> *Today, the large majority of children requiring adoptive families do not carry the characteristics of most adopters-ideal child. They tend to be older, have brothers or sisters with whom they hope to be placed, have multiple problems in terms of developmental delay or long term medical uncertainties and suffer the aftermath of abuse of all kinds. Furthermore, we now recognize how important it is to place children, whenever possible, in families who share their culture and ethnicity (Corbett, 2002, p 39).*

Despite the many shortcomings of contemporary adoption policy/practice, there are some positive developments within the Aboriginal communities for the future of adoptive children. An example includes the first adoption agreement between the provincial government and the Aboriginal agency of Lalum'utul Smu'eem in Duncan, BC. This agreement was signed on Janurary 17th, 2008 which delegates responsibility for all aspects of adoption to the Cowichan tribes. The First Nation child welfare agencies have proved to be more effective than provincial agencies in finding ways to care for children within their communities (Wien, Blackstock, Laxley & Trocme, 2007).

The MCFD North region and local First Nation communities have enjoyed 'cultural camps' or 'homecomings' which provide an opportunity for Aboriginal foster children to return to their hereditary land and meet family. Some Aboriginal families meet their children for the first time. Foster parents or social workers are encouraged to attend. The cultural camp usually involve Aboriginal foster children being the focus of celebration activities such as a community feast where children often receive a cultural gift and participate in Aboriginal dancing. The current research attempts to contribute to this growing body of progressive knowledge and practice by articulating a model of culturally-sensitive adoption which is grounded in the experiences of one Aboriginal community, Lax Kw'alaam.

Methodology

This research took place within MCFD's North region which encompasses more than one-half of the province's landmass, the province's largest geographic area, which includes approximately 51 Aboriginal bands. The Aboriginal children in care of the government in BC's north represent at least 76 per cent of all the children in care, many in non-Aboriginal foster homes.

This article seeks to "reveal unexamined assumptions and the ways in which people may be accepting explanations of the dominant cultural group who serve to oppress those without power" (Glesne, 2006, p. 16). This research was conducted to honor the cultural context of one northern BC First Nation coastal community, Lax Kw'alaam (also known as Port Simpson). Lax Kw'alaam is accessible by boat (ferry) or float plane which was utilized during this reserach. Through listening to the adoption experiences and views of the Lax Kw'alaam people, in a culturally comfortable setting designed in cooperation with their community members, ideas for a new adoption process emerged.

The research sought to answer the primary question: What to you believe the northern First Nation people need in order to adopt Aboriginal children who are in the care of MCFD? Through the exploration of Lax Kw'alaam adoption experiences, recommendations for recruitment of First Nation perspective adoptive parents were uncovered. The qualitative study utilized the concepts of Stringer's (1999) action research frameworks. Stinger (1999) believes only First Nation people can be cultural experts for their communities, and emphasizes collegial structuring, rather than hierarchical ones, with the goal of facilitating and supporting people, rather than directing and controlling them. To achieve a higher degree of relevance for outcomes, a culturally considerate research is argued to be more open to a First Nation worldview (Bennett, 2004).

A culturally sensitive group format, designed and facilitated by the Lax Kw'alaam people, was termed "Circle groups." All participants were voluntarily selected by Lax Kw'alaam community leaders. Participant selection criteria included the following, a person; (a) free from past association with MCFD adoptions; (b) of First Nation ancestry who had lived in Lax K'Alaams or was presently living in the village; (c) at least 19 years of age; (d) able to express personal views in a small group; (e) identified by a Band worker as being curious about adoptions; and (f) believed to be free of mental illness. Results were obtained from two Circle groups (N=13); one group consisting of three males and four females was held with former Lax Kw'alaam community residents in the city of Terrace, and a second Circle group consisting of all females was held in Lax Kw'alaam. The age of participants was not recorded however, all participants were adults.

Informed consent was obtained through a variety of methods. A Consent form outlining the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality provisions and contact information for thesis supervisor and University was sent in advance to Lax Kw'alaam leadership for the purposes of recruitment of participants. The same was read aloud during Circle group introductions and each member was given a copy of the letter for their individual reference. Individuals who agreed

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to participate had their consent recorded on audio tape and witnessed by the researcher and Circle group facilitator.[1]

Ethics

The ethics process involved cultural, professional and academic reviews. Academic approval was obtained from Royal Roads University Ethics review procedure (1999) including consultation with the University Aboriginal Coordinator. The research procedures were designed to conform to the Ethics of Research Involving Indigenous Peoples (Indigenous People's Health Research Center, 2004). Cultural review was provided by the local Aboriginal agency, Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Community Services Society (NIFCS) prior to community leaders being contacted. The study purpose and methods also received approval from Lax Kw'alaam leadership. The research was also reviewed and approved by MCFD. Finally, the First Nation facilitator provided consultation on the research process, preliminary results and final document preparation and dissemination. The facilitator remains updated on research presentations to this day.

Limitations and Scope of Research

This research was limited by the researcher being a Caucasian, middle class social worker and the inherent cultural restrictions within such a perspective. The Circle groups were small enough to encourage conversation from all members but the MCFD ethics requirement disallowed those who had adoption experiences with MCFD. The Lax Kw'alaam community was studied exclusively, and other communities and their members may have provided different results. The sample group was small. The geographical area of the northwest of BC could have been expanded to include First Nation people from a variety of locations. Future research with participants of other first nations communities in BC and throughout Canada would be valuable to ascertain whether the results observed here are illustrative of the experiences of other First Nations members. Additional research with those who have direct experience as adoptive parents or adoptees, but who were restricted from this research for reasons of confidentiality, would also prove valuable. Finally, research contrasting the experiences of First Nations people with custom adoptions versus non-Aboriginal adoption practices would prove advantageous.

1 Sherrie Haldane, M.S.W. and member of the Lax Kw'alaam community facilitated both Circle groups. She provided support, advice on methods, potential sources of bias in the analysis as well as nuances of culturally sensitive group practice for the Lax Kw'alaam Circle group participants.

Themes

The "circle groups" data were analyzed for recurrent substantive content using the principles identified by Stringer (1999) and Strauss & Corbin (1998) which led to the identification of the following themes: 1) historical experiences with child welfare, 2) cultural loss within stranger care, 3) Aboriginal views about adoption and, 4) recommendations for indigenizing adoptions.

1. Historical Experiences with Child Welfare

"They took him completely away from his family"[2]

First Nation people have suffered serious losses on a community and individual level as a result of the past adoption actions. When asked about their adoption experiences, both Circle groups immediately responded by describing experiences with child protection. Participants recounted community loss when their children were taken without family being given information regarding how to contact their children or the area where the children were relocated. "There are a couple of cases … where [social workers] came in, grabbed three children out of school, flew them in a plane, and nobody, nobody including the teachers … contacted the parents to let them know what's happening." Negative past child protection practices and resulting encounters with social workers are stories sustained orally in community history. Years of witnessing the removal of children has yielded an over-arching sense of community grief.

Participants also identified an individual loss. When asked to describe adoption a Circle group participant stated, it was similar to "a person in authority, like the RCMP or Indian agent [who] comes, takes the children forcibly from the parents, and puts them in residential school … the parents and family have no say." This grief, it is suggested, has a direct correlation with the views of adoption, a program associated with child welfare.

2. Cultural Loss within Stranger-care

"The child is left with unresolved cravings"

Participants compared the longings of children in stranger-care similar to the feeling of a "craving," which is a multi-dimensional yearning of First Nation children who are placed in a non-First Nation homes. Cravings may be a desire for traditional foods, which became familiar to the unborn child as it was ingested by the birth mother.

Another craving was believed to take place from the child being deprived of cultural experiences. Several participants recounted observations of stranger-care providers who were reluctant to expose First Nation children to their culture. The

2 Quotations in italics within the Theme and Results and Recommendation Sections are those of Circle group participants.

actions of stranger-care providers were interpreted as fear of First Nation culture and traditions. As an example, one participant viewed non-Aboriginal foster parents as trying to "protect the First Nation foster child from their First Nation traditions":

> *… these people were non-native and they had one of our own kids from here. The dancers had a BBQ with salmon, fried bread, and our traditional foods … that kid wanted to see, but they said 'no, no, no' everything was no.*
>
> *Especially the fried bread, you can have fries, but you can't have fried bread … yet while in the mother's womb, it was consumed … they became accustomed to the taste so they know the taste.*

These cravings may encompass the feeling of community and family felt by the birth mother and transmitted to the unborn child or infant, but denied the child once they are in the government's care. One participant stated that children in care lose their family connections "because they are in the system too long". When the Lax Kw'alaam community representative is contacted from children in care, some of whom live around the world, the child or adult seeking family information has little to offer the community leadership -- family information is scarcely recorded and therefore not available years following. One participant spoke of a situation she knew of, a foster child sought to meet her biological parents. This request took social workers so long to work on, that both biological parents passed away before the foster child could meet them.

> *"Hopefully, somewhere along the line, no matter where a child is adopted out, they will still maintain their cultural identity, because when they come to aging out category, that's the hard part."*

The general perception of outsiders caring for community children was discussed. When the non-Aboriginal caregivers negate valued cultural connections, "stranger-paid-caregivers" were viewed by participants as insufficient when compared to the provisions family members could offer a child within the context of their community. Another participant stated the children from their community "placed with non-native families [they] are the ones that we heard didn't work."

3. Aboriginal Views about Adoption

"Indian Adoptions" are Alive and Well

Traditionally, Aboriginal people sought Aboriginal 'adoptive' parents for their children when the situation warranted. Community members carried the conviction that sharing children promotes community strength, caring, and bonding (Crichlow, 2003; Keewatin, 2004, p. 26). Sharing children is part of the "traditional law, community standards, values and beliefs." Stories continue to be shared of children being given to others with honor bestowed on all parties. Collectively Circle group participants recognized these adoptions as "Indian adoptions," are acts of generosity from one family to another. When these children were cared for by the 'adopting' family, birth parents were acknowledged and often included. Several participants shared stories of a child who was identified as belonging to the adoptive family and yet knows their birth family. Typically children are given to those who do not have children or to those whose child has passed away.

> *She was pregnant and she felt sorry for her brother, so she said, 'when my baby is born, you can have the baby.' She when went into labor, both the brother and his wife were there … the baby turns out to be my Mom. This is Indian adoption … because they were the ones that raised her up. But she never forgot her family.*

Participants distinguished traditional adoptions involving tribal agreements, and custom adoption involving family agreements surrounding the child to be adopted. The practice of sharing children with those who care best care for them involves cultural titles and tribal positions along with birth family consultation. In lifelong planning for children, they are not estranged from their community, birth families or culture; as a result, First Nations languages have no traditional word for adoption (Bennett, et al, 2005, p. 24; L. Wells, personal communication, August 31, 2007).

The ethnocentric process of legally transferring parental rights is historically foreign. Traditional adoptions directly contrast legalized Western Adoption orders that decree children can be owned (Giesbrecht, 2004, p. 156). Lax Kw'alaam participant's spoke of 'Indian adoption' as an ancient, established, collaborative process for community children still in process today. The traditional or cultural adoptions are currently practiced in Lax Kw'alaam. One participant stated, "I think the whole of Canada doesn't recognize that we still have our own culture."

4. Recommendations for Indiginizing Adoptions

I. Commitment Necessitates Action

"Is MCFD serious?"

As participants began to discuss the possibilities of adopting children presently in care, the question of governmental commitment was raised. First Nation communities, especially those in an isolated location, already operate on scare resources. Simply having a good idea supported by research is inadequate within the context of

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community life. Participants were well aware of multifaceted community needs, they spoke of the many ways Lax Kw'alaam members continue to "fight for things to be better," and, they need resources from government to actualize these adoptions. If community members were to consider this adoption 'campaign,' as one participant remarked, what commitments would the government make for First Nation adoptions?

> *First Nation people here need to be convinced again because of all the negative things that happened. When I talk about your campaign to convince us that we can do this -- that we can look after our own -- I feel we need to have support.*

Government commitment could be demonstrated through innovative efforts to acknowledge community adoption inquiries. One participant spoke of the need for "a lot more encouragement from MCFD to put [adoptions] out to the First Nation communities". Participants also spoke of the need for government to assist villages with adoption support rather than expecting villages to attempt to understand adoption dynamics solely on their own.

Government commitment could include government initiated, internal, systematic changes for an adoption process more inclusive of Aboriginal people and their culture. Specifically, the need for systemic support must include "encouragement, openness and initiative" on the part of the government before, during and after the adoption process.

Government commitment could include symbols and actions to confirm the sincerity of an Aboriginal adoption focus. Participants discussed the present lack of Aboriginal adoption recruitment initiatives and wondered if this was an indication of government disinterest in Aboriginal adoptions. Some participants expressed uncertainty regarding the authenticity of government's interest in recruiting First Nation people as potential adopters. "My question is, are they [MCFD] looking for us to adopt? From what I see, I don't think they are. A lot of kids are going into the system".

II. User-Friendly Adoption Information Systems

"Let the people know"

Rather than mainstream recruiting through adoption messages constructed by non-Aboriginals, the adoption recruitment message participants recommended is one which is created and delivered by First Nation people. Adoption invitations could be continuous, friendly, hopeful, and include community adoption information groups, television and radio advertisements, and culturally appropriate adoption books centered on a First Nation values.

User-friendly adoption information includes adoption concepts presented in a relaxed, comprehensible manner to Aboriginal people. Community members often receive information in person; adoption information would be more successfully communicated in person. One participant stated, "You need to communicate, not just have some brochures sitting in the Health Unit, but have a personal representative coming and talking to the people in the community about the need for people to step forward." Valuable information is shared through story telling. Some participants wondered why they rarely heard of successful adoption stories of children in care. Some participants spoke of the need for positive First Nation adoption stories shared by First Nation adoptive parents.

Within the First Nation community, there is a need to offer frequent opportunities to members to consider adoption through comprehensive knowledge for their adoption decision. The recommendations were to provide adoption information groups so the community could clearly understand the adoption process, their legal rights and responsibilities, including single adopters, medical information, work benefits, successful age combinations for children entering into a family, family adjustment trends, and support around negative adoption responses. To further encourage adopters, adoption stories need to be shared to a larger audience of Aboriginal people.

Participants spoke of the value of Aboriginal adoptive parents sharing positive adoption stories through brief television ads, preferably on Aboriginal television networks. "Get out there and do more advertising." The invitation should include the delivery of Aboriginal children in care facts and a means to access adoption support.

III. Consensual Practice > Colonial Policies

"Change policy to Accommodate First Nations families"

Participants consider current adoption policy inadequate due to Eurocentric, colonial philosophies guiding adoption procedures. Participants stated the present adoption approach is dictated and directed to the First Nation community. Participants recommended mandated adoption policies follow a consensual model involving First Nation family, community and government decision-makers. "Cooperatively work out policy with First Nation people," stated one participant. A collaborative process in First Nation adoptions would require policy change to accommodate flexible cultural needs of families. Participants spoke of policy demanding their "mandatory participation", even in the midst of challenging situations, and widespread social worker efforts for solutions within family before adopting their children to "outsiders."

Family information is critical in order for First Nation people to consider adoption. Participants identified the amount of family and cultural information obtained for Aboriginal children is severely limited. First Nation families do not know who the child is connected with and the current policy for collecting family and cultural information prevents First Nation adopters from coming forward. Participants recommended that more accurate family and cultural information be obtained from the system prior to contacting potential adopters. One participant indicated that when children were in the "system too long" their family information was lost. "They're not looking after the best interest of the child, not in our culture", stated one participant.

Participants felt the role of the family is not recognized within the adoption system, and yet the family role is critical in First Nation culture. "Family first" stated one participant. In this regard the opportunity for regular birth family contact is of primary importance, and should be agreed on before adoption finalization. Not only did participants see the lack of connection with the birth parents in adoption as problematic, but they indicated that the grandparents, aunts and uncles were overlooked as well. One participant stated that the adoption process should assist in, "gathering the family together… it would really help them [birth family] to get through the process." "I feel if we don't take people from our culture and extended family, it would be better if we could go back to operating more as a community."

Several policies changes were suggested, "family-blood-lines" could to be stored on a government system for each child in care; the numbers of children available for adoption clearly tracked for each Aboriginal community; and pre and post-adoption stages updated with community leaders. The adoption process needs to progress to one where the grief and loss of the birth family and adoptive family has "flexible boundaries."

IV. Social Work Cultural Training Needed

[Social workers]… "feel comfortable with the people you're dealing with!"

Social workers are often placed in the 'expert' role. With time and work responsibilities, the flexibility to enter into the learner role can lessen, and it is precisely the learner mind-set that is needed to gain cultural understanding when working with First Nation communities. The social worker sees systemic flaws, but often has few leadership resources to initiate change.

> *The poor outcomes that are evident in the current lived experiences of Aboriginal children, youth, and families compel child welfare to move past tinkering with services to examine what needs to be changed in the values and basic approach of the profession itself to improve child welfare and relationships with Aboriginal children and families (Blackstock, Brown & Bennett, 2007, p. 64).*

Adoption often displays the end result of many years of MCFD planning and intervention. The energy and values of social workers are reflected in their work with families and communities. Often as final reports are written describing the child's history, the social workers involved in this stage see the end result of systematic procedures, multiple foster placements and cultural omission. To catch the light for change as early in the process as possible, and continue past numerous obstacles, leadership and learning must unite.3

To counteract the continuance of negative adoption experiences, a more personable approach with First Nation people is desired; Circle group participants recommend social workers establish strong relationships with local First Nation leaders. Circle group participants described social workers as authoritarian, professionals who remove children thereby assisting in the disassociation of children from their community, rather than supporting families. Overall the lack of cultural understanding by social workers frustrates First Nation people. Another participant asked for power balance in the relationship stating "take away the fear [that First Nations people have of the] authority that social workers have … the feeling that people have that social workers have all the control." Yet another participant said she wanted "openness, mutual understanding" and a social worker who could be "not so bashful" and "relaxed" when working with them. One participant said she wanted to build up a positive working relationship with social workers rather than having a "crisis relationship" generated around problem solving during emergencies.

First Nation adoption is related to families, who are intractably connected to culture. Participants wanted to feel respected by social workers. "You have workers who don't know … That child's culture is its clan, its tribe, its community. There's a lot of protocol you need to know." In order to begin to understand the culture, participants recommend that social workers engage in experiential learning of First Nation culture by participating in feasts or by visiting the First Nation communities for a few days prior to meetings. One participant challenged social workers to be open to learn about Aboriginal culture in the same way that First Nation people have to learn about other cultures, including other First Nation cultures. "We

3 Social workers can feel adequate in their role, as did I. My thesis supervisor confronted my awkwardness as a learner and ushered me towards a renewed learning attitude. Leaders from Lax Kw'alaam instructed me to listening to gather information thereby optimized this unique cultural experience. The dichotomy of First Nation cultural needs and the academic requirements combined to further challenged me to new levels as a learning leader. The Royal Roads University Leadership program provided essential tools to engage in a creative, open, innovative approach to this adoption research.

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are quite accustomed to dealing with anybody and everybody" and participants spoke of how they watch and learn from other First Nation people in order to build relationships. Participants stated that attending cultural events should be mandatory, even in consideration of busy workloads. The development and maintenance of culturally skilled social workers should be supported within the government structure.

Social work cultural training should be extended to the university level (MacDonald & MacDonald, 2007). Participants discussed the need for cultural skills and information to begin at the university level for social workers. One participant recommended that experiential cultural learning should become a mandatory skill for educational credentials.

How do social workers acquire leadership? Not only do leadership opportunities need to be developed through practice, but leadership skills need to be taught at the university level.

> *Many universities proclaim that one of their most important missions is to train young men and women to be the leaders of the next generation. If they are serious about that proposition, they must be serious about the study of leadership and leadership development … But responsibility for strengthening leadership studies does not fall solely upon university administrators; if anything, it falls more heavily upon scholars and practitioners in the field, for they must build and solidify the intellectual foundations (Gergen & Kellerman, 2003, p. 25).*

Is there a way for government to require social workers to have leadership training before they enter the field?

V. Feast metaphor

"They belong to us"

Feasts were described by participants as being a time of family connection and joy. Participants described families serving together, honoring traditions, and delighting in being part of a collective celebration which includes eating and dancing together. At feasts, the strength of children is acknowledged and their identity confirmed. In addition, feasts are a means of announcing the child's "Indian name" to be received and maintained as historical community information.

Participants discussed a new adoption approach which could involve a feast, similar to the celebration feast signifying the arrival of an infant to the community. The baby welcoming feast is spoken often in the Sm'alayx language to mean, 'You are ours.' The feast could include a child receiving a new adoptive name. An adoption feast could bring the community together so adoption information and stories could be heard by the community without the appearance of secrets or deceptive adoption agreements.

Conclusion

Aboriginal people, who suffered family disassociation at the hands of social workers, have imparted to us recommendations for adoption changes. What will be done with such wisdom? We can continue to work diligently inside our present structure, or we can attempt to push forward and break new ground for the benefit of adopted Aboriginal children (MacDonald, Glode & Wein, 2005).

Challenges to the paradigm of historical child welfare and adoptions practice are already being initiated by Indigenous leaders, such as Dr. Joan Glode, C.M. who together with the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations, filed a Canadian Human Rights complaint in 2008 alleging that the Government of Canada was discriminating in providing less funding for Aboriginal child welfare than for non-Aboriginal child welfare (MacDonald, 2010). Dr. Glode received the Order of Canada in 2009 for her leadership and devotion to the social welfare of aboriginal children and families and remains an active voice as a Mi'Kmag First Nation community member of the Acadia (Band) in Nova Scotia.

Social workers have latitude in how they maintain cultural dignity for Aboriginal families through their daily practice. Social workers can, for example, lead-the-way by advantageously gathering specific birth family and cultural information, thereby increasing adoption opportunities for children. Social workers with courageous hearts and determined wills long for a new era of adoption, leadership skills (Bolman & Deal, 2003) offer valuable resources to engage in continual learning amidst the daily complexities of government procedures and fiscal restraints.

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The Culture of Strengths Makes Them Valued and Competent: Aboriginal Children, Child Welfare, and a School Strengths Intervention

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Abstract

Schools are an important community partner in providing structural supports and wrap around services for children involved with the child welfare system. In this paper, we discuss the implementation of a culturally sensitive strengths-based intervention approach within an elementary school and its value to Aboriginal children. This article discusses the theoretical foundation of the strengths intervention approach and provides a description of a strength assessment tool as well as the implementation of the intervention with specific relevance to Aboriginal students involved with the child welfare system. Two case studies are presented, which illustrate the value of the strengths approach for individual students.

Introduction

When families become involved with child welfare services, it is often due to being in crisis situations (Crosson-Tower, 2008), either temporary or recurrent. These experiences can be disruptive and stressful for children, who frequently face major uncertainty regarding their families and their future care, even when their families are receiving the best possible interventions. This, in turn, can negatively impact children throughout all areas of their lives. This paper examines a new approach that has been introduced at McKellar Park Central School, which is an inner city elementary School where Aboriginal children involved in child welfare services are benefiting from a school/community-based strengths intervention approach, which assesses, promotes, and utilizes a full spectrum of strengths for each individual (Rawana & Brownlee, 2009). The intervention makes it possible for the school to play an important role as a community partner in providing the kind of relationships and structural supports that are vital for helping children to foster resilience.

Aboriginal children who are involved with child welfare services face all the same issues as non-Aboriginal children. These issues include significant transitions, potential trauma, and high mobility. But for Aboriginal children there are added considerations such as an historical legacy of children being taken from their families and communities (Chansonneuve, 2005; Lafrance & Bastien, 2007), a much higher percentage of children in care (Baskin, 2007), on-going considerations regarding culturally competent foster placements (Blackstock, 2005; Sinclair, 2007), as well as endemic structurally-entrenched poverty affecting Aboriginal communities across Canada (Kendall, 2001). The School strength intervention approach described in this paper uses unique assessment tools, providing children with an increased awareness of their personal strengths (Rawana & Brownlee, 2009). Not only can the child draw upon their personal strengths from one area of their life to have a positive influence in another area, but they

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can also use their strengths in whatever paths their lives take. Therefore, even the children who access the intervention for limited amounts of time get the benefit of increased self-awareness about their strengths, as well as the experience of any practical application of their strengths that they are able to access while at the school.

This article first discusses issues facing Aboriginal children in the child welfare system at the school, followed by a review of the theoretical foundation of the strengths approach, a description of the strength assessment tools, and an overview of the implementation of the approach with its specific relevance for Aboriginal students involved with the child welfare system. Finally, two case studies are presented, which illustrate the value of the strengths approach for individual students and demonstrate the effectiveness of providing wrap-around services to students in an urban, inner-city elementary school.

Aboriginal Child Welfare Context

Children who are involved with child welfare are some of the most vulnerable people in our society. However, as is the case for all children, it is evident that children involved with the child welfare system are not without strengths, gained both from surmounting adversity as well as from the presence of everyday positive life experiences (Kirven, 2000). Crosson-Tower (2008) outlines the four reasons for the involvement of child welfare services with families in crisis: "(1) failure to complete basic tasks, (2) failure to adapt to changes brought on by developmental tasks, (3) failure to deal with crises, and (4) failure to deal with societal pressures" (p. 43). The child welfare service itself often becomes one of the crises with which parents have to cope. It is easy to see how under such conditions the families themselves may fail to notice or appreciate their own strengths.

Children involved with the child welfare system have experienced disruptions in their home life, often from emotionally unsettling events. Frequently, changes in primary caregivers, either entering foster care, returning to immediate or extended family, or moving between foster caregivers, affects children's school performance. Kirven (2000) argues that children's identities often form through the input of school, peers, extra-curricular activities, neighbourhood and community; which interestingly are some of the domains that are assessed in the assessment of child strengths that are discussed later in this paper. When a child welfare situation impacts the lives of Aboriginal children, one must consider the potential effects of being removed not only from immediate family, but also potentially from a tightly knit extended family. Further, this can also change or strain relationships with family and others who are living in First Nation communities and contribute to a sense of isolation often experienced by Aboriginal people who have recently moved to urban centres (Graham & Peters, 2002). Feelings of loss of access to culture or spirituality, if the placement is not culturally appropriate in some way, can also intensify the child's sense of isolation. As Justice René Dussault (2007) recounts: "Children judged to be vulnerable were routinely made wards of provincial agencies and placed in non-Aboriginal foster homes. External agencies have been slow to understand the profound cultural differences and adjust their approaches accordingly" (p. 9). The most common issues facing the Aboriginal students of McKellar Park School involved with child welfare services are high levels of transition in school life, home life, and between communities, lack of access to resources, isolation due to new urban settings, and high levels of mobility (Graham & Peters, 2002). The strengths intervention approach includes multiple components of that can positively influence the experiences of these children.

Theoretical Foundation of Strengths at McKellar Park Central School

Saleebey (2006) describes the strengths perspective as mobilizing clients' talents, knowledge, capacities, and resources "in the service of achieving their goals and visions" so the client can "have a better quality of life on their terms" (p. 1). This conception of strengths includes several key concepts. First, is the idea that everyone has strengths and that clients can draw upon the different areas of strengths in their lives to achieve their personal goals. Second, an individual can utilize these strengths to achieve a better quality of life, when the strengths are consciously perceived as valuable and transferable. Third, the conceptualization of strengths as the knowledge, capacities and resources that clients already possess to their benefit is particularly important for clients who may not conform to the norms of the dominant culture. It allows a conceptualization of personal strengths that is unique to an individual's worldview, and the worldview of one's family, community, and culture. Although the strengths perspective is used throughout the field of social work, and has generally been shown to be effective in practice (Saleebey, 2006; Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005), the translation from perspective to model has been relatively vague when applied to families and children and has tended to rely heavily on a resilience-based application.

Rawana and Brownlee (2009) support the need to clarify the operationalization of the strengths perspective in its application with families and children and have offered a model of their own that easily extends to a school environment. In their assessment and intervention model, they identify strengths within all domains of a child's everyday functioning,

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not just in relation to an experience of adversity as would be the case with a resilience-based model. This is particularly salient to children and families involved with the child welfare system where the sense of adverse life circumstances can sometimes seem overwhelming. For instance, in a resilience-based conceptualization of strengths an Aboriginal child who has been taken into care due to domestic violence within his family would be encouraged to draw on the ways he coped with this situation in the past, such as seeking help with extended family or bonding with siblings (Glicken, 2004). However, using the model described by Rawana and Brownlee (2009), which includes an appreciation of the child's strengths that are not necessarily based on adversity, the child may be found to have a profound connection to his culture and positive involvement with his hockey team. The child could draw upon both of these areas of strength for dealing with the experience of being in care as well as dealing with the trauma of domestic violence.

The Rawana and Brownlee strengths model highlights the capacity of children to maximize their potential, to improve their lives and to deal with difficult events. The inclusion of a Strengths Assessment Inventory (SAI) enables a wide range of strengths to be identified that are valued both by the individual and society, including cultural and spiritual sources of strengths (Rawana & Brownlee, 2009). Given the importance of culturally appropriate practice within social work (Morrissette, McKenzie & Morrissette, 1993), including the incorporation of spirituality (Zapf, 2005), it is essential to ensure that clients' needs are being met culturally. This aspect of service can pose challenges, as not only do all individuals have different perceptions of and identifications with their own cultures, but also social workers are often serving clients whose culture differs significantly from their own. However, since the Rawana and Brownlee model evaluates strengths in such a broad spectrum of the client's life, the strengths that may potentially be drawn from cultural practices can be assessed and included in any intervention with the child and family.

Strengths Assessment

The value of a comprehensive assessment of strengths, usually in the form of an interview, has been widely recognized by social workers as an important component of a strength-based approach to clinical work (Cowger, 1994; De Jong & Miller, 1995; Glicken, 2004). The strength assessment protocol developed and described by Rawana and Brownlee (2009) emphasizes the value of a structured strength-based questionnaire, which involves multi-source and multi-site procedures. A multi-source assessment could involve the child, parent and service providers such as social workers and teachers. The multi-sites are generally home and school. An assessment instrument is preferred because of the ease with which the information can be collected from a number of key people. Thus, the child can complete a self-report whereas parents, teachers, clinicians and other community leaders can use a rating scale that is equivalent to the self-report but designed for adults who are familiar with the child. By using this instrument, a description of observed strengths can be readily gathered about the child.

This strategy of multi-source, multi-site assessment lends itself to the organization of strengths information according to naturally occurring structures in the environment which Rawana and Brownlee label domains of functioning. A relatively simple way to describe the domains is to separate them into two major categories: Contextual Domains, which refer to the context in which the child interacts with others, and Personal Developmental Domains, which refer to the more individualized functioning of the child. Both the contextual and personal developmental domains reflect day-to-day functioning throughout the lifespan of the child. The contextual domains include Peers, Family/Home, School, Employment, and Community, while the personal development domains include Personality, Personal and Physical Care and Leisure or Recreation, Spiritual and Cultural Development and Current and Future Goals. Some domains include aspects of the child's life that become more pertinent as the child matures, such as employment, community involvement or spiritual and cultural development.

By presenting the information on identified strengths according to the domains of functioning, the school-based intervention offers the child and family a framework that enables them to recognize quickly and easily which areas of the child's life are going well. It also allows the child and family to appreciate if the child's strengths tend to be concentrated in specific areas rather than over a broader range of domains, or even if the child is possibly struggling in some areas. This process usually includes new information as well as characteristics of the child that are widely appreciated and fuses it into a framework that makes it possible to have conversations about a variety of strengths as well as conversations about why the child may have invested in some strengths rather than in others or conversations about how the child might be able to employ the strengths he or she has in one domain to improve functioning in another domain. Since the assessment seeks to gather information on actual strengths and can include an evaluation of the child's strengths by others, there is a greater chance that the strengths are an accurate reflection of the child and allow realistic expectations to be developed.

Implementation of a School Based Strengths Intervention Approach

McKellar Park Central School is an inner-city school located in a relatively lower socio-economic area of Thunder Bay, Ontario. The school has a population of 265 students with approximately 50% of the students self-identifying as First Nations. For approximately the last year and a half McKellar Park Central School has been involved in the implementation of a bullying project based on a strengths perspective and the case studies given below are based on this experience. At McKellar Park Central School a comprehensive strengths evaluation forms the foundation of the strengths intervention approach. The built-in cultural appropriateness of the approach suits the diversity of the student body. McKellar Park Central School uses the assessment of student strengths to promote a positive school environment, by using the students' personal assets to deal with some of the problems that they are experiencing in their lives. The intervention has many components, all of which incorporate the students' strengths, and all of which are dynamic, in that they are able to evolve and adapt as the intervention continues. By initially assessing the students' strengths, the students become conscious of their personal potential to contribute not only to the school community, but also throughout all aspects of their lives. These strengths are portable and transferable, so that student may explore how they can use strengths that they have in one domain to respond to challenges in a different domain. The assessment stage is the first step for involving students to begin to reflect on their potential. Many other components of the intervention provide an opportunity for the students to actively use the strengths that are assessed, to contribute to, participate in, and become members of the school community.

Benard (2006) highlights the ways in which people are able to develop healthily and learn successfully: "having the opportunities to be heard, to voice one's opinion, to make choices, to have responsibilities, to engage in active problem-solving, to express one's imagination, to work with and help others, and to give one's gift back to the community" (p. 203). The strengths intervention approach at McKellar Park provides opportunities for students to do all of these things, which according to Benard will result in the development of students' social competence, problem-solving skills, positive use of self, and their sense of purpose and future. Essentially, various components of the strengths intervention demonstrate to students not only that they have strengths, and that they have the potential to use them, but also allow students to actively test their strengths, through positive participation in the school community. The participation is not limited to the formal components of the intervention either, but is generally applicable to all aspects of school life through the development of a 'culture of strengths.'

The school has had a very positive response to the strengths initiatives that it has undertaken, and has succeeded in creating a welcoming culture of respect, caring and competence. This has been particularly successful with Aboriginal students, who have responded exceptionally well to the strengths approach. For children who are already familiar with the strengths perspective through involvement with social work professionals, such as children encounter in child welfare services, this kind of wrap-around approach serves to reinforce the notions that they have already encountered. The true measure of success for an intervention is whether it is able to positively affect a client's life outside of the therapeutic relationship. Thus, the involvement of the school system in offering a strength-based intervention is important in helping to consolidate a wider application of any therapeutic work. The next section discusses the individual components of the strengths intervention approach at McKellar Park Central School and how they work towards helping Aboriginal children, including those who may be involved with child welfare services, develop wider social competence, problem-solving skills, positive use of self, and their sense of purpose and future. In addition, the discussion and the two cases illustrations that follow focus on how the intervention approach supports the child through the difficulties that they often experience while they are involved with the child welfare system.

Components of the McKellar Park Strengths Intervention Approach

Common issues encountered by Aboriginal children involved with the child welfare system are high levels of transition in home and school life and even between communities. These transitions are often paired with isolation emerging from the high levels of mobility, especially if the family is entering a new community, as well as changes in the family's access to resources. Many elements of the strengths intervention are helpful with these issues.

The first component of the intervention approach is the completion of a personal strengths assessment using the SAI as described above by both the child and sometimes by the teaching staff and parents or caregivers. This information was shared with significant stakeholders, particularly to ensure all the key helpers can facilitate the expression of these strengths. The next component in which a student may participate is the "Good Start Centre." This consists of giving a fair start to students who join the school during the year. During two half-day sessions, the students and their families are set up for success emotionally, socially, and academically within

the school. The school's administrator, or Special Education teacher, will spend this time with the families ensuring that both the students and caregivers feel comfortable in the school and community. This may include, but is not limited to, informing the family where they can access community resources, performing academic testing on the students, and involving the students in a buddy program. A strengths inventory is completed with the parents and students, and this information is used to successfully integrate the students into the school community. For example, if someone is good at sports, this becomes an important part of his or her school experience. This helps to make the student feel comfortable thus preventing the anxiety that can sometimes lead to negative behaviours. For Aboriginal children who are in care, changes in foster placements may occur or the children may return to their biological parents or extended families. Although it is often the goal of child welfare agencies to prevent school changes midway through the year, it is sometimes unavoidable. This component of the strengths intervention helps to ease the transition into the new school at a time when children are facing multiple transitions in their lives.

Another strategy used is cool down and prevention time. Students who are experiencing difficulty on a particular day will spend time with a caring adult in the school who is aware of their strengths. During this time, they discuss how the student could engage in behaviours that are more positive by using some of the student's personal strengths, and thus avoid the situation that put him or her in cool down in the first place. This intervention empowers students to make better choices and to have a hand in creating a more positive school culture. For students who are experiencing turmoil at home and within their families, this approach allows them to reflect on the challenges they are facing, including the challenge of maintaining positive behaviours at school when there are personal issues that can be distracting to them, or causing stress while they are at school. During this time, which the student spends in self-reflection with the adult, they both make an effort to explore and expand on the assessed strengths of the student and to plan strategies that could help in dealing with these challenges using the strengths that the student has identified.

A fourth component is the use of alternatives to suspension practices. The administrators use alternatives to spending time at home when something has occurred that may have warranted a short suspension. This is a step in progressive discipline, where the child works on social skills, may partake in restorative practice, or a talking/healing circle. It is consistent with the above-mentioned approaches, in which the student's strengths are being utilized to engage in a restorative conversation. Time is spent working through a resolution of the issue that benefits all involved. This is effective if the child is beginning to engage in negative behaviours, which potentially could lead to the breakdown of foster placements. In addition to being a progressive method of discipline within the school, it potentially can help to maintain the foster placement for longer, because the child will continue to attend school instead of being in the constant care of the foster parents, and will be engaged in on-going reflection on personal strengths and alternatives to negative behaviours.

The Ambassador's Club is another important component that builds on the child's strengths, both in terms of philosophy and implementation. It is comprised of students, selected because the staff feel that they could benefit from further opportunities to engage in positive behaviour, to "give one's gift back to the community" (Benard, 2006, p.203). The intervention approach employs children who do not tend to excel in the traditional areas on which students are assessed in a school setting, such as on academics, or classroom behaviour. These students' strengths have been evaluated and used to make them aware that positive power situations exist in the school to replace negative behaviours that are being perpetrated or experienced by the students. Students are experiencing the success of helping to be a part of the solution, rather than expediting the problem, by being helpful to each other, as well as to the school community. The students spend a lunch hour every two weeks with the administrators working on social skills, problem solving, discussing how to improve school situations to make these situations more inviting to other students, as well as, organizing activities for the school. The students also run assemblies and give tours to new students. For children who are experiencing a profound lack of control over their lives, such as is often the case for children in the child welfare system, the sense of taking on responsibilities, and being rewarded for good behaviour (which can also be a problematic aspect of child welfare if the child perceives his or her behaviour as being the cause of entering into care) can increase self-esteem, self-efficacy, and a sense of positive accomplishment. These children are garnering attention for their positive actions, reinforcing the strengths that have been previously assessed.

The final formal component of the strengths intervention approach is the participation of the New Experiences Program, which is provided by a children's mental health agency, namely, the Children's Centre Thunder Bay. The New Experiences Program staff provide student and parent workshops and consultations, and address specific issues that come up in students' experiences. For example, some workshops have addressed grief, trauma, bullying, Seven Grandfather teachings, role models, the development of goals and dreams and appropriate coping skills. This occurs once a week in

the school, and is a way to involve caregivers in the dialogue that is occurring within the school about students' strengths. Biological parents, foster parents, and extended family are all welcomed into the school to participate, increasing the sense of community within school. This is a way to facilitate the transfer of strengths between different aspects of children's lives.

Once the strengths intervention approach began at McKellar Park Central School, the teachers at the school wanted to utilize their students' strengths more actively in the classroom. The teachers actively and dynamically introduced the strengths approach into the classroom, based on the strengths assessments completed by all the students. Most of the classrooms in the school now have a 'strengths wall,' on which the students' key strengths are listed. These strengths walls have the benefit of being easily changeable, so that when students are able to utilize previously untapped strengths, the wall can be changed to reflect it. This occurred as an adjunct to the initial conceptualization of the strengths intervention approach, but quickly became a focal point of students and staff. No student was left without a visual representation of what they brought as individuals to the school community. Strengths language was quickly absorbed into students' and teachers' vocabularies, and an entire strengths culture began to take shape within the school.

Case Studies

Case One

John, a thirteen-year-old male, at McKellar Park Central School has been repeatedly taken into the care of the local Aboriginal child welfare agency, and returned to his biological mother's care throughout his life. In his mother's home, John was a witness to domestic violence, and experienced violence himself. He has always lived in poverty. John acted out throughout his elementary school career, usually with aggression and violence, which often resulted in being suspended from school. Although the teachers at school recognized that John's behaviour was a carry-over from his home life, they still were challenges to deal with his "lack of obedience to adult authority."

After participating in the school's strength intervention approach, John has undergone a number of positive changes which have been sustained for at least a year and would appear to be stable. He is described as a leader, an athlete, and as being very helpful in the school. He is discovering his strengths in the school, and in the relationships he is forming with others within the school. John's negative behaviours subsided, and he began to "understand who he [is] as a person, and what his strengths [are] in the school." After the strengths intervention started, John made the decision to live with his grandmother, rather than continue living with his mother. His grandmother's home is a stable, supportive environment. He has also found the capacity to stand up for himself to his mother, and to defend the decisions that he makes based on what is best for himself. He has had to take these actions in the school setting occasionally, and has been able to draw on the supportive, strength-based relationships that he has developed with the adults at the school. He has become much more self-reflective, and is able to see patterns in his behaviour, and recognize why they are occurring. For example, looking at his own data documenting the behaviour incidents that he has had throughout his school career, John recognized that negative behaviours often peaked in January. John recognized that Christmas was not a good time in his family, and was able to see the connection between his anger and acting out when he returned to school each January.

John is a member of the Ambassador's Club, and has willingly attended every New Experiences workshop. Both his mother and his grandmother also participated in the New Experience workshops. According to the principal of the school, running interventions for both parents and children not only provides valuable education to both parties, but also allows children to witness their parents committing to their own and the child's well-being, and modelling participation in the community.

John has become a fully participating member of the school community since the strengths intervention approach has begun. He has built positive relationships with the adults at the school. He knows that they want him to succeed, and he is motivated to follow through to achieve success, and to live up to the reputation that he has created for himself. In addition, the negative behaviours that were being carried from home life into John's school life have reversed; he is now bringing the positive strengths he is discovering at school into his home life, to make decisions and take actions that are to his benefit.

Case Two

Sarah, a twelve-year-old female at McKellar Park School, currently lives with her biological family, she has been taken into foster care at various points throughout her life, and it remains an on-going issue within the family. Sarah's home is not stable, and there are on-going struggles with the living conditions, due to poverty. Both the adults at the school and Sarah herself worry about her well-being. Sarah engaged in aggressive, violent behaviours, including relational bullying of other girls. She also used drugs and frequently came to school under the influence of drugs, before starting with the strengths intervention approach. Sarah faced suspension on several occasions, and also was frequently absent from school.

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Since the strengths intervention approach was implemented at the school, the principal has not had a single incident when Sarah has had to go to the principal's office. It has been over a year since the principal has had to deal with Sarah's negative behaviours. Before the strengths intervention formally began, Sarah was given alternatives to suspension for her behaviours, an action that has carried over into the strengths intervention approach. She responded very well to the adult interventions that accompany the alternatives to suspension, and Sarah participated in positive discussions, and has learned coping and life skills, instead of spending the time at home. She has, like John, participated in all of the New Experiences workshops, and her father has attended each of them as well. Again, the opportunity for children to see their parents demonstrating their care and concern for them has more implications in home life, and the carry over of the strengths-oriented culture and language from school to home by both parent and child cannot be understated. Sarah also participates in the girls' drumming group that takes place each week, and has become very focused on athletics.

In Sarah's case, she has definitely benefited from the culture of strengths that has permeated the school community. She has been "pumped up" by adults in school, who recognize her positive behavioural changes. She no longer uses violence or bullying, and the principal believes that no one in the school feels victimized by Sarah. Neither does she come to school under the influence of drugs, nor does she skip class any more. The principal said, "She's a non-issue. She's one of my stars." This highlights the fact that in addition to Sarah's behaviours becoming a 'non-issue', she is now being recognized for her positive actions and for the changes that have occurred in her behaviours. From the strengths surveys, she has identified athletics as an area of strengths for her. When asked about the turnaround in her behaviour, she identified participation in sports as one of the motivations to come to school. Her attendance is no longer an issue and the goal-oriented thinking and identification of her strengths helps Sarah maintain her improved attendance. Because the school itself has a culture of strengths, it has become a place where Sarah knows that people care about her, and where the structure, setting, peacefulness, and the relationships that she has built all support and enhance her own strengths.

Conclusion

The strengths intervention approach implemented by the school has affected all students in the school, but has garnered remarkable results with the Aboriginal population. The specific outcomes noted for the children and families involved with child welfare have been of particular interest, as this population faces increased risks and challenges both within the school setting and in home life. The principal of the school stated that, "It's really the culture of strengths rather than any component of the approach. It's the culture of strengths that make [the children] feel like this is a home environment, that [they're] respected." The interventions undertaken in the school's strengths intervention approach give these children the unparalleled opportunity to name and identify their strengths, and have these strengths recognized by caring adults, as well as for the children to discover the potential that already exists for their development. Most importantly perhaps, it gives the child a safe, nurturing environment to experience the positive results of expressing and exercising their personal strengths. The culture of strengths within the school becomes a springboard for these children to realize their potential in all areas of their lives. It also contributes to the structural conditions, relationships and access to social supports that are essential if children are to develop the individual capacities to acquire resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Ungar, 2004) that will enhance their chances of successfully navigating their way through the child welfare system.

Since the identified strengths discussed above are transferrable between home, school and the community, these children are able to see that their identity is closely intertwined with their strengths. This development, therefore, may help them to navigate successfully through child welfare situations that they either have encountered in the past or will encounter in the future.

Finally, the program described in this paper has built-in quantitative, qualitative and case study components to the design in order to explore longitudinally the changes that have occurred in the school from the inception of the program to its completion which is intended to occur in December in 2009. While the evaluation of this program will be completed, the successes to date have encouraged the administrators and staff at McKellar Park Central School to continue with the program as part of regular practice.

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Indigenous Self-Discovery: "Being Called to Witness"

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Abstract

This paper presents a reflective topical narrative in a style this author discovered in researching Irihapeti Ramsden (2003), an Ngai Tahupotiki (Maori) nursing instructor of Aotearoa (New Zealand). It is a refection on the nature of Indigenous scholar's inquiry, or what Irihapeti Ramsden recognized as an often melancholic journey of self-discovery. It is an attempt to understand how, where, and why colonization has reduced us to dependent remnants of the self-reliant and independent peoples our stories remember. We are collectively creating an alternative voice to colonial lies/myths and calling for the restoration of the human dignity stolen along with lands, resources and human rights. Irihapeti Ramsden (2003) used her own melancholic journey of self-discovery to re-ignite trust and reciprocity between people, and to bring the idea of Cultural Safety to colonial New Zealand, thereby establishing a splendid map for future generations of all spaces in need of decolonization. She was met with considerable resistance in her homeland as she raised awareness of the truth about abuses of power by colonial institutions and bureaucracies. By similarly engaging in often difficult processes of self-discovery Indigenous scholars everywhere are helping to unravel a global inheritance of colonial practice. Reconciliation will only be possible when citizens honour Indigenous people's resistance, resentment and rebellion to European myths of conquest. Indigenous scholars are Being Called to Witness seven generations forward and to preserve the beauty and strength our ancestors wanted to protect. Our ancestors sacrificed a great deal, and we must wipe our tears, open our eyes, listen deeply, clear our throats, and raise our strong voices to bear witness to our ancestors' prayers.

> *Being called to witness by the Coast Salish and Interior Salish peoples' of Canada is an honour, a tradition dating back long before contact with European cultures. Salish peoples' history is an oral history. The role of a witness is to record the message of the event in their hearts and minds, and afterward, remember and validate the special occasion by carrying the message and sharing it with friends, neighbors and community members (Vancouver Olympic Committee, 2009).*

Introduction

My deliberation on the above quote, a flyer released by the Vancouver Olympic Committee (2009) prompted my search for the meaning and utility of 'being called to witness.' Canadian Indigenous story-restorer, story-recovery expert, and wisdom keeper Lee Maracle answered my query and began a personal exploration of the West Coast Salish practice of "being called to witness" to help create a dialogue on the nature of Indigenous self-discovery for Indigenous scholars and writers. This exploration mirrors a remarkable discourse occurring between mature Indigenous community workers with varied repositories of stories old and new from "Indian Country" who are returning to Canada's educational institutions, where they are struggling to articulate on the ground insights to Indigenous experience in colonial Canada. However, even with many remarkable wisdom gathering life experiences, I, and many of them are required to appeal academic rejection of unique and hard fought 'lived' qualifications for admission to graduate studies. My work had taken me into arenas of community development, land claims research, mental health, suicide, child welfare, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and addictions research. None of which appeared to qualify my entry into the hallowed halls of academia. Unfortunately, many of us find that marks in undergraduate work mean more than hard earned life experience and life practice for graduate studies at University of Toronto. Fortunately there have been efforts to challenge the

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barriers that have kept Canada's Indigenous population waiting by the door. Ronald Niezen (2009) made an effort to articulate one of the unique pathways of understanding Indigenous self-discovery has taken in his recent book, ***The Rediscovered Self: Indigenous Identity and Cultural Justice,***

> *From a construct of international governance representing in the abstract a category of people assumed to be in need of development and inclusion-by-assimilation in the project of the nation-state, the term "indigenous" was subsequently re-engineered to represent the aspirations of a wide array of peoples marginalized by states. It has clearly undergone a significant extension of usage from a legal category to a source of identity. It has acquired a "we." It effectively changed hands and was modified with hopes and expectations of self-determination. Legal sociology, in other words, can be taken hold by its subjects as a source of liberation and collective self-definition (Niezen, 2009:178).*

The above statement captures some of the thoughts I explore and express in this paper regarding my experience as an Indigenous community worker and late arriving scholar. After surviving a 30 year career of First Nations community development work, I made my way through graduate school in an attempt to alter the colonial trajectory unleashed on First Nations within our home and native land now known as Canada. I saw that success for most Indigenous students precludes the idea of graduate studies and inherent opportunities to expand a form of critical analysis for developing leadership skills in a modern context. I believe that First Nations peoples, whether fighting the legacy of colonialism or accessing advanced education for personal, familial and community sharing still face sad barriers to participation in meaningful ways. We are however, called loudly to contribute to 21st century demands for collaboration and engagement with our external "host" world. Paradoxically, we are also frozen out of leadership opportunities in our home communities when we lack the traditional knowledge required to assist in restoration of lost traditional knowledge from the colonial siege our ancestors endured. The exclusion of Indigenous scholars at the graduate level also prevents future non-Aboriginal leaders from having an opportunity to engage and know the very people who will sit and negotiate the new relationship demanded of Canada and its Indigenous population. An exploration of how Canadian reserves, which represent artificial homes in terms of the healthy communities that were surrendered to make way for the settlement of Canada, will be "privatized" is a current and 'politically hot' example of that new relationship (Flanagan, 2010). Aboriginal people however, are not going to conveniently disappear into the Canadian body politic; therefore, Canada and academia must reconcile the damages done by broken Treaties, residential school atrocities, and the mismanagement of Canada's natural wealth (Saul, 2009).

This article is a reflective exercise on a very personal struggle of self-discovery to make sense of the pathos/pathology of colonization. Locating learning modalities that actually honour the sacredness of human relationship, too often undervalued in academia was difficult, and I was forced to find new ways of expression. Theoretical constructs perpetuated by academia are rarely formulated with Cultural Safety pedagogy in mind, and some witnessing simply does not fit the academic model (Ramsden, 2003). Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux represents the best of Indigenous scholarly achievement where giving back to community exceeds an obligation to correct the failures of academia to honour and receive Indigenous world-views as valuable to our future leaders. Her insistence that the expression of "neuro or holistic education" in the classroom means bringing scholars into the community and the community into the classroom, steps well beyond the comfort zone of most academics, and embodies the oral traditions that define Indigenous knowledge exchange at its most fruitful and compelling.

Study in the Academy today

Rampant cultural, historical and social confusion creates many difficult issues for researchers/witnesses at all levels of education when they venture into the unresolved pain and injury of Canada's colonial past. Indigenous peoples are marginalized and invisible in most areas of study. Their history and discourse is normally relegated to special programs like Aboriginal studies, as if Indigenous world-views, knowledge, culture and vision for Canada's future only require mere comma's in course material. These nods feel like inclusion only if a visible, vocal and courageous 'Indian' finds a seat in the class. Indigenous students' experience within the academy is reminiscent of a 'Dickenish' tale. It is often a tale of two extremes at the best of times and at the worst of times simultaneously becomes a lesson and a lonely burden of responsibility to challenge the shame and humiliation of each racist, ignorant and arrogant colonial myth perpetuated; but like Oliver Twist we want more than poverty.

Poverty or Richness Undefined?

In that light, the extreme circumstances of poverty in First Nations is a testament of stolen lands, stolen human rights to self-determination and stolen communities, or as Lee Maracle teaches "places we would want to stand under" (Maracle, 2009). Jan Longboat (2009) defined 'poorness' in

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terms of elders identifying suffering people who had lost the richness of collective reciprocity and interdependence. She identified those who failed to follow culturally imperative teachings and learn the traditional skills necessary to provide a good life for themselves and their families. The loss of natural sovereignty meant citizens equipped with exceptional abilities to share beyond individual needs lost the ability to help in times of need; good will was replaced with tyranny and domination. Dispossession and dependency on hand-outs replaced efficacy and resilience. It is impossible to fully grasp the transfer of poverty from refugees to those seeking refuge from the atrocities of Canada's colonial history without a thorough inquiry into the landlords of cultural destruction that were visited upon a once independent and self-sufficient peoples. Canada is very much in need of a truth telling on the destructive impacts of racist, sexist, and oppressive Indian agents through the 18th, 19th and 20th century.

Indigenous Inquiry and Being Called to Witness

My graduate school education eventually provided a path-way of influence and engagement with my academic peers. Together, I could see how we could inform, uninformed mainstream educated Canadians about the harsh realities of their colonial history on First Nations, especially those in Canada's vast northern backyard. I saw first hand how they have been "shielded from truths" so their governments could maintain their perverse domination over the Indigenous populations of Canada (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2010). I was constantly reminded that not having the proper credentials also limited the value of my 'lived' knowledge and experience. I found walking the talk of those who talk the talk a confusing struggle. Being raised on a travelling carnival had prepared me to protect myself from others "running the alibi" for predatory domination (Koptie, 2009), but acquiescence to "colonial imperialism" was demanded (Battiste, 2002). Indigenous peoples remain trapped and assumed followers of that tired dance. Being called to witness is re-learning how we once led our own dances and successfully locked them into strong good hearts and strong good minds. Thankfully, I was welcomed by the Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) group of University of Toronto who advocated for recognition of the contributions my generation of social workers could make from within the walls of academia. They are pulling down systemic barriers to Indigenous knowledge gaining recognition as vital to the truth and reconciliation healing work Canada stubbornly avoids. We assert that community development research work in First Nations communities must look at the social, economic, political, spiritual upheavals that the 'reservationiz454ation' of Canada's Indigenous peoples have had on our sense of well-being. Indigenous peoples were relocated to temporary, intentional marginalized and mostly uninhabitable plots of surplus lands. These mostly small and enclosed reserves were governed by the colonial Canadian Indian Act of 1876. This incarceration represents the "after this nothing happened" aspect of our circumstances (Lear, 2006). The necessary unveiling of this story requires witnesses and impact statements on spaces and places Indigenous scholars have not long inhabited. Reliance on the ignorance and arrogance of colonial representations of Canada's historical, economic, political and spiritual identity are troublingly unfair and false (Saul 2009), because too much of Canada's history supports white supremacy notions of savages in need of civilization. The real story belies the actual frontier experiences too long hidden in one sided historical telling of Canada's nation-building/destructing. Depending on the vantage point taken poverty is often seen as deserved for failing to adjust to progress or, poverty can simply be seen as the price Indigenous people pay to cling to ancestral self-determination. Their determination to follow the instructions of thousands of generations of survivors within their traditional homelands has indeed been costly.

Is the addictive tendency toward dependency on reserves somehow related to a forced relinquishment of power to engage in warfare? Or, perhaps related to the impotency of rebelling against the oppression of the Canadian Indian Act? Why and how do resistance, resentment and rebellion become internalized? Do traumatic experiences replace ceremony, celebration and carrying in our hearts the cultural gifts a good life once witnessed and carried forward? Yet as my introductory quote highlights, our people carried other elements of the past forward as well. Still, far too many Canadians are shielded from the alternative experiences of resilience based culture transfer in the historical settlement/community foundations in our territories. The gaps in understanding of what has unfolded in the past 150 years are unconscionable.

Decolonization?

Indigenous survivors of colonial excess remain stark witnesses of injustices waiting for compassionate reception. An inclusive historical revision of Canada's true identity is long overdue. Cultural, political, social, economic and spiritual reclamation is well underway not just in Canada but globally; witness the United Nations 2007 adoption of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada's path to becoming a credible modern state must include the de-colonization aspirations of Indigenous peoples in Canada's backyard. Plundering wealth from stolen lands, like on Pandora in James Cameron's recent

movie ***Avatar,*** will always draw out the real "Defenders of the Land" such as Mohawk Indigenous activist Ben Powless (2010). Powless bears witness as a remarkable new generation of de-colonization agents of change, with global reach. The tar sands, gold mines, diamond mines, oil fields and hydro dams are situated on Indigenous lands and under Treaty terms that can no longer be dismissed or ignored. This author was a cultural advisor on a recent, February 2010 Canadian Roots youth exchange to Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation. That First Nation is situated in the "Ring of Fire, a mineral deposit in northern Ontario that the Ontario government in its 2010 Throne Speech, identified as the greatest mineral discovery in a century. Chief Connie Gray-McKay of that remote First Nations told our group, "we're tired of being the sandwich, we want to be the plate," to express the frustration of watching wealth extracted from their traditional lands that does nothing to alleviate the heart wrenching poverty in their community. There is a worldview locked within those Treaties, and it speaks to an intentionality to protect those lands and to survive many more generations ahead. One of this author's most glorious experiences in graduate studies was researching the field notes, journal entries and recordings of Elder's stories by Abraham Maslow, Lucien Hanks and Jane Richardson from their 1938 anthropologic visit, with supervision by Ruth Benedict, to Blackfoot territory in Alberta. They were able capture detailed witness impact accounts which contained valuable insights to Canada's intentionality in the 19th and 20th century.

The Legacy of Scott

Treaty "negotiations" included threats of American style genocide and starvation, and were a part of Duncan Campbell Scott's bureaucratic tactics to get rid of Indians and gain access to valuable oil fields and gold. The world has long been called to witness the actual "Indigenous-colonizer relations" out of those 'visits' that ***Avatar*** successfully managed to capture allegorically (Powless, 2010).

Duncan Campbell Scott deserves more scrutiny than most Canadian historians provide and would surely fit the criteria for a villain role-model for James Cameron's movie ***Avatar.*** His tenure at the Department of Indian Affairs represents the pathos of colonial inertia. Most Canadians are not taught about D. C. Scott the famous poet and creator of Canadian cultural genocide for Indigenous peoples across Canada's north, south, east and west. Scott exemplified a Victorian racial, social, cultural and spiritual superiority that flowed from social-Darwinism and prerogative power myths that permitted the conceiving of policies by bureaucrats to define state objectives like,

> *I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact. That this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone… Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill (MacKenzie, 2009:91).*

Indigenous peoples surely never wanted to be refugees in their own lands, living in squalid conditions, and having their children ripped away from them, while the instigator and purveyor of those atrocities was writing poetry. Indigenous scholars and writers must do valiant inquiry into the thoughts of men like Duncan Campbell Scott's who unabashedly unleashed terror and trauma in the past century against their ancestors and across their homelands.

Alice Miller's remarkable book, ***For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child Rearing and the Roots of Violence,*** guides the locating of a reflective topical biography on Adolf Hitler's psycho-social human development and the abusive childhood he experienced. Unresolved intergenerational flaws were likely significant in a life that spawned a final solution for racial hatred. Adolf Hitler's fascination with cowboys and Indians and his acting out behaviors led to the Holocaust. That figurative Trail of Tears saw an effort to destroy a whole population. Patterns of 'conquest' in the new world may have provided a tragic model for colonization and genocide worldwide. Indigenous writers will find paths of truth when studying writers like Alice Miller, as they seek to critically frame what happens when men like Duncan Campbell Scott round up Indigenous children and place them in places of "poisonous pedagogy" (Miller, 2002). Our lives remain haunted, our ability to flourish impeded, and our First Nations are still recovering from the intergenerational traumatic impacts of historic injustices, just like others around the globe.

Abraham Maslow the Father of Self-Actualization

It was 1938 when Hitler's aspirations for colonial dominance unfolded throughout Europe. In northern Alberta, a future famous 20th century humanist social scientist named Abraham Maslow was then a graduate student and being sent by Ruth Benedict to investigate a waning tribe of Indians on the Prairies of Canada. Benedict sought to capture, observe, and preserve anthropological data before civilization destroyed the Indians' way of life and very existence (1934). It is vital for reconciliation that a new generation of Indigenous inquiry takes stock of truths from that fateful 1938 excursion into Indian Country by Maslow, Hanks and Richardson. What

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that team recorded has everything to do with exposing the big lie that Canada is willing to be a fair country. Maslow spoke clearly to an understanding that the oil of Alberta belonged to all Canadians and that it was time for the benefits of that oil to contribute to ending Indigenous poverty. Maslow claimed that in 1938 and again in 1967. What has the Canadian government had to say in response?

Preliminary review of field notes and later journal recordings by Maslow and his research team demonstrate their experience had an important impact on the development of Maslow’s concepts of humanist psychology. His early work on hierarchies is a vital record for Indigenous scholars from at least two perspectives. First, it confirms inherent cultural resilience against the historic experience of colonization and Western dominant culture rationalizations. Secondly, it raises questions about potential distortions and misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. Maslow’s experience among the Blackfoot “Indians” of Alberta provides a mostly hidden record of valuable meta-narratives lost in a quest for scholarly knowledge through the study of “primitive” people. However, his recorded stories and witness statements are also gifts to the Blackfoot people of Alberta who were struggling to maintain traditional ways of living on top of rich oil fields. Maslow heard narratives of the destruction of buffalo herds, the reluctance to sign treaties; gold and oil rush encroachments as well as racist conduct by settlers. Promises of sharing, friendship and peace from faith in treaties never came true. Maslow writes many years later,

> *“I came into the reservation with the notion that the Indians are over there on a shelf, like a butterfly collection or something like that. And then slowly I shifted and changed my mind. Those Indians on the reservation were decent people; and the more I got to know the whites in the village, who were the worst bunch of creeps and bastards I’ve ever run across in my life, the more it got paradoxical. Which was the asylum? Who are the keepers and who the inmates? Everything got mixed up” (Hoffman, 1998:119).*

Oil would ultimately make Canada very wealthy, but paradoxically impoverish the population that resided over the oil-fields. The economic development of Alberta was gained through Victorian precepts of prerogative power myths and destructive disregard of the Blackfoot people. Maslow saw Alberta as one of the most racist places he had ever been to, and I found myself in wonderment at the stories they recorded on the Treaty making process. By the time the Canadian government completed the Treaty process in Alberta the Indian Affairs Department under Duncan Campbell Scott decided Treaties were not required for British Columbia. The Dominion of Canada evolved from the Christian Doctrine of Discovery based on the conquest of no man’s land or “Terra Nullius.” Terra Nullius was a prerogative proclamation by imperial Britain that its colonies were lands of unoccupied territories until white settlement found them, a clear breach of international law, and requiring greater research input from Indigenous perspectives (Arnold, 2007). The entrenchment of social, political, economic and cultural bias during the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries was supported by researchers of Maslow’s generation. This debate is not about Indigenous contributions to modern psychology, but about the silence undermining Indigenous people socially and politically in the name of advancing Euro-centric scholarly expertise. Maslow would become the father of motivation while the people of the Blood Reserve would descend further into cycles of dependency, despair and loss. By 1967, only one generation away from his 1938 six week visit, Maslow was hearing narratives from a new generation of graduate students who bore witness to the addictions and violence that were fast becoming the new social norms of the Blood community.

A.D. Fisher and Next Generation Witnesses

On hearing descriptions of marginalization and despair he later challenged one of his graduate students, A. D. Fisher (1984) to get the truth into the academic literature. Fisher wrote an essay entitled “Indian Land Policy and the Settler State in Colonial Western Canada” which incorporates his shared field work with Maslow. Fisher (1984) calls for explanations of “how and why the outcome of “reservationization” turned out to be Indian underdevelopment in “the bountiful land of Alberta” (Fisher 1984). The launching of inquiry processes to locate under researched meta-narratives and hidden stories from that visit began with Fisher. Uncovering the truths in their work as well as the mistakes of colonization becomes the new prerogative for Indigenous scholars. The ending of the one sided articulation of impacts on social, political, economic and political upheavals and the Indigenous expression of colonial settlement is imbedded in these witness accounts. The losses of land experienced by the Aboriginal peoples, and the scars of the Alberta oil sands are a perfect metaphor to Canada’s colonial wounded soul that hides an addiction to devastation, destruction and disregard for future generations in the name of greed. New generations of Indigenous story-tellers have many arrows to fire at the myths of Canadian claims to be a fair country (Saul 2008). It is a worthy endeavor for future generations of Indigenous scholars and on the ground experts to seek out traditional wisdom through restoring traditional intergenerational inquiry. One of my heroes Métis scholar Olive Dickason offers a guide to Indigenous inquiry,

> *My goal has always been to present the situation as it actually was… and to recognize the actual role of the Indians in our history… their Fundamental role. The point is to try and make that [clear](Gorman in Valaskakis et. al., 2004:133).*

Indigenous Scholars as Pathfinders

I challenge all scholars to further research/inquire into the historic, political, economic and spiritual 'witness experiences' of the father of understanding basic human needs and self-actualization. Indigenous scholars must explore and express the "After This Nothing Happened," realities in places like Alberta where stolen lands have become a global battle of sustainability and the preservation of our Mother Earth (Lear, 2006; Koptie, 2009). Indigenous scholars must also be vigilant and vibrant, and think critically about the intentionality of non-Aboriginal scholars like Tom Flanagan (2010) who seek to "run alibis" to silence First Nations peoples' ability to resist such excesses (Koptie, 2009).

The re-searching for truths that honour Indigenous worldviews long dormant in most colonial historical interpretations of Canada's identity as a modern nation state that the world should esteem, denies the painful recollections and intergenerational traumatic experiences of a new generation of Indigenous writers for which Lee Maracle created a path. It is imperative that de-colonizing, post-colonial and racially inclusive academic literature includes these narratives (Koptie, 2009). Kanienkehaka (Mohawk) scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2005) in his Warrior treatise, ***Wasase: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom***, provides an invaluable context to Indigenous scholars,

> *Decolonization … is a process of discovering the truth in a world created out of lies. It is thinking through what we think we know to what is actually true but is obscured by knowledge derived from experiences as colonized peoples … our struggle is with all forms of political power, and to this fight, we bring our only real weapon: the power of truth (Alfred, 2005:280).*

Indigenous scholars play vital roles as path-finders and mentors. Navigating the rigors of often culturally unsafe academic environments that remain foreign, perplexing and not yet ready for some of the stories coming in from "Indian country" is difficult and challenging to even the most courageous (Koptie, 2009). There is however, splendid reflexivity in identifying as an Indigenous scholar. Demystifying ridiculous misconceptions and worn out rationalizations of white dominance and white supremacy flowing from Victorian age myths of British hegemony, imperialism and a perverse sense of entitlement to privilege is the modern warrior's way of re-contextualizing colonization. The inquiry approach Indigenous scholars and writers must take is first of self-discovery (Ramsden, 2003). When we uncover the intentionality of our ancestors in the face of conquest and the untold stories from Treaty making as "living to fight another day" we can fully grasp the unlimited opportunities they prepared for us.

Being Called to Witness: The Survivors Generation

Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux currently holds the first Banff Centre Nexen Chair in Aboriginal Leadership and describes herself as coming from a "family of residential school survivors" (Sawyer, 2010). This strategic appointment allows her to seek common ground in First Nation communities in order to re-enliven the fact that "we have our own ways" and use "wise practices" to define our lives (Wesley-Esquimaux and Snowball, 2010). Wesley-Esquimaux has devoted her life to "Changing the Face of Aboriginal Canada" and was nominated for the Federal Liberal Party in 2009 as a candidate in the York-Simcoe Riding where her home community, Georgina Island First Nation is situated. She is seeking a position of influence to expand her reach to the leaders of Canada to "re-script the future within our communities and in how our communities are perceived by the general population" (Sawyer, 2010). Wesley-Esquimaux has helped develop a ground-breaking youth engagement program called The Canadian Roots Exchange, which is designed to bring together youth/witnesses; First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and non-Indigenous with Aboriginal communities across Canada in a spirit of reciprocity, honoring and friendship. Students seek positive opportunities for unity and record what they learn through film, story exchanges, photography and lively debate. In 2009, the Canadian Roots program created a documentary on the lessons they learned from hearing stories from residential school survivors which they titled ***Shielded Minds*** (shieldedminds.ca). This video acknowledges that formal education has shielded their minds from the historical realities of Canada's Indigenous peoples and the impacts of the failed assimilation policies of their country.

Expressing the need for inquiry and witnessing in places outside academia means that Indigenous scholars like Wesley-Esquimaux take a different path from many Euro-Canadian scholars. She uses her social capital with First Nations to create path-ways into a modern form of education still unavailable through-out most of Canada. In her experience, institution bound scholars too readily confine knowledge in the 'bird cages' of institutionalized education where ideology is cornered in the residential school model. Sami Scholar, Rauna Kuokkanen (2007) also explores the struggle for legitimacy

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and alternative ways of educational inquiry through an Indigenous lens,

> *People are related to their physical and natural surroundings through their genealogies, their oral traditions, and their personal and collective experiences with certain locations. Interrelatedness is also reflected in many indigenous peoples' systems of knowledge. These systems are commonly explained in terms of relations and are arranged in a circular format that consists mainly (if not solely) of sets of relationships whose purpose is to explain phenomena. In many of these systems of knowledge, concepts do not stand alone; rather, they are constituted of "the elements of other ideas to which they were related" (Kuokkanen, 2007:32).*

Rauna Kuokkanen is a figurative 'gift exchange' from the Indigenous peoples of Norway and Finland to Canadian Indigenous university students. Her work is in the area of colonial pedagogy and Indigenous studies, and she is a guest lecturer at the University of Toronto in Aboriginal Studies. The contextual framework for this paper was located in Rauna Kuokkanen's (2007) book, ***Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes[Worldviews] and the Logic of the Gift.*** Kuokkanen elegantly probes the lack of Indigenous perspectives, narratives and context in academia,

> *The university remains a contested site where not only knowledge but also middle-class, Eurocentric, patriarchal, and (neo) colonial values are produced and reproduced … the academy is one of the main sites for reproducing hegemony. Not surprisingly, then, the studied silence and willful indifference surrounding the 'indigenous" continues unabated in most academic circles. In the same way that indigenous peoples (and their epistemes[worldviews]) remain invisible when the nation-states were shaped, indigenous scholarship remains invisible and unreflected in most academic discourses, including that of some of the most progressive intellectuals (Kuokkanen, 2007:156).*

Yes, times they are a changing rapidly, especially the racial realities in author Vine Deloria Jr.'s America. Watkins (2006) in remembrance of Vine Deloria, Jr. who entered the spirit world November 13, 2005 stated:

> *'Two things influenced me to take a pro-indigenous stance in archaeology. The first of these were my Pawnee friends who… made me aware of how Native People felt about anthropologists and archaeologists. The second was Vine Deloria's book Custer Died for Your Sins. Clearly what he wanted was to challenge us and forbid us the comfort of our complacency. He was successful doing these two things (Watkins, 2006:506).*

Of even more recent vintage, a child of the civil rights rebellion, President Barack Obama, has enlivened the truth and reconciliation debate across Turtle Island [North America] and Indigenous people can see transformative signs of hope in his ascension to influencing America's place in the 21st century. His pledge to re-visit America's obstruction and non-endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples follows Australia and New Zealand change of heart on their colonial pasts; leaving Canada the lone hold-out of denial and shameful conduct. The National Episcopal Church of America which Vine Deloria Jr.'s father Vine Sr. was an archdeacon and missionary on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in South Dakota has made a similar concession. During its July 2009 76th General Convention in Anaheim, California the Church passed a groundbreaking landmark resolution repudiating the validity of the Christian Doctrine of Discovery that led to the colonizing dispossession of the lands of Indigenous peoples around the planet. Onondaga First Nation woman Tonya Gonnella Frichner, an attorney and founder of the American Indian Law Alliance and North American Representative to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, at the Ninth Session April 19-30, 2010 submitted a report titled; "Impact on Indigenous Peoples of the International Legal construct known as the Doctrine of Discovery, which has served as the Foundation of the Violation of their Human Rights." All Indigenous scholars must join in the remarkable efforts globally being undertaken to demystify the dehumanization through Christian 'Doctrine' that continues to haunt mankind. Her summary of that important paper begins with,

> *This preliminary study establishes that the Doctrine of Discovery has been institutionalized in law and policy, on national and international levels, and lies at the root of the violations of indigenous peoples' human rights, both individual and collective. This has resulted in state claims to and the mass appropriations of the lands, territories, and resources of indigenous peoples. Both the Doctrine of Discovery and a holistic structure that we term the Framework of Dominance have resulted in centuries of virtually unlimited resource extraction from the traditional territories of indigenous peoples. This, in turn, has resulted in the dispossession and impoverishment of indigenous peoples, and the host of problems that they face today on a daily basis (Frichner, 2010).*

The Episcopal Church of America also at its July 2009 gathering called on Queen Elizabeth II to "disavow, and repudiate publicly, the validity of the Christian Doctrine of

Discovery" (Miller, 2009). Miller (2009) poses a long overdue paradigm shift to re-tell, review and re-negotiate notions of the prerogative power myths (Arnold, 2007). These are the myths that permeate many social structures of race, culture, gender and religion that sustain the paternalistic guardian/ward relationships of Indigenous peoples within the "Promised Land,"

> *Even if these dramatic events never take place, however, the Episcopal Church has taken a valuable and courageous step by focusing Americans and the world on how European Christians used international law to dominate indigenous peoples and to dispossess them of their lands and assets. Will other Christian churches and the international community have the same courage to look at the foundations, histories and laws that helped create European domination of indigenous peoples? (Miller, 2009:3)*

These messages are significant as Canadian Indigenous scholars valiantly search for similar stories of resilience and strength in contemporary Canada to demystify the place of 'Indians' in Canada. They know that it is only a self-recovery of identity and human dignity that will allow the restoration of pride in their nations. Cook-Lynn (2007) addresses this quest to locate safe places of connecting to those stories in her important work ***Anti-Indianism in Modern America: Voice from Tatekeya's Earth,*** where she writes about the obligation of Indigenous scholars to project strong voices to people who "believe in the stereotypical assumption that Indians are 'damned,' vanished, or pathetic remnants of a race" and cries of "let's get rid of Indian reservations" or "let's abrogate Indian treaties." Instead of feeling inspired to find places of good will, she notes that far too much energy is sapped escaping spaces of hate, indifference and inexcusable ignorance. Marie Battiste (2002) challenges Canadian academic institutions to take leadership roles in locating truths and reconciling the gaps in academic and intellectual inquiry of colonial wrongs and seeks to create collaboration across cultural divides to,

> *… support the agenda of Indigenous scholarship, which is to transform Eurocentric theory so that it will not only include and properly value Indigenous knowledge, thought, and heritage in all levels of education, curriculum, and professional practice but also develop a cooperative and dignified strategy that will invigorate and animate Indigenous languages, cultures, knowledge, and vision in academic structure. (MacKenzie, 2009:93)*

We Have Been Called to Witness

This paper on reflective topical narrative mirrors my return to graduate studies in my fifth decade after a melancholic journey of self-discovery. As with most of my peers we carry a heavy burden of demystifying ridiculous misconceptions and worn out rationalizations of white dominance and white supremacy flowing from Victorian age myths. Political and academic Pirates continue to plunder riches from foreign places by renaming their destructive tendencies as progressive civilization. History is repetitive. Yet we are often pressured to produce a record of why Indigenous peoples of Canada continue to fail. Now, those early concepts have moved to 'integration' as opposed to 'assimilation' into the Canadian body politic. How do we articulate colonial poverty and ***inferiorized*** communities? How does Indigenous scholarly inquiry into colonial myths find space in an academia more concerned with perpetuating colonial inertia? Returning to the wisdom of Vine Deloria Jr. (2006) in his call for spiritual re-discovery in his book, ***The World We Used to Live In***, we are warned;

> *This uncritical acceptance of modernism has prevented us from seeing that higher spiritual powers are still alive in the world … We need to glimpse the old spiritual world that helped, healed, and honoured us with its presence and companionship. We need to see where we have been before where we should go, we need to know how to get there, and we need to have help on our journey (Hall, 2008:157-158).*

To be able to research, record and re-tell truths about unsustainable fallacies is to realize the eternal hope of survival that the Indigenous people continue to hold across Turtle Island [North America]. Aboriginal peoples are determined to not disappear under the weight of by the cultural, political, social and spiritual devastation of colonial inertia (Sefa Dei et al, 2000). Indigenous scholars are tasked to address this 'crisis of knowledge' by re-telling the tragic consequences of the past seven generations in a voice that resonates with resilience and pride. That which created the inequities of caring, sharing and loving will not continue as we courageously witness and articulate the limits of survivability which continues to resonate in the souls of all Indigenous people who continue to mourn their paradoxical civilization. Cathy Caruth (1995) in her book ***Trauma: Explorations in Memory*** created an important anthology of informative and sensitive essays on inquiry through witness memory exploration that might become a guidebook for Indigenous scholars/witnesses wanting frameworks of compassionate reflective auto-biographic narrative for assisting recovery from crimes against humanity such as the residential school experience. Dori Laub

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(1995) challenges all humanity to accept responsibility for the inconvenient truths of "events that produced no witnesses,"

> *A witness is a witness to the truth of what happens during an event. During the era of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, the truth of the event could have been recorded in perception and in memory, either from within or from without, by Jews, or any one of a number of "outsiders." Outsider-witnesses could have been, for instance, the next door neighbor, a friend, a business partner, community institutions including the police and the courts of law, as well as bystanders and potential rescuers and allies from other countries (Laub in Caruth, 1995:64).*

Canada must eventually reconcile its painful colonial legacy. This will require a massive and collective grieving of the stories of intergenerational trauma now deeply locked in the memories of all Canada's Indigenous peoples (Saul, 2009). Remember, we are not that distant from Holocaust survivors who struggled to bear witness to the worst crimes humanity could permit. Truth and reconciliation will be a call to all of Canada to witness the suffering by colonization of the Indigenous peoples of "our home and native land." The melancholic journey of reconstituting a culture, a right to self-determination and natural sovereignty holds valuable lessons for Indigenous peoples everywhere under siege as distinct peoples.

Two lengthy witness accounts follow (see Appendix A) by Canadians who responded on-line to an inquiry by the Canadian Broadcast Corporation; "Did you or a family member attend a residential school?" and "Send us your stories." These are responses elicited by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's June 11, 2008 apology for Indian Residential Schools. In the Canadian Parliament, he termed residential schools a "sad chapter of Canadian history." The appended accounts honour the format of so many witness accounts and provide insights to how people integrate intergenerational traumatic experiences. Often scholars are admonished for lengthy quotes that 'distract' readers. Just as deep listening skills are required for reconciliation and forgiveness this author feels that presenting entire quotes honours the way stories are collected. Indigenous scholars face a dilemma in compromising alternative narratives that respect the style Indigenous wisdom transfer takes from the ground up. This author is still learning to balance academic expectations with maintaining the integrity of voice. There are so many silenced stories that desperately need releasing and are waiting for compassionate inquiry. They will only be heard through kind human reciprocity and with the good will of "being called to witness."

We are all "Being Called to Witness."

Canada will choose peaceful reconciliation or disruptive confrontations over unshared land, resources and wealth that challenge both sovereignty and social order. It is painfully perplexing that even within our institutions of learning so little truth of the legacy of colonization resonates through issues of class, race, and gender. The debate on the very future of humanity comes from survivors of colonial excess and the perpetuation of myths of power and control triumphing over creating Cultural Safety and inclusion. What is reconciliation in a country where so few citizens know what went on in residential schools? On April 27, 2010 The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair the Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), at the Ninth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues called for a ten year initiative for an International Roundtable on Truth Commissions. In his speech titled "For the child taken, for the parent left behind," he explained the TRC mandate to global witnesses,

> *The TRC is not here to lay blame, or to determine guilt. We cannot compel testimony or grant immunity. We do not decide compensation. There are others who do that.*
>
> *We are here to determine our future as a nation. Our first obligation is to show the true and complete story of residential schools.*
>
> *The history of residential schools is likely the least known dimension of Canadian history. It is not taught in our schools. It is not commemorated anywhere in our country or in our national capital. The 150 year history of residential schools has not been made a part of our national memory. It has been ignored or, worse dismissed.*
>
> *What is known however to most Canadians is the present legacy: that Indigenous peoples in Canada do not have the same standard of life that is enjoyed by mainstream Canada. They easily fall into the trap of blaming Indigenous people for the conditions in which they live and for failing to address their problems adequately. That blaming leads inevitably to disrespect. That disrespect however also comes from the many generations of public policy founded on the view that white Euro-Canadians were superior, a view supported by law and taught in schools to Indigenous and non-Indigenous and non-Indigenous student alike (Sinclair, 2010).*

Are Canadians ready to hear true stories of infanticide and crimes against humanity where children were victimized to punish a whole race of peoples for being slow to 'civilize'? And who can call what is narrated by Indigenous survivors civilized?

These long overdue questions represent a new inquiry into why in a land of bounty we have Third World and Fourth World poverty. It is because, "there is no real poverty in this country; there is simply excessive greed?" Or, perhaps what many elders would simply call a profound "poverty of spirit." The lands that Aboriginal peoples live on are often economically unsustainable because Aboriginal peoples cannot hunt on grossly disturbed lands or fish for food in polluted waters. Most Canadians deem inhabitable lands that most Indigenous peoples call home because of forced historical homeland dispossession. Canada's growing reputation of reckless mining practices around the globe establish this country as ready for collective intervention by nation-states determined to stop the exploitation and marginalization of Indigenous peoples globally. Canada refused to endorsed and sign onto the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people, and Canada appears unwilling to acknowledge its colonial past, confirmed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's statement on September 25, 2009 at the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh that, "We're so self-effacing as Canadians that we sometimes forget the assets we do have that other people see … we are one of the most stable regimes in history … **we also have no history of colonialism**. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers, but none of the things that threaten or bother them. Canada is big enough to make a difference, but not big enough to threaten anybody. And that is a big asset if properly used." Canada continues to minimize and control what rights Indigenous Canadians will be offered, and the Canadian government will want to retain control of the economic levers that would provide true self-governance and sustainability. Do we recognize that statements like this demonstrate Canada's natural sovereignty to be as fragile as Aboriginal Canada's? Canada's Indigenous population is building the capacity to fill the void of Canadian indifference to its obligations, to extend human rights to all its citizens, and expose the truths of Canada's dismissive political agenda.

The Canadian Arctic has lately become the new frontier for extending colonial power over Indigenous people. Canada has until 2013 to challenge Russian assertion before the United Nations that Canada does not have sovereignty over large portions of its north. Canada's claim to territorial integrity on its northern boundaries requires a new engagement with its Indigenous peoples. The next 50 years of Canadian geo-political, economic and spiritual existence may become the 'Greatest Show on Earth' (Koptie 2009). Natural sovereignty is the ability to sustain territorial, social, political, economic and spiritual integrity across time and place.

Jan Longboat (2009) directs us to maintain 'good living and good minds' as we only exist in the now, now and now. Our past and our future are reflected in how we conduct ourselves in the present, and many other Indigenous elders reiterate concepts of inclusion and being called to witness not only for our own nations, but globally. Indigenous knowledge has maintained path-ways of sustainability and respect for future generations who are the intended beneficiaries of what we do today. Elder Merle Beedie (1993) references the many voices that our lives and communities speak through on healing from the violence that conflict at home and in our lands have generated,

> *The next 500 years are for Native people … Promote talking circles, teaching circles, healing circles to the Native and the Non Native communities. Promote healing lodges in our territories; develop all forms of teaching materials for the schools, TV programs, plays for the theatres, movies, et cetera., et cetera. Educate all the community about our history and the part we played in this and they have to match roles; we did survive together. Get your women into politics of our communities and nations and support women's groups whenever and wherever in our communities because they are our life givers, they are our peace keepers, they are our faith keepers (Beedie, 1993).*

The ultimate gift of higher learning for Indigenous scholars is the challenge to re-write, re-vise, re-tell and recover stories, meta-narratives and the wisdom of our ancestors. We are already engaged in adapting from victims to survivors and moving towards "victorizing our lived experiences," "becoming victorious, strong and re-membering where our hearts belong is imperative to our reconstitution as nations" (Wesley-Esquimax 2009). As a community helper and late scholar, this author has been honoured to "be called to witness" hundreds of survivor's stories that have helped frame my worldview and professional life. I have gratefully joined forces with a growing number of Indigenous scholars, writers, and wisdom keepers to support leaders like Dr. Cynthia-Wesley Esquimaux in her extraordinary bid to "Change the Face of Aboriginal Canada."

"So gently I offer my hand and ask

Let me find my talk

So I can teach you about me."

Rita Joe, 1988

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Appendix A

Did you or a family member attend a residential school?

RW (posted June 13, 2008)

I appreciated the Prime Minister's Apology on behalf of the Government and Canada; any emotion shown was welcomed, as my family also suffered the rippling effects of devastation.

They suffered in silence and shame as though responsible for what happened to them. Recently, my grandmother, now 88 years old, told of her experience in residential school: as a little girl she cried herself to sleep every night until she became sick, her sisters ran away with her taking turns carrying her on their backs, they were all punished; her parents whom she loved were called "savages"; she had to pick dandelions for lunch and would gag on the boiled greens; she witness a nun fighting with a girl and her habit coming off revealing her bald head; she stayed awake all night afraid to wet the bed and be humiliated as others were; she would do the dishes for the nuns and priests and realize how well they ate; and her 14 year old sister died of complications after a nun threw a kettle of boiling water on her chest.

My dad and his brothers and sisters grew up in the same residential school. He never talked about his experience. My dad died in 1969 at 42 years old; I was 12. Although very talented, he had a lot of problems. All his brothers died young.

These priests and nuns represented God to these children (although a false one) and therefore it was spiritual abuse as well; how many children suffered and died believing that even God hated and disapproved of them. The real God would not take children away from their families and abuse them mentally, physically, emotionally or sexually and it is not God's intention that children be ashamed or abused just for being who He created them to be. I pray the rest of Canada will stop hating Native people and come alongside them as they heal. I pray that my grandchildren and future generations would be able to grow up being treated with respect and acceptance in their Native land.

CB (posted June 13, 2008)

My mother was taken from her family at age 7, and dropped off on her reserve at age 16 years. She asked for directions to her family home, and as she made her way through the woods on a path, she met a woman. She asked this woman if she was heading in the right direction to her mother's house. Little did she know that she was talking to her own mother. I cried when I first heard that story from my Mom when I was in my 20's.

She had not seen her mother in all those years. Her most imbedded memory of her childhood is of 'always' feeling hungry; she said all of the children became very excited when twice a year the 'inspectors' would come. That is when they were fed big hearty meals with real butter and milk. As well she recalls being punished for speaking her native language, and if the Sisters thought they were not working hard enough with their chores, they were called heathen savages.

The stories go on and on……..I never understood why my mother could never show affection, and never said she loved us, her children. Her problems with alcohol, depression and anger I now know were fueled by her lonely, regimented, and cold-hearted, childhood experiences.

It is unfathomable to think of all that our culture has lost due to all that was taken from our families who endured the residential schools. So many ongoing problems, and always put-downs and disrespect by many non-aboriginals who have no understanding of the depth of our losses.

I honor my Mother and all of her siblings, who also endured the residential schools-my uncles with the biggest 'hearts' and the kindest smiles but saddest of eyes, who ruined themselves with alcohol.

It is a similar story with almost all aboriginal families. And I ask for strength for all; to rise above the vices that have been used to hide or mask the deep pain so that our people can again be proud and have dignity.

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Historical Trauma, Race-based Trauma and Resilience of Indigenous Peoples: A literature review

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[a]Ph.D. Delphine Collin-Vézina is the Tier II Canadian Research Chair in Child Welfare and an assistant professor at the School of Social Work at McGill University. She is a clinical psychologist that has developed a strong interest in research and clinical topics related to social work, including child welfare and child maltreatment. Her research program aims at developing culturally-appropriate clues for designing early and effective therapeutic and preventative interventions for the diverse populations of traumatized people, one of which are First Nations children and youth. Dr. Collin-Vézina's research is informed by theoretical concepts in attachment and resiliency.

Abstract

This literature review examines the various responses to trauma suffered by Indigenous peoples as a result of governmental policies geared towards assimilation. Both traumatic and resilient responses are demonstrated at the individual, family and community levels. Much of the research that has been done in the United States to develop theories around historical trauma and race-based traumatic stress may also be applied to Canada's First Nations due to similar histories of oppression and colonization. Overall, the research finds that self-government and a connection to culture and spirituality result in better outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

Introduction

The focus on negative outcomes facing Indigenous peoples may mask the diversity of responses to the challenges facing Aboriginal, First Nations and American Indian persons. Both resilient and negative outcomes for Indigenous persons are well documented but negative outcomes seem to get more attention in the media, which may contribute to both overt and more subtle forms of discrimination. This is for a number of reasons: the disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in countries like Canada, the U.S. and Australia when regarded as a whole are so striking that effective arguments for change in policy need to highlight these disparities to demonstrate the need for policy changes (Armitage, 1995; Cornell, 2006). As a consequence, the literature becomes fragmented between those who are trying to bring to light the devastating impacts of colonialism, and those that focus on resilient peoples, communities and Nations. This paper will seek to bridge the literature that attempts to explain the disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples while taking into account the enormous cultural variation among tribes and Nations. Trauma models should be expanded and diversified to take into the historical and current day experiences of Indigenous peoples. Some types of trauma that can be applied to Indigenous peoples include intergenerational trauma, historical trauma and race-based trauma. Given the enormous challenges faced by many Indigenous cultures to survive, resilient responses to trauma are especially notable and take many forms. Resilience models that are found at the individual, family and community levels will be explored in more detail.

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Disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples

The United Nation's Human development report found that if the Aboriginal population in Canada were taken out as a sub-group they would rank 48th out of 174 countries for their level of overall development and 71st for education, whereas the rest of Canada consistently ranks in top 5 (UN, 2006). Canada has been admonished by the United Nations Economic and Social Council who expressed serious concern over the significant disparities between Canada's First Nations and non-Aboriginals with regards to access to water, health, education and housing (UN, 2006). Almost 50% of off-reserve Aboriginal children under the age of six live in low income families, compared to 18% of non-Aboriginal children and 57% of Aboriginal children that live in large urban centres are living in low-income families (Statistics Canada, 2008). When using the "community well-being index (CWB)" which takes into account education, income, housing and labor force participation, among the 'bottom 100'Canadian communities, 92 are First Nations. Only one First Nation community ranks among the 'top 100'Canadian communities in 2001. Inuit communities are typically distributed towards the middle of the CWB range (Beavon, 2006).

In addition to these more commonly used measures of well-being some sub-groups of Aboriginal peoples are inflicted with very high rates of suicide, drug and alcohol dependence and the resulting high rates of out-of-home placement of children (AFN, 2007; Kirmayer, 1994; Trocmé et al., 2005). The Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, in their sample of over 20,000 First Nations people from 10 regions across Canada found that over 15% of those surveyed had attempted suicide in their lifetime and 30% had thought about suicide. Furthermore, 16% of the respondents consume five or more drinks of alcohol at least once a week (AFN, 2007). Although this paper cannot adequately cover the history of discriminatory policies targeted towards Aboriginal people by the Canadian government, a short summary below will help shed light on the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people described above and the resultant need for more research on both traumatic and resilient responses to these policies.

Assimilation and the Canadian Government

Before the arrival of European settlers, all of the First Nations governed themselves and had their own economic systems for ensuring that the needs of members of the nation were met (Duran & Duran, 1995; Milloy, 1999). In some Nations, the potlatch ceremony allowed for families that had greater success in hunting, fishing or cultivation in a particular season to share with families that had less success. Although Nations differed one to the next, it was uncommon for tribes to claim specific pieces of land as their own. Instead, it was generally believed that land belonged to everyone and was not a possession to be claimed. European settlers with ambitions of making money off the land decided that they would claim it for themselves, despite International laws, which stated that the first people to find and inhabit land had ownership over it. The settlers used a clause in the law that allowed them to override this rule if the persons occupying the land were found to be too "savage" and thus forced many Nations to confine themselves to portions of land that the imperial government deemed suitable (Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996). These portions of land were often far removed from other populations and above the frost line making it difficult to grow food and establish businesses. The government wanted Nations to prove that they could be self-sufficient and contribute by "European standards" such as farming, industry and other business models of production, but this went against the way they had been supporting themselves since time immemorial and furthermore, most reserve lands were unsuited to agriculture or other economic enterprises. The Indian Act of 1876 and all of its amendments had as an explicit goal to control every facet of life on reserves and the agents that monitored Aboriginal peoples on reserves severely limited trading and other economic enterprises with neighboring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities (Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996).

In order to further goals of making Aboriginal people follow European values, the Bagot Commission of 1842 and the Davin Report of 1879 were turning points in the history of residential schools. Both of these documents described a process whereby removing native children from their parents and schooling them outside of their communities would help the children to adapt to European values and Christian belief systems. The model was suggested based on schools that had already been opened in the U.S. for similar purposes. The Davin Report was based on observations of boarding schools in the U.S. and four that were already in operation in Ontario. The report made it clear that day schools were not adequate for assimilating children and that ongoing contact with their family members would only enable them to maintain their cultural values, beliefs and language – precisely what the government wanted to destroy (Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996). By 1890, dozens of schools, which were partnerships between the federal government and churches, were in full operation. Residential schooling thus became mandatory wherever it was available and school officials removed children from their homes if they did not come willingly (Milloy, 1999). The schools were chronically underfunded from the

outset leading to unsanitary conditions, health epidemics, and hundreds of child deaths. Milloy (1999) recounts that in many instances, inspectors found raw sewage in sleeping and eating quarters of the children and that despite being reported to the authorities, little change occurred. Reports of inadequate standards of clothing and food were also common and demands by parents to return their children home to live in better conditions went unanswered. Underfunding also meant poorly trained and underpaid staff that used harsh physical discipline of children, often leading to physical abuse. Residential schools started to close down throughout the 1960s and 1970s although the last one in Saskatchewan did not close until 1984. Widespread sexual abuse came to public awareness in the late 1980s when adult survivors began coming forward (Milloy, 1999; Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996). Given the lack of parental role modeling and widespread physical and sexual abuse while attending residential schools, generations of survivors have likely lost the capacity to engage in nurturing social interaction with young children that promotes attachment and intimacy (Wesley- Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

The "sixties scoop" is a widely-used term that refers to a period of time when thousands of First Nations children were removed from their parents and placed them in non-Aboriginal homes. Many scholars refer to this time period as a continuation of the residential school system because removal of Aboriginal children from their homes and communities continued, only under a different pretense. The justifications for removing children from their homes were largely due to cultural differences in parenting practices that were misunderstood as neglect by non-Aboriginal social workers or due to poor living conditions caused by governmental underfunding of housing and essential services on-reserve (Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996). Despite the gradual expansion of First Nations run child welfare organizations, the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in out of home care continues to this day due to funding formulas dictated by the Indian and Northern Affairs Department that provide funding to child welfare organizations based on a head count of children in placement. This leaves little flexibility in the ability of organizations to provide prevention services that keep children and families together (Blackstock, Prakash, Loxley and Wien, 2005; Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996). Thus, Aboriginal children continue to be placed and adopted by non-Aboriginal families, which, in turn, further disconnects them from their communities, languages, livelihoods and cultures (Ball, 2008). The 2003 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect found that Aboriginal children continue to be reported to child welfare authorities more often, have their files substantiated and kept open more often, and are brought into care more often than non-Aboriginal children. The primary reason for intervention is what social workers call "neglect" and is often closely tied to poverty, addictions and structural issues such as poor housing conditions (MacLaurin, Trocmé, Fallon, Blackstock, Pitman, & McCormack, 2008).

On March 31, 1998 the Canadian federal government provided a one-time grant of $350 million dollars to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which was given an eleven-year mandate, ending March 31, 2009. According to their website, the Foundation was intended to encourage and support, through research and funding contributions, community-based Aboriginal directed healing initiatives which addressed the legacy of physical and sexual abuse suffered in Canada's Indian Residential School System, including intergenerational impacts. By admitting that widespread abuse and neglect occurred in the residential school systems, the government took one step in the direction of reconciliation, but by limiting the scope of the healing foundation to victims of physical and sexual abuse, it fails to take responsibility for the perverse nature of the schools in the first place. The impact of having attended residential school began the moment that the Davin Report's intent was to "take away the Indian in the child". Removing thousands of children from their caregivers, prohibiting cultural practices, cutting off children's hair and prohibiting contact between children and parents for long periods of time was in and of itself hugely traumatic (Brubaucher, 2006 & Minister of Supply and Services Canada). The Foundation only recognizes children that were victims of overt physical or sexual abuse, but does not consider the emotional impact of denying children of their cultures and families as abuse. Furthermore, the residential schools settlement offers token amounts of money to any current survivor of a residential school, but not to family members of survivors if they are deceased, thereby failing to recognize any form of intergenerational trauma.

This is not to say that the children who were victims of abuse and neglect while in government care do not deserve special mention. In addition to the trauma inflicted on all children who were removed from their homes to attend residential schools, these experiences were greatly compounded by acts of child abuse and neglect. With the recognition of the widespread abuse that occurred, it is hopeful that the Canadian public will become more cognizant of the devastating impacts of colonialist policies that continue to this day.

Although these policies have irrefutably contributed to existing disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples across the globe, Aboriginal scholars have cautioned against non-Aboriginal scholars attempting to find "linear causalities" between specific events or situations and poor outcomes for some Native people or communities (Fleming

& Ledogar, 2008). Instead, they assert the need for a more holistic and integrated understanding of what has led to these differences. Some scholars have drawn on literature from other cultural groups – such as studies on intergenerational trauma among Holocaust survivors - to explain the community level consequences of certain traumas (Brave Heart, 1998; Evans-Campbell, 2008). At a family level, widespread abuses suffered in residential schools most probably have led to intergenerational cycles of abuse and neglect that persist to this day (Evans-Campbell, 2008). In addition, daily assaults of racism and discrimination, referred to by some scholars as "microagressions" likely exacerbate the impact of other traumas (Carter, 2006; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt & Chen, 2004). The following section will explore the need for a more holistic understanding of trauma and conclude with an examination of the many varieties of resilient responses to trauma.

Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Some groups of trauma researchers have called for both an expansion of what is considered trauma and for an alternative diagnostic or screening tool that does not label individuals as pathological or mentally ill (Brave Heart, 1998; Carter, 1999; Danieli, 1998). The DSM-IV-TR defines Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as "The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following have been present: (1) The person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others (2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (APA, 2000). In order to expand this definition, alternative types of trauma have been put forward by researchers and communities including intergenerational trauma, historical trauma and race-based or insidious trauma (Brave Heart, 1998; Carter, 1999; Danieli, 1998). The common thread amongst these three theories is that historical factors interact with current day stressors and can result in either problematic or resilient outcomes in individuals, families and communities.

Intergenerational trauma

Most of the literature on intergenerational trauma refers to the work that has been done with the offspring of survivors of the Holocaust. The Holocaust has been seen as a relevant comparison to policies against Indigenous persons in Canada, the U.S. and Australia that were genocidal in intent and in effect (Brave Heart & deBruyn, 1998). Grubich-Simitis (1984) worked with hundreds of descendants of Holocaust survivors and began to form a clinical impression that many suffered from "transposition" or acting out the uncompleted mourning processes of their parents, who had not been able to adequately mourn the many losses they suffered during the Holocaust. Some clients appeared to be simultaneously living in their own realities and in the fantasy life of one of their ancestors and feeling just as vulnerable to persecution as someone living during this time period. It is not difficult to see the parallel between these observations and specific historical moments for groups of Native peoples. Brave Heart & deBruyn (1998) recall the Massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 where hundreds were killed and their bodies were thrown into mass graves. In 1881, there was a governmental ban placed on traditional burials, spirit keeping and "wiping of the tears", therefore grief was compounded and became pathological resulting in elevated rates of suicide, whereby the living are "unconsciously motivated to join the deceased,"

Several studies have attempted to empirically demonstrate the intergenerational transmission of trauma, parenting deficits and other difficulties. Felsen & Erlich (1990) in their study of 25 second generation holocaust survivors and 24 control subjects who were also Jewish but whose parents had no direct experience of the Holocaust found that there are certain character organization traits found with the descendants of survivors including a lower sense of self-worth and an unwanted identification with their mothers. The authors attribute the latter characteristic to the greater responsibility for meeting emotional needs that is generally attributed to the mother and the mother's difficulty in meeting the children's needs due to being overly critical of herself as a survivor (survivor's guilt). The subjects all indicated an over-identification with their mother and rated themselves as being self-critical, a highly undesirable identification by all subjects.

Bar-On, Eland, Kleber, Krell, Moore, Sagi, & Soriano et al. (1998) criticize the underdevelopment of theories that explain the transmission of trauma from one generation. The authors assert that in contrast to clinical descriptions of second generation survivors, most empirical studies to date have failed to find significant differences between descendants of Holocaust survivors and control groups. They propose that a more fully developed theory will aid in understanding some of the more subtle findings between experimental and control groups and use attachment theory to guide their analyses in three studies based in Canada, Israel and the Netherlands. Several important factors disrupted the process of mourning in Holocaust survivors including time gaps in ascertaining the status of loved ones, the uncertainty of the exact time, date and location of death and the abandonment and betrayal experienced by children who lost parents. These children then grew up with a disrupted attachment and may have inadvertently passed this on to generations to come, treating children as adults that were capable of providing

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emotional comfort and support (Bowlby, 1951). The studies found what appeared to be disruptions in healthy attachments. In the Netherlands study, children of Holocaust victims (n=30) were more "parentified", or felt more responsibility for taking care of their parents than the control group (n=30) whose parents were Jewish but not war victims. In the Vancouver study, responses of 57 adult children of Holocaust survivors were analyzed and found that overall, children were preoccupied by their parent's sadness and tried to please them by only bringing home only good marks or avoiding asking questions about the Holocaust. Furthermore, these respondents did not feel entitled to happiness because their parents were not able to be happy. The Israeli case study of one man found that it was difficult for him to tell a coherent story that linked his past and their present because he felt obliged to move beyond the experiences of his parents as a symbol of the future, and yet were so wrapped up in the past because of untold secrets and memories that he always felt were present for his parents.

Once again, parallels between second-generation Holocaust survivors and the experiences of many Indigenous people are evident. Survivors of residential schools were often separated from their parents for years at a time. They likely felt abandoned by their parents and wondered why they did not come and take them away and save them from those that stole them from their communities. When these children became parents, they were likely preoccupied with memories of their traumatic pasts (of being abandoned or abused) and may have expected their children to provide them with the comfort and security that they did not get growing up in an institutionalized setting. Furthermore, this pattern of parenting will carry across several generations – until children have caregivers that have models of healthy and nurturing care, they will be forever robbed of breaking this cycle.

Historical Trauma

Brave Heart (1998) was the first to apply the concepts of intergeneration trauma to the Lakota people, naming it historical trauma. She relates that because the Lakota have an extended sense of "family", their grief is also expanded to include larger numbers of deceased. Traditional outward signs of grief included cutting one's hair and sometimes one's body, symbolizing the loss of the part of oneself. At the end of the mourning period, called "spirit keeping" (usually one year), the Lakota would "Release the spirit" and "wipe the tears" to resolve the grief and allow the mourned to come back and participate in society. Brave Heart (1998) argues that with the 1881 ban on traditional practices, Lakota grief was inhibited and compounded. She writes that "Lakota grief differs from the process described by Freud and Pollock – the degree of decathexis is different because the Lakota seek continued involvement with the spiritual world after the death of their loved ones, this makes them further predisposed to pathological grief because even partial decathexis (the ability to disengage from another spirit emotionally) is limited". In 1890, a massacre occurred against the Lakota people killing thousands in what is referred to as the "Wounded Knee Massacre". The bodies of the dead were thrown into mass graves and the survivors were left to deal with the aftermath without being permitted to grieve or bury the bodies in a way that allowed them to release the spirits. Brave Heart (1998) believes that this was the beginning of an overreliance on alcohol and elevated rates of suicide, which were ways of coping with unresolved feelings. She tested her hypotheses on 45 service providers during a four day psycho educational intervention which was designed to initiate the resolution of grief. She employed a pre and post test using the Lakota Grief experience questionnaire, self reports at the end of the intervention, and a follow up questionnaire after six weeks. The findings of the study included the following: 1. Education about historical trauma led to an increased awareness of the impact and associated grief of the traumatic Lakota history, 2. Sharing the effects with other Lakota people in a traditional context provided cathartic relief; and 3. Grief resolution was initiated for individuals, including a reduction in grief effects, a more positive identity and a commitment to individual and community healing. Differences between men and women were found suggesting that men were at an earlier stage of grief resolution (denial and trauma fixation) at the pre-test stage than women who were living with more guilt and shame. At the end of the intervention, women blamed themselves less and had lower grief scores, whereas men as a group felt more sadness, grief, anger, hopelessness, shame and guilt. However men's joy and pride simultaneously increased by 50% (Brave Heart, 1999).

Denham (2008) uses the concept of historic trauma in his ethnographic fieldwork with a four-generation family living in Northern Idaho. His research consisted of seven formal interviews with the family "patriarch" and informal observations of family interactions. Denham contends that this family honors their ancestors by the passing of narratives from one generation to the next in a sharing fashion. The way that the past is framed, however, is where other families may differ one from the next. The "Coeur d'Alène" family reframes their narrative in a strengths-based approach which focuses on their assets despite the adversities they have endured. He writes that because trauma memories are different than other memories – in that they lack a cohesive plot - they are capable of shattering one's sense of self. This self then requires someone to help them make sense of what has happened to them so they are able to overcome resulting obstacles. By passing a resilient narrative from one generation to the next, this family helps future generations make sense of their past and gives them strength and knowledge to overcome discrimination and to

educate others that are more ignorant than themselves. The author concludes that historic trauma needs to be separated from responses to trauma, which can be both pathological and resilient (Denham, 2008).

Abadian (2006) made a similar argument as Denham (2008) in her presentation at the "Healing our Spirits Worldwide" conference. She argues that cultural renewal can be as dangerous as it can be rehabilitative. She refers to the Lakota people's historical attempts to renew culture that ended tragically – as in the 1890 Massacre of Wounded Knee. Furthermore, other so-called cultural renewals, such as Hitler's attempts to renew the "great Aryan nation" or Serbia's attempt at cultural resurgence have all ended horribly and been toxic to survivors. Abadian argues that cultural renewal requires paying attention to the stories that one tells themselves in relationship to others and who is responsible for the way things currently are. She refers to these stories as meta-narratives – and asserts that toxic cultural renewal is an outcome of toxic cultural narratives. In turn, these cultural narratives are the outcome of past traumas. The first step in the regeneration of healthy and affirming cultures is the telling of life-affirming and healthy narratives. She draws on the example of a young child who was sexually abused by an extended family member. Because the child only has "pre-operational thinking" (Piaget, 1928) or believes that everything that happens is as a direct result of what they have done, they come to believe that any harm that occurs is their fault. This child thus goes through his life believing he is damaged, unloveable and unworthy of healthy relationships. These "post-traumatic" narratives tend to be habitual, frozen in the past, self-referential and self-reinforcing. In the same way, entire communities can pass on unhealthy narratives to future generations. Healthy traditional communities were able to deal with trauma through the sweat lodge, rituals to support those left behind by loved ones and through the adoption of orphaned children as a regular practice. But when entire communities experience the same traumas for generations, the very mechanisms that helped them to cope become destroyed in the process. The whole group becomes frozen in time and the collective narratives become post-traumatic. Abadian points to religious doctrine as another example of toxic narratives that get past on through time and that label people as "better than" or "worse than" anyone else based on their commitment to religion. She calls these beliefs falsely empowering and argues that doctrines of Christianity, Judaism and Islam emerged from their own historical traumas and have carried these forward and traumatized millions of people worldwide into believing that any one person can be more important or worthy of God's love. Cultural renewal thus requires a cleansing of the elements of post-traumatic subcultures that no longer serve people and communities and keep them stuck in a traumatic past.

Evans-Campbell (2008) suggests that the concept of historical trauma could be applied to all colonized, Indigenous peoples. The author argues that the diagnoses such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder do not address multi-generational traumas; as the focus is too individualized and does not take into account the social aspects of reactions to trauma, nor does it address the way that historical traumas may interact and compound currently experienced traumas such as intrafamilial abuse, suicide of family members and daily racism and discrimination. She suggests that the criteria for historical trauma should include the following: 1. Many people in the community experienced it, 2. the events generated high levels of collective distress (demonstrated both empirically and narratively), and 3. The events were perpetuated by outsiders with a destructive intent – often a genocidal intent, making them particularly devastating. Instead of focusing on the individual impact of trauma, Evans-Campbell proposes a multi-level framework for understanding overlapping causes. She argues that trauma is best understood as impacting at three levels: the individual, the family and the community. At the individual level, trauma manifests itself in mental and physical health problems - PTSD, guilt, anxiety and depression. At the family level, symptoms may include impaired communication and stress around parenting (or attachment problems seen in children). The entire community may suffer from the breakdown of traditional culture and values, the loss of traditional rites of passage, high rates of alcoholism, physical illness (obesity) and internalized racism (Duran & Duran, 1995).

Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt & Chen (2004) in conjunction with tribal elders from nine reserves in both Canada and the U.S. developed two scales: the Historical Loss Scale and the Historical Loss Associated Symptom Scale Latent construct in an attempt to empirically capture the impacts of historical trauma. The first scale consists of 12 items, each of which lists a type of loss identified by focus groups of elders. These include loss of: land, language, culture, spiritual ways, family and family ties, self-respect, trust, people through early death, children's loss of respect for elders and traditional ways. The Historical loss associated symptoms scale is also made of twelve items and specifies symptoms identified by focus group members and other participants. These include sadness, depression, anger, anxiety, nervousness, shame, loss of concentration, isolation or distance from other people, loss of sleep, rage, feeling uncomfortable around white people, fear or distrust of the intentions of white people, feeling as though it is happening again, feeling like avoiding places or people. Both items have

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high internal reliability, with Cronbach's alpha scores of .94 for historical loss and .90 for historical loss associated symptoms. In a subsequent study of 452 American Indian parents of children 10-12 years old almost three quarters of the sample met the criteria for lifetime alcohol abuse and of those, 15% met the criteria for 12 month alcohol abuse. Historical loss mediated the effects of perceived discrimination, suggesting that historical loss and the resolution of these losses have impacts on alcohol abuse. The authors caution that this is exploratory work done only with one Nation, but that the scales may be adapted to reflect the losses and symptoms of other groups as well (Whitbeck, Hoyt, Chen & Adams, 2004).

Clinicians that work with Indigenous peoples around manifestations of trauma should also be aware of culturally appropriate treatment models. Duran & Duran (1995) argue for a shift in the counselor's worldview when working Indigenous populations. The authors relate that based on their experience working with several different tribes in the U.S., most Indigenous peoples' belief systems about mental health and healing are very different from euro-centric viewpoints. For example, the concept of time is generally used by western mental health counselors to set goals for treatment. For Indigenous peoples, it may not be a length of time that is required to heal, but rather the intensity in which they engage in the process. Dancing intensely during a traditional ceremony may provide as much cathartic relief as discussing problems over a longer period of time. Furthermore, western notions of well-being such as employment, income levels and ownership of property are not necessarily applicable to standards that Native peoples aspire to. Traditionally, capitalist models were not part of Native culture and instead ceremonies to share wealth among members of tribes or clans were an important way of creating balance and harmony in communities. Standard notions of functioning and well-being should be continually questioned and modified depending on what goals the person has for themselves (Duran & Duran, 1995).

Although the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next may explain some of the current mental health problems and other disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, it is likely only one piece of the story. There are several other compounding factors that need to be examined in order to begin to have a holistic understanding of disparities.

Race-Based Trauma and discrimination

Carter (2007) in his major contribution article proposes that race-based traumatic stress injury be recognized as an "emotional or physical pain or the threat of emotional or physical pain stemming from racism in the form of harassment, discrimination or discriminatory harassment (aversive hostility)". Racial encounters can be interpersonal, institutional or through cultural racism. The trauma resulting from an event should be determined by the severity of the individual's reaction to the event (and the cluster of symptoms that accompanies it), because severity may be a consequence of the cumulative effects of racism throughout the person's life. The event that causes symptoms to manifest may be less serious than other events, but the additive factor causes the person to feel they cannot take anymore. Carter asserts that although race-related stress has been studied, trauma researchers do not generally consider racism in the diagnosis of PTSD. Carter also argues that discrimination can stem from historical policies and can infiltrate into current day myths and misconceptions about people of color or ethnic minorities. Histories of colonization and oppression cannot be separated out from everyday acts of racism and discrimination.

Bryant-Davis (2007) responds to and expands on Carter's argument for the recognition of race-based trauma. She argues that clinicians and those who work with the public need to be sensitized to the multiple and overlapping types of trauma that people experience in their lifetimes and should specifically assess ethnic minorities for instances of race-based trauma. The author feels that it is irresponsible to try and avoid issues of race and discrimination due to the counselor or psychologist feeling uncomfortable with the topic. She also writes that race-based trauma should not be pathologized, but that any kind of trauma will inevitably lead to victim blaming by a public that is not educated or sensitized. Therefore, it is not enough to keep race-based trauma separate from the DSM; work on educating the public needs to be done at multiple levels to support traumatized persons. There is some ambivalence in Bryant-Davis' argument because she nevertheless finds the work of trauma experts helpful in using the same cluster of symptoms when assessing race-based trauma as PTSD. She asserts that attention should be paid to reports of intrusive thoughts, hyperarousal, numbing, intense emotional reactions, difficulty concentrating, difficulty with memory, feelings of destructiveness towards self or others and psychosomatic reactions (Bryant-Davis, 2007; van der Kolk, McFarlane & van der Hart, 1996).

A handful of researchers have attempted to measure the relationship of perceived discrimination with other mental health outcomes such as depression, suicide attempts and alcoholism among American Indians (Walls, 2007; Whitbeck, 2002 & 2004). Whitbeck (2002) in concert with an advisory committee comprised of American Indian elders and tribe members from one nation developed an 11 item scale to measure how often respondents had been: insulted, treated disrespectfully, hassled by police, ignored, recipients of a

racial slur, threatened with physical harm, suspected of doing something wrong, treated unfairly, expected not to do well by whites, discouraged to achieve an important goal and treated unfairly in courts as a consequence of their AI minority status. The response categories ranged from 1 (never) to 4 (always). The authors found that the scale has a high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha of 0.90). The studies found that discrimination was correlated with higher alcohol use and suicide attempts and protective factors such as involvement in traditional activities disappeared when respondents had suffered from high levels of perceived discrimination. Thus, discrimination may lead to a broader range of symptoms than those officially recognized by a diagnosis of PTSD as Bryant-Davis (2007) suggests.

Both race-based trauma and historical trauma are only beginning to be recognized as legitimate frameworks by which to address mental health problems with Native peoples. Although Carter (2007) makes an important argument against pathologizing a trauma that is a result of society's ignorance, an official recognition of suffering by the American Psychiatric Association would go a long way towards sensitizing the thousands of clinicians that work with ethnic minorities and Indigenous peoples on a regular basis.

Resilient Responses to Trauma & Discrimination

Fleming & Ledogar (2008) provide a summary of resilience models and argue that although early models of resilience focused on the individual's ability to succeed despite adversity, there has been an ongoing search by researchers to find models that reflect resilience at not only the level of the individual, but also the family, community and cultural levels. Research completed on resilience in Indigenous communities has examined both individual factors that contribute to positive outcomes, and, more recently, community-level variables that may prove beneficial for large numbers of people within the community. Because the causes of many problems were widespread governmental policies and practices that affected whole nations of peoples, it is logical to study resilience at a community level – even if many of the problems have now spread to families and individuals

Resilience as Self-government

There is strong evidence to believe that Aboriginal quality of life would increase with greater expansion of self-governed nations. Chandler and Lalonde (1998 & 2004) found that of 196 First Nations communities surveyed in British Colombia, 111 had not a single suicide. Self government was greatest protective factor against suicide and all markers of cultural continuity (land claims, education, health services, cultural facilities, police & fire services, women in government and community run child welfare services) were associated with lower suicide rates. In communities that had only one or a few of these services, the rates of associated suicide were as great as six times that of the overall population.

Cornell (2006) as part of the Harvard University Economic Development project argues that Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States have much in common - including the fact that all four are predominantly European-settler societies, English-speaking, have legal and political systems that share a primarily English heritage and also share a particular pattern of relationships with Indigenous peoples. In all four, European settlement often violently dispossessed Indigenous peoples, but Indigenous peoples remain today on remnant lands have all engaged to one degree or another in movements for Indigenous self-determination. Furthermore, Cornell (2006) asserts that the central governments have tended to be more willing to address issues of Indigenous poverty than issues of Indigenous self-determination. Overall disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons mask the fact that some Nations are outperforming not only other Indigenous communities, but also non-Indigenous communities. Tribes and Nations in the United States that have successfully implemented self government in one facet or another have seen reduced reliance on social assistance, reduced unemployment, the emergence of diverse and viable economic enterprises on reservation lands, more effective management of social services and programs (including language and cultural components) and improved management of natural resources (Jorgenson, 1997, 2000 & Krepps, 1992). Cornell & Kalt (2007) describe two approaches to economic stimulation in American Indian nations. The authors write that the standard approach that began in the 1920s has five main characteristics: "(1) decision making is short term and non-strategic; (2) persons or organizations other than the Native nation set the development agenda; (3) development is treated primarily as an economic problem; (4) Indigenous culture is viewed as an obstacle to development and (5) Elected leadership serves primarily as a distributor of resources". The approach doesn't always have all five of these elements but in general it has been wrought with corrupt leadership, an economy highly dependent on money from the federal government and ongoing poverty and an impression of incompetence that undermines future attempts to re-gain sovereignty of their nation. In contrast, the Nation-building approach sees Native nations make all the decisions, governing institutions adhere to Indigenous political culture and decision making is strategic and long-term. In many communities, governing institutions are the remnants of colonialism and the electoral system is based on the British

model. When the authors refer to governance structures that adhere to Indigenous culture, they are referring to structures that have meaning and significance for that particular tribe or nation and therefore will inevitably be less prone to corruption and failure (Milloy, 1999). Examples of prosperous Nations in the U.S. are the Citizen Potawatomi in Oklahoma, the Missis-sipi Choctaw and the Salish and Kootenai. All three Nations built themselves up from minimal assets and reliance on federal money to being fully self-governed – in some cases with their own Supreme Court system – and with diversified economies consisting of banks, golf courses, casinos, farms and retail food chains. The Citizen Potawatomi Nation funnels their profits into services for citizens including health and wellness, early childhood development programs and an award-winning small business development program. Unemployment is virtually non-existent, the community members are healthier mentally, physically and culturally. Cornell and Kalt (2007) assert that these experiences are applicable to Indigenous peoples across all four countries, but also caution that self-determined Indig-enous governance in these countries is likely to be diverse, and that a single form of self-governance is unlikely to work across groups or across countries.

Resilience as Cultural and Spiritual Renewal

A small number of researchers have begun to work with tribe members to develop tools that measure traditional spiritual commitments or cultural connection and the relationship to resiliency among Indigenous populations. Although there are distinct interpretations of these concepts that vary by tribe and culture, American Indians and the First Nations of Canada share a history of massacre, colonialism and high rates of out of home placement of children. Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt & Chen (2004) were the first to employ the term enculturation using three separate measurements: traditional spirituality, traditional activities and cultural identification. The Healing Pathways Project used these measures for their three year lagged sequential study on four American Indian and five First Nations reservations (Walls, Johnson, Whitbeck and Hoyt, 2006; Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt & Adams, 2004). In one set of analyses, 746 youth aged 10-12 were asked about suicidal thoughts and behaviors, discrimination, negative life events, alcohol use, depressive symptoms, delinquency, anger, self-esteem and enculturation. Enculturation and traditionality were negatively associated with suicidal behaviors, whereas discrimination and negative life events were positively associated with suicidal behaviors (Walls, 2007). This combination of three measurements appears promising for several reasons: it was developed in consultation with tribal members and elders, the measures contain many cultural components specific to both Native American and First Nations people and the traditional activities component, although not exhaustive, includes a large variety of traditional activities (19 in total) that span across cultures. In addition, the incorporation of elements that measure beliefs, actions and identification is a more holistic way of capturing cultural connection.

A cross-sectional survey of 1, 456 American Indian Tribal members aged 15-54 years old used a cultural spiritual orientation scaled and found that those who were more culturally or spiritually oriented were half as likely to report a history of attempting suicide than those with a low score (Garroutte, 2003).

Anderson & Ledogar (2008) provide a summary of 15 studies that have been completed in Canada that examine protective factors among youth across a wide range of issues including suicide prevention, tobacco use, risky sexual behavior, pre-natal health and domestic violence prevention. Some of the different constructs used to measure contribution to resiliency were: spirituality, sense of coherence, history of abuse, knowledge of consequences, pride in one's heritage, self-esteem, subjective norms, agency or self-efficacy, level of distress, involvement in traditional ways, church attendance, level of support, parental care, parental monitoring, parental attitudes, influence of peers and community influence. Associations were found between resilience and mastery, self-esteem, low levels of personal distress and pride in one's heritage. Although these were the only associations that were found to be significant, the authors assert that limitations, such as small sample sizes in many of the studies, may have contributed to the lack of association. Nevertheless, a common finding across these studies is that belief in traditional culture and values and participation in cultural practices provides some kind of a buffer against adversity and risk-taking. The very element that governmental policy sought out to destroy has turned out to be vital to the physical and emotional well-being of Indigenous peoples.

Future Directions

Research that has been done thus far clearly supports the theoretical frameworks of intergenerational, historical and race-based trauma. Furthermore, the notion of "culture", be it at an individual, family or community level is clearly a protective factor many Indigenous people. The developments in the theoretical literature on historical trauma as first described by Brave Heart (1998) are gaining some recognition, but more measures are needed to test the construct of historical trauma among a greater variety of cultural groups in order to confirm its applicability to different cultures. Whitbeck and colleagues

(2002 & 2004) have begun to examine the interplay between a number of factors that both contribute to and undermine resiliency including perceived discrimination, enculturation, historical trauma, historical loss, alcohol use and suicidality.

What continues to be lacking is the ability to study resiliency of Aboriginal or Native American people living in urban and isolated rural areas. Like other cultural groups, enormous differences may be evident from one generation to the next and depending on whether someone has ever lived on a reserve community or not. Most of the studies examining the relationship between resiliency and community well-being are done with people living on-reserve. How can some of the positive findings from the studies cited above be translated into work with Aboriginal peoples living off-reserve? One area of future research may be to work with families that reside in communities or cities with a greater access to cultural resources (such as urban Native friendship centres) or with ongoing connections to friends or family members living on reserve to see how their level of involvement with such resources serves as a protective factor against the increased stressors of living in a city including discrimination, negative stereotyping and greater levels of financial stress.

No scale or measure can be thought to measure the countless losses suffered by Aboriginal peoples in Canada and Indigenous peoples across the globe. The one time grant of $350 million to be spread over 11 years from the Canadian federal government is a first step in addressing the multiple losses endured by Aboriginal peoples. However, this money, without any kind of permanent structure or ongoing funding will not likely scratch the surface of the multiple and competing needs of generations of Aboriginal peoples affected by institutional racism and discrimination. Furthermore, only the measurable act of attendance in residential schools is being compensated. The loss of lands, gender roles, traditional family patterns and governance structures (to name only a few of the losses) are in no way being recognized as contributing to the suffering that continues for many Indigenous peoples. Although more Canadian research would further the argument, there appears to be no legitimate reason against further stalling by the government to settle land claims and reestablish the inherent right of First Nations to self-govern. If this transition is done properly (i.e. First Nations led, respecting traditional governance structures, etc.) self-government would likely decrease disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and result in healthier individuals, families and communities.

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Islands of Safety: Restoring Dignity In Violence-Prevention Work with Indigenous Families

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Abstract

Islands of Safety is a model and process designed in conjunction with Métis Community Services in Victoria, B.C. Based on a focus of human dignity and resistance, safety knowledges of women and Indigenous peoples, Islands of Safety was created by Métis family therapist Cathy Richardson and developer of response-based therapy Allan Wade. The initial stages of project design, pilot project implementation were funded by the Law Foundation of B.C. Resembling family group conferencing on the surface but rooted in different philosophical terrain, the Islands of Safety process is based on the understanding that people resist violence and prefer respect.

> *Our elders teach us that [it] is the spiritual connectedness between and within all that exists that has been one of our greatest weapons, healers, liberators in our battle against genocide.* (Chainley, 1990)

Introduction

Where there is violence in families, there is also a potential for the restoration of safety, respect and harmonious relationships. This is particularly so for Indigenous families where grief and loss are paramount and often unresolved in the aftermath of colonial violence that has yet to be named and addressed. Harper's recent words of apology to Indigenous people did not make clear the particular acts of violence perpetrated by the state against human beings nor offer reparations to restore dignity, land, children and other sacred entities taken without permission. Similarly, individuals and communities have not come together across Canada to comprehensively redress colonial violence. This may yet happen, but in the meantime suffering in many Indigenous families persists and human services programming can provide opportunities for restorative processes when undertaken with a perspective that does not seek to minimize the violence or continue the humiliation involved with a colonial code of relations (Wade, 1995) where community members receive help from so-called experts. One such program designed to address and redress what has been taken, to create safety and restore dignity to families, is called *Islands of Safety*.

Islands of Safety is a model and process designed in conjunction with Métis Community Services in Victoria, B.C. Based on a focus of human dignity and resistance, safety knowledges of women and Indigenous peoples, Islands of Safety was created by Métis family therapist Cathy Richardson and developer of response-based therapy Allan Wade. The initial stages of project design, pilot project implementation were funded by the Law Foundation of B.C. Resembling family group conferencing on the surface but rooted in different philosophical terrain, the Islands of Safety process is based on the understanding that people resist violence and prefer respect. Individuals' and families' responses and resistance reveal important knowledge about creating safety, protecting others and managing risky situations. A person's resistance does not and most often cannot stop violence but is no less important for that fact. Responses to violence, including various forms of resistance (spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional) serve to maximize one's sense of dignity in demeaning and humiliating circumstances. This knowledge can be resourced when

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assessing and reducing risk and engaging in transformational therapies. The facilitators of this work (Cathy Richardson, Allan Wade, Cheryle Henry) have also remarked that healing is facilitated by social justice and families are often blamed for its absence rather than held up in an intricate social network based on love and the provision of particular situational needs.

Furthermore, where most models of the theory of violence stem from a theory of the effects of violence, promoting the view that violence is the effect of overwhelming forces that act on the offender, Islands of Safety begins with the view that humans are spirited and agentive beings who sometimes choose to use violence, who could also choose respect, and who invariably seek to preserve their own dignity in the face of humiliation and oppression. For many Indigenous families, preserving dignity means being able to care for others and to preserve the integrity of their needs on physical, spiritual emotional social levels. Perhaps the greatest source of pain for adults is being denied the opportunity to care for one's own children, either by lack of means, forced separation or other state-imposed circumstances.

We know from a recent body of research on social responses that there are major barriers to healing in the aftermath of violence. One such barrier is the response of others upon disclosing violence. Many individuals have reported receiving a negative or unsupportive response from family, friends and professionals. These responses range from a victim-blaming tone ("What were you doing in that part of town anyway?"), to mitigating the responsibility of the perpetrator ("he is trapped in a cycle, he was a victim himself", "he has alcohol issues"), to being disbelieved ("she is a good person and would never do that to you"). Language use plays an important part in casting the position and responsibility of the victim and perpetrator. Research conducted by Coates and Wade (2007) demonstrated four operations of language used to 1) conceal violence, 2) conceal resistance, 3) mitigate the responsibility of the perpetrator and 4) to shift the blame onto the victim. These four operations are often found together in legal and human service settings and exert a profound influence on social responses and victims' recovery.

When violence has never been properly acknowledged, redressed and safety restored, the suffering of the victim is perpetuated and enhanced (Andrews & Brewin, 1990; Brewin & Brewin, ; Andrews, Brewin & Rose, 2003). Alternatively, language can be used to clarify responsibility and bring into the light the ways that the person responded to the violence, while never consenting to what was being done to them, even if overt demonstrations of resistance were not possible due to the danger. Making clear what has happened and what is necessary to repair or make whole what was once whole, is part of an orchestrated positive social response to the victim of violence.

Islands of Safety aims to create safety by orchestrating positive responses to children and to adults at risk in the context of their families, including concrete and workable safety plans. Where possible, and with a maximum level of choice, Indigenous families are invited to discuss their hopes and dreams for their family through a Métis/Cree model of family life, by identifying how their family has responded to current and historical violence and oppression (Richardson & Wade, 2009).

Colonization is, among other things, a massive and multi-level attack on the dignity of a people. Colonization was and is a deep humiliation of the once proud nations of Turtle Island. Many of the families who participated in Islands of Safety were subjected to residential school and child welfare abuses, as well as to other aspects of colonialism in Canada. Many Indigenous parents must explain to their children why other people now live on land that was once occupied by their own family and later given to settlers (Adams, 1989; Freire, 1970, Harris, 2002). These social and historical factors have left many Indigenous families and communities in poverty and want, denied the wealth generated from the land and the natural world. Attributed to issues of poverty and neglect, Indigenous children are taken from their parents en masse and placed into non-Indigenous foster homes (Carriere & Richardson, 2009, Carriere, 2006).

Dignity is central to social life (Wade, 1997). Dignity can be found in what people already believe, feel, think and do to create safety and pursue justice for themselves and others. Dignity is the practice of treating others with respect, as defined in traditional teachings. Attending to dignity in the Islands of Safety process includes promoting freedom and autonomy, refraining from advice-giving, (Brant, 1990), supporting one another in caring for loved ones and preserving physical and social integrity. It includes creating space for people to pursue their highest and most ordinary aspirations. When dignity is affronted, either privately or publically, individually or on a large scale, it must be restored. The restoration of dignity occurs when the injured party is supported in pursuing just redress. Dignity is expressed in the insatiable desire for self-governance, in a context of freedom and equality.

Indigenous families who come in contact with child protection authorities experience multiple forms of humiliation, such as the embedded message "you are not a good parent." Meaningful safety planning is likely to occur when professionals work consciously to restore dignity to the parents. Constant attention to dignity creates a sense of social safety which, in turn, fosters a climate in which child safety concerns can be placed in the centre and addressed directly.

Islands of Safety can be described as a process that is articulated through a language of human rights and social justice rather than a language of psychology. A focus on interaction and relational systems takes precedence over individualist perspectives. From both a common sense and a human rights perspective, we believe that a mother who is targeted by violence cannot and should not be held responsible for the violence and its cessation. However, mother blaming in the form of applying "Failure to Protect" laws in child welfare undermines safety and the mother's parenting of her children. In fact, custody of children is often given to perpetrators because victims tend to be characterized as weak, depressed and undeserving (Strega, 2006; Coates & Wade, 2007) These biases are unhelpful, undermine mothers and mothering (Andrews & Brewin, 1990) and continue to destabilize Indigenous children and families (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Sinclair et al, 1991).

Islands of Safety work necessitates an analysis of power, as inspired by feminist, anti-colonial literature, as well as the experience of those who have been interned in prison camps and stigmatized for their so-called deficits. Islands of Safety involves a micro-analysis of language in relation to dignity and an understanding of the "four operations of language" (Coates & Wade, 2007) as well as a commitment to use language that does not distort responsibility for violence. It is based on a focus on how people respond to and resist violence, rather than how they are affected or impacted by it (Coates, Todd, Wade, 2000). This distinction is fundamental to Islands of Safety practice and cannot be emphasized too strongly.

A Brief Introduction to Response-Based Ideas

Response-based ideas arose from direct service with people who had endured violence, including Indigenous women and men who were violated in the so-called residential schools (Coates, Todd and Wade 2000; Nelson and Richardson 2007; Wade 1997, 2000 and 2007). In the course of clinical work, Wade noted that victims invariably resist violence and other forms of oppression, overtly or covertly, depending on the circumstances (Coates, Todd and Wade 2000; Todd and Wade 1994; Wade 1997 2000) and found that engaging clients in conversations that elucidated and honoured their resistance could be helpful in addressing a wide variety of concerns (Epston 1986; Kelly 1988; Richardson 2006; Todd and Wade 1994; Wade 1997 and 2000). This required a significant shift in theory and practice, however. Acts of resistance are responses to violence, not effects or impacts of violence. We found that focusing on victims' responses allowed us to better identify and construct accounts of their resistance. Accounts of resistance provide a basis in fact for contesting accounts of pathology and passivity, which are typically used to blame victims.

Todd (2007) extended this line of thought to work with men who use violence against women, and Coates (1996) integrated response-based practice with a program of critical analysis and research on the connection between violence and language (Coates and Wade 2007). Richardson (2004, 2006) applied response-based ideas to her work on the development of Métis identity and developed the "Medicine Wheel of Resistance" as a framework for understanding Indigenous resistance to colonization, racism and oppression. And, we are currently developing and testing a model of child protection practice that integrates response-based ideas with Richardson's research and direct service work and with other recent work in the field, such as the Signs of Safety approach (Turnell and Edwards 1999).

Philosophy of Response-Based Practice

The Framework for Working with Violence in Families

1. Social Conduct is Responsive
2. Dignity is Central to Social Life
3. Violent Acts are Social and Unilateral
4. Violence is deliberate
5. Resistance is ever-present

Assumptions Underlying Response-Based Practice

Dignity is Central to Social and Psychological Life, and is related to:

- Social Esteem
- Self Worth and Preferred Identity
- Autonomy and Inclusion
- Care for Others
- Physical and Psychological Integrity

Violence is understood as being social, unilateral, deliberate, and resisted by victims who prefer better treatment.

How victims resist and respond to violence is crucial information that:

a. Indicates capacity and pre-existing ability,
b. Serves as evidence in court by elucidating and clarifying the actual brutality or nature of the violence,
c. Dispels the myth that violence is due to momentary loss of control but rather a process that is enacted deliberately over time.

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Language

- Four Operations
- Human Rights, such as practices of witnessing, accountability and just redress
- Words in Everyday Use
- The Language of the Family

Colonization

- The Helping Professions are a conduit for cultural assumptions
- Understanding the role of the helping professions in the colonial project

Negative Social Responses to Mothers and Victims

- For many victims, negative and unjust social responses are as painful and debilitating as the violence itself.
- Violence in society and in the family forms a context where violence is learned but does not excuse or explain violence. Violence is a series of deliberate physical and/or social acts in a specific time and place, involving the misuse of power.
- Victims do not choose or prefer violence.
- Abstract psychological concepts (e.g., learned helplessness, lack of self esteem) construct victimhood and are often not helpful in safety planning.
- Violent behaviour often involves or is enabled by a) isolation of the victim, b) shaming or discrediting the victim, c) control of money and other resources d) social deception and manipulation of the victim's support systems.
- Violence is due to a lack of control by the offender. If that was the case, it would happen equally in public and private, involve more visible bruising and other injuries, and occur at work an in other social situations.

Response-Based Formulations	Effects-Based Formulations
Violence is deliberate.	Violence is an effect of overwhelming forces.
People resist violence and mistreatment.	Victims can be or are passive.
Violence is a series of micro-acts over time, often beginning with attempts to control the victim.	Violence is an act.
Lanuage is used by professionals to clarify violence, resistance, responsibility, social responses to victims, and the victim's responses to the social responses as well as to the violence itself.	Language is used by professionals and others to concel violence, mitigate peretrator responsibility, and shift responsibility onto the victim.
Victims prefer respect and kindness - dignity is central to social life.	The victim is a co-agent or "brought it on herself," attracted to the violence in some way, due to psychological issues or predisposition.
Presents both the victim and perpetrator as agentive, active subjects who make decisions.	Presents the victim as a passive object.
The problem exists in the social world, between people.	The problems exists in the head of the victim.
Human dignity is foundational to all human services work.	Establishing control of the process and psychological authority over clients, as described in the companion guide to the DSM.
The process must be voluntary, and informed consent re-established at various points.	Informed consent is sometimes not discussed and the professional is asserted as the authority guiding the process.
An analysis of power and commitment to avoid acting upon the client or replicating dominance.	An avoidance of analysing power differentials, such as gender, race, social class with a belief that equality exists or does not relate to the therapy.
Assessing and understanding the negative (or positive) social responses to the victim is a key part of the work.	Much psychological or effects-based work is individualistically focused and does not take into account the social context and social interaction.
Based on social interaction and a micro-analysis of language.	Based on the individual and a focus on the self.
Involves a micro-analysis of language and the use of language that clarifies violence, and avoids mutualisation, euphemisms, passive and non-agentive constructions, avoids abstractions and generalizations.	Often distorts "who did what to whom" through processes such as mutualising, the use of euphemisms, romanicization, eroticization, nominalization. Professional and psychological language involves using generalizations and abstractions, rather than concrete descriptions of behaviour.

- It is inappropriate to advise victims to leave their abusive partner; victims often hold important safety knowledge and know they are more likely to be hurt or killed when they leave. In general, victims are more able to assess their own and their children's' safety than professionals or professional assessment tools.
- Society does not take adequate responsibility for protecting women and children against violence; it is not the sole job of the woman to stop violence.
- Colonial aspects of society create less safety for Aboriginal women and children than for mainstream populations.

When practicing Islands of Safety, it is important to be prepared to debunk popular myths and unscientific psychological generalizations about women and violence. The following chart provides an example of some of the most predominant biases found in the domestic violence literature.

Myth	Myth-Busting
It takes two to tango/couples are co-dependent (see the Cycle of Violence)	This "mutualization" obscures the fact that sometimes people are attacked and that violence can be unilateral, even in intimate relationships
There is no rest for the wicked	Perpetrators often deliberately undermine the reputation and intentions of the victim, in advance, in order to create the conditions where he can "get away" with the violence
Women choose violent men, or lack discernment	Most people who end up being violent, are kind, thoughtful, romantic, sympathetic at the beginning of the relationship, otherwise they would have little appeal. Men who have been rejected may use entrapment strategies.
Why don't they just leave?	Most women in violent situations also face social barriers such as a lack of safe housing, a lack of income, as well as bruises, compromised health, depression. Women tend to leave when they have received some acknowledgement from the perpetrator that he was "wrong"... when some of her dignity is restored. Also, she must avoid child protection workers, knowing that she will be blamed. Women in transition houses often have their children taken from them, rather than from the violent offender. The better question is: What has the offender been doing to prevent the victim from leaving?
Won't she be safer if she leaves?	Mothers who are being victimized by violence have a strong intuitive sense of the danger and know that most women who are murdered by their partners are killed after they leave.
Won`t the courts be fair?	Mothers who have experienced violence are often very sad. This understandable sadness is often construed as clinical depression in court and used against her as a ``bad parent` in custody cases. Defense lawyers often subpoena medical records, mental health records, which are used against the mother in various ways, jeopardizing her custody. Section 15 Custody and Access reports often involve the use of psychological tests that do not take violence into account and are likely to portray the woman as mentally ill.
The system will help women who experience violence	Real help for women in the system is sporadic and unpredictable. Safety plans involve a strategic analysis of the safety offered by professionals and the legal system, rather than an assumption that risk towards women and children will be mitigated.

Safety Conversations with Family Members

The Islands of Safety model involves a number of conversational rounds, based on traditional processes. We use a structured format for discussing key topics. This includes:

- A statement of interest
- A request for permission to discuss the topic of interest
- Questions about the topic, focused on responses to the violence and other adversities, the knowledge/capacity apparent in those responses – based on the safety blanket as a representation of key relationships and responsibilities
- Inventory of key pre-existing ethics, practices and safety knowledges and consideration of its place in a safety plan
- Acknowledgment and thanks, reflection on the previous segment (e.g., its usefulness), and permission to raise another point of interest.

The topics of interest include:

- History of the family (life when things are going well preferred interaction)
- Current circumstances, protection concerns, how everyone is doing

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- Family responses to the violence/adversity
- Social responses to family members
- Family responses to social responses
- Identify evidence of risk and safety

Examples of Processes and Questions

Eliciting information on negative & positive social responses & current safety in the moment (What worked in the past?, How did you develop a relationship with a helper that helped them to be helpful to you?)

Responses to positive social responses

Statement of Interest: I am curious to know about other times you have been involved in a similar situation, when you disclosed an experience of violence or abuse. Have you ever been involved in a similar kind of meeting with professional and support people? At those times, who and what were the most helpful for you? What kind of practices helped you through that situation?

Responses to negative social responses

A lot of the research says that many of the people who report an incident of violence say that they were disbelieved, shamed, told to remain silent, or blamed in some way for the violence. These negative social responses were reported on the part of family, friends and professionals. Have there been times when you have experienced such negative social responses? At those times, how did you respond to the negative social responses?

Permission Questions for Family Members in the Meeting

- I'd like to know more about how/ or when there is more safety in your family.
- Elucidating Pre-Existing Abilities
- Would it be all right to talk about that for a few minutes?
- When there is some kind of danger or threat, how do people respond to handle it (e.g. children, grandparents/ aunties, mother, father?)

Connective Questions

- Where did you learn to do that? Can you remember the first time you had to do that? Who taught you how to do that? … inside the family, the culture, and individual lives … Other uses – Constructing the broader influences of pre-existing ethics & practices
- Have there been other times or other places that you have had to use this strategy, to promote safety?
- What does the presence and practice of these measures say about the family's ability to create safety?

These practices form the foundation of response-based practice and the Islands of Safety child safety planning model for cases of violence in families.

Safety and the Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples

The medicine wheel in the middle represents the person as a holistic being, encompassing bodies of intellect, physicality, emotion, and spirit. In attending to safety, it is helpful to consider physical safety, cultural safety, spiritual safety, intellectual safety, sexual safety, and psychological/ emotional safety. These aspects of safety are formulated from a perspective of both "freedom from" and "freedom to" and are expressed in Islands of Safety through a language of human rights rather than a language of psychological constructs. This preference assists in avoiding and contesting the blaming of victims while supporting the non-offending parent or caregiver.

One of the concerns for child safety is the narrow parameters through which safety is defined. To begin, Islands of Safety work takes the position that child safety is advanced when we, collectively, attend to the safety of the mother. Through this approach, the safety issues for children are resolved completely when maternal safety is actualized. In terms of earlier thought traditions, these forms of safety relate to "freedom from" and human rights in civil society, the rights of Indigenous men and women, and the rights of children. In order to respect these rights, it is sometimes necessary to move away from psychological formulations and language, into the discourse of human rights and in reference to national and international Charters and Declarations.

Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Section 35.4 of the Canadian constitution guarantee equality for men and women under the law, including the equal right to live in safety. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples articulates the right to safety and living conditions that promote safety and dignity, allotted equally to men and women. Article 21 states that Indigenous people have the right to the improvement of their economic and social conditions. This includes reducing vulnerability for violence for those most harmed by it today:

Addressing conditions of poverty and want provide expanded options for Indigenous women, make available housing and multiple forms of safety and opportunity, in ways that are reliable and predictable. Article 44 states that all rights and freedoms are guaranteed to both Indigenous women and men and Article 22 specifies that Indigenous women

shall enjoy full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination. These clauses relate to states contesting action that emboldens perpetrators and destabilizes the victims of violence. Article 7 relates to right to life, physical and mental integrity and security of the person while Article 24 relates to the right to health, including traditional medicine and the role of women in maintaining well-being. Article 43 relates to the provision of "minimal standards" for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples, which are obviously not being upheld in Canada today. After years of invitation, Canada still refuses to become a signatory to the Declaration, while former British colonies such as Australia have now signed on.

Perhaps most relevant to child welfare service delivery, Article 2 relates to non-discrimination and Article 3 relates to self-determination. Islands of Safety embeds the right to self-determination through attention to dignity, including autonomy, agency and the micro-aspects implicated therein with culturally-appropriate processes. Consider the personal medicine wheel existing within a broader social, global and ecological context with which the individual interacts. These aspects of the social world form the container for women, children and families. Where violence, lawlessness and a general disregard for human life exist (or Indigenous life in the case of colonialism), it becomes more difficult to create safety and contest the mother-blaming/victim-blaming practices that reassign responsibility from both the perpetrator and the social world. Within this understanding, Islands of Safety is interested in asserting physical safety, emotional/psychological safety, spiritual safety, cultural safety, and intellectual safety.

In addition to the obvious need to facilitate a child's cultural participation and culturally appropriate methods of healing, Islands of Safety workers also contest missionization or the imposition of religion on Indigenous children in foster care situations, which is relatively common in British Columbia, since many religious people are drawn to taking in children (Richardson and Nelson, 2007). As well, we inform families of the dangers of engagement with the mental health system, where receiving a permanent mental health record may result. We take the view that further stigmatizing Indigenous children who have already endured violence and direct and indirect racism, through psychiatric and psychological diagnoses, is a violation of their fundamental human rights.

We present cultural practice to non-Indigenous child protection workers and advocate for the family's sacred concerns. We draw attention to practices which may inadvertently replicate colonial strategies of dominance and serve to destabilize Indigenous families and their relationships to one another. Further, attending to safety involves an understanding and promotion of cultural safety for Indigenous families.

Cultural safety relates to the possibility of an Indigenous person or member of a minority group being treated with acceptance and equanimity, and where racism or prejudice will not be encountered. In the Islands of Safety work is involves acknowledging where the family comes from, which community they belong with and how our people may have interacted with their people historically. Cultural safety overlaps with spiritual safety, which can be considered as freedom from imposed religion or medical/healing methodologies. We also consider issues of emotional/psychological safety and the social responses received by others who have found out about the issues of violence.

While working family by family to create safety for individual children, the mandate of the state and the Ministry of Children and Family development could be expanded to address violence within a larger movement to address poverty and to create housing and guaranteed minimal income for those raising children.

> *A group of washerwoman on a riverbank see a baby floating along, rescue it, and then find themselves plunging into the river regularly to grab babies. Finally, one washerwoman walks away from the scene. Her comrades ask her if she doesn't care about babies. She replies, I'm going upstream to find the guy who's throwing them in (Solnit, p. 157).*

Most often, there is a mother in that river also needing a hand up. If child protection work were to tackle poverty and issues related to human rights, such as housing and economic security for families, many child protection issues would be alleviated and family members fleeing violence would have more options for social safety.

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