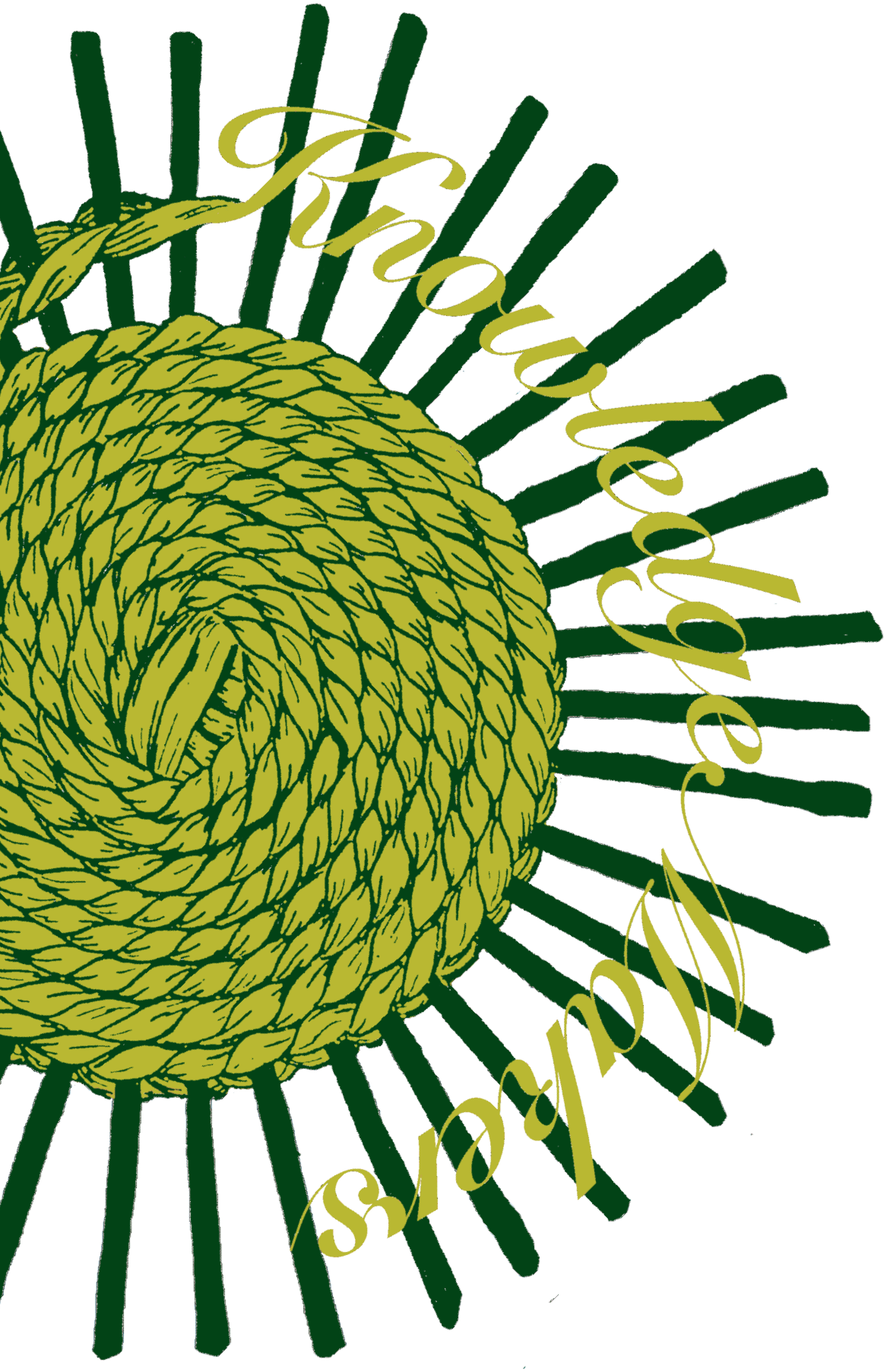



Knowledge Makers
Est. 2016
Vol. 9, 2024

My thinking behind the Knowledge Makers design was drawn from a few ideas I read in the Indigenous Storywork article. Archibald (2008) discusses the design of baskets: "I use the basket as one metaphor for learning about stories and storytelling." (p.2). When discussing Holism Archibald explains it "symbolizes wholeness, completeness, and ultimate wellness. The never-ending circle also forms concentric circles to show both synergistic influence of and our responsibility toward the generations of ancestry, the generation of today, and the generation to come" (p.11). My design works off of these two images showing that the Knowledge Makers program is working from the many generations of Indigenous knowledge that came before us and is weaving towards a future generation of Indigenous researchers - Levi Glass

Archibald, J. A. (2008). An Indigenous storywork methodology. Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues, 371-393


*Indigenous people were and still are told to assimilate, bend, adjust, twist our bodies, genders, and our words until we eventually take the same shape as colonizers, until we sound and think like colonizers.*

*- Ellis Rondquist*

# Knowledge Makers 2024
# Contents

## CONTENTS




TRU
Open Press

The St'at'imc Seven Laws of Life are about harmony. No one law is more important than another, for without one the others come crashing down; You can't have happiness without a healthy mind and spirit.

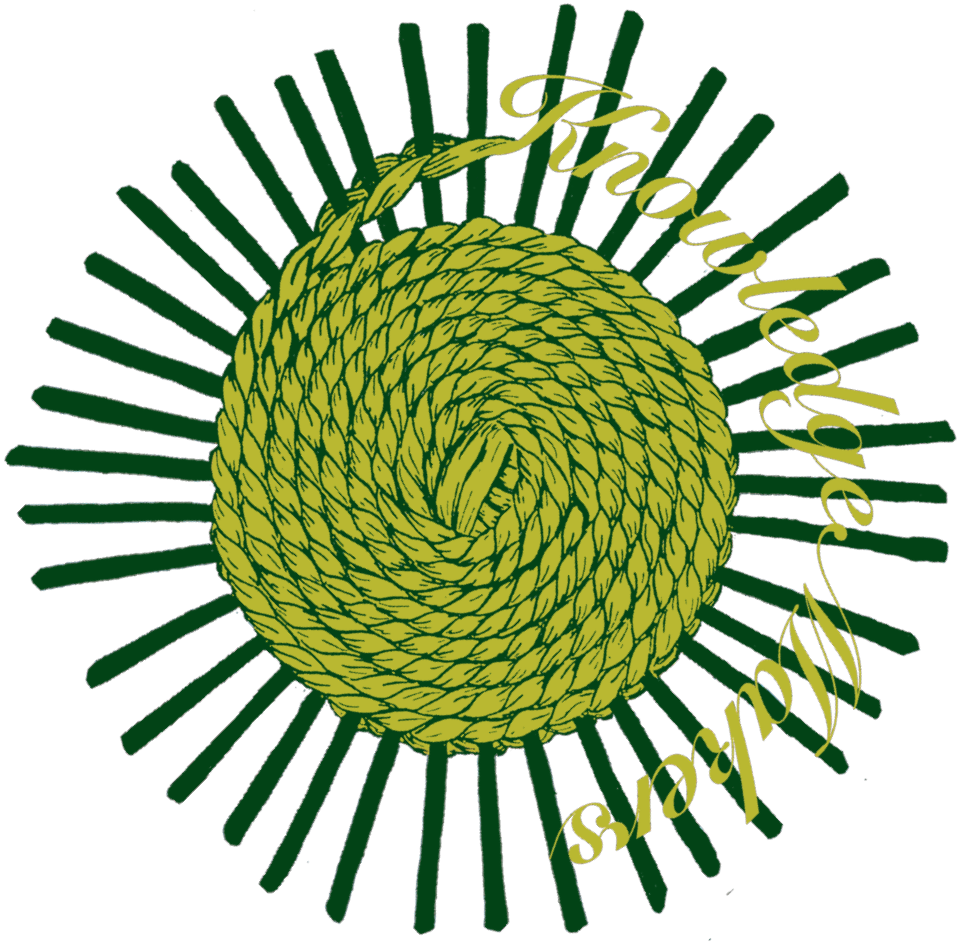
**~ Rylee Bull**

# FOREWORD

We begin with the symbol for Knowledge Makers: a pine need basket in the process of being made. This Indigenous skill starts with one piece; each added piece of the weaving adding strength and creating the whole, each distinct yet significant. The Knowledge Makers journal shows us how Indigenous peoples and researchers are indeed full of distinctiveness, power, and strength. We see the potential to expand knowledge and to transform the research communities within Canadian Universities.

Knowledge Makers is an interdisciplinary research mentoring initiative based at Thompson Rivers University that supports Indigenous undergraduate students to become researchers. The selected students participate in a two-day workshop exploring Indigenous research. They prepare research action plans and produce papers for the Knowledge Makers publication. A gathering is held with the university, community, and loved ones in attendance to share the moment when the Knowledge Makers, as first-generation Indigenous researchers, receive their first copy of their first publication. And as often happens in Indigenous ways, the first act for each Knowledge Maker is to gift this treasured first publication to their respected ones. We come together throughout the Knowledge Makers journey with the support of our families, Elders, administrators, faculty, staff, and each other, tapping into the potential we have as Indigenous researchers, and the breadth and possibilities of Indigenous research methodologies.

We feel incredibly honoured to be in each other's company, and inspired by the communal sharing of knowledge that happens within this space with the goal of creating brighter and more hopeful futures for us all. Knowledge Makers is more than just a journal publication, it is a research network that facilitates research training, and traditional knowledge sharing. Since Knowledge Makers inception in 2016, this program has published 90+ undergraduate research papers, 20 of our Alumni have won awards for their work, and we have supported students from over 30 Indigenous nations to bring their knowledge to the academic table. In addition, we have created a system of mentor support at the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels that



support the needs of Knowledge Makers students while in the program and beyond. We are overwhelmed with pride in the achievements of past Knowledge Makers, many who are receiving international scholarships, presenting their knowledge at conferences, becoming research assistants and faculty within TRU, continuing their studies into their Masters' and becoming leadership within their own communities. Knowledge Makers is a profound, dynamic journey with sustainable outcomes. It is always a privilege to share this journey with everyone involved. In this shared effort we enact research as a form of service.

This year, 1 elder, 2 faculty and 16 members of the Volume 9 cohort had the opportunity to travel to Aotearoa (New Zealand) to visit the University of Waikato. Luke Moss, Tahliah Temepara, Fire Donna, Kaneihana Dewes and the Te Ao HuriHuri program welcomed us with open arms and made us feel like family coming home to visit. With support of Universities Canada's Global Skills Opportunity funding, we were able to assist these 16 students in participating in a global Indigenous experiential learning program that immersed them in Māori teachings and culture. These cross globe Indigenous connections facilitated cross cultural understanding, connection and opportunity that few programs can do. The similarities that Indigenous peoples face, even if they are on different continents, shows us the importance of connectivity and the strength that can be achieved when we come together and recognize the power we have united. Weaving together our shared experiences with hope for a better future benefits us all, and we are thankful for the opportunity we have had to visit our new Māori friends who have become our Knowledge Makers family.

Within this year's volume, you as a reader will get to experience the accumulation of all of the hard work these students, as well as the support staff of Knowledge Makers, have put into combining students' passions with research. This edition showcases a powerful collection of essays, research, and reflections written by Indigenous students from across disciplines at Thompson Rivers University. Each piece offers a unique perspective on the intersections of Indigenous knowledge, contemporary issues, and personal experiences, contributing to ongoing dialogues of decolonization and reconciliation. Volume 9 explores Indigenous ownership of businesses, the well-being of lands and climates, navigating the legacies of institutional harms, and much more. This year's edition continues to challenge conventional perspectives and amplify Indigenous voices, offering insights into how Indigenous students are leading change in their communities and beyond. The weaving of this basket of knowledge-making and Knowledge Makers is dynamic and advancing. What a treasured gift we have with this ninth edition of the Knowledge Makers journal.

Dr. Airini, Dr. Sereana Naepi, Jeneen Herns-Jensen, Dr. Rod McCormick and Sandra Bandura

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Thompson Rivers University campuses are on the traditional lands of the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc (Kamloops campus) and the T'ex-elc (Williams Lake campus) within Secwépemc'ulucw, the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc. The region TRU serves also extends into the territories of the Stat'imc, Nlaka'pamux, Tsilh'qo-tin, Nuxalk, Dakelh, and Métis communities. We recognize that this territory has been a place of research, teaching, and learning since time immemorial.*

Thank you to all the Deans, faculty, staff, and Knowledge Makers alumni who were able to join us this year to provide encouragement and insights. We acknowledge Winter 2016 Knowledge Maker Levi Glass for his talent in designing the Knowledge Makers' artwork (seen on the cover of this journal and on all of our wonderful swag). Thank you to the extraordinary team that brought this publication to print, (in alphabetical order) Dr. Airini, Chuying Jiao, Dr. Rod McCormick, Jeneen Herns-Jensen, Dr. Mukwa Musayett, Peyton Anderson, Dr. Sereana Naepi, Dr. Shannon Wagner, Sukh Heer Matonovich, and Jessica Obando Almache from TRU open press. Thanks for Amber Riaz from A4 Editing. We're grateful for the skills, expertise, and empathy that Jessica and TRU Open Press brought to their work as graphic designers for this journal. Thanks to Kristen Glass for maintaining and designing the Knowledge Makers website and social media. We would be nothing without the guidance, teaching and mentorship of the Elders, particularly Mike Arnouse, Doe Thomas and Joanne Brown. Thank you to the support, administration, and catering teams for making sure all that was needed was in place. We also are extremely grateful to Tina Matthew (Executive Director, Indigenous Education) and her team for their continued support of everything we do. We acknowledge the support and supplemental funding provided by the faculty of Education and Social work as well as the Office of Research. Knowledge Makers is led though the All My Relations Research Centre, which is based in Faculty of EDSW. Thank you to the Director Rod McCormick, Associate Director Jeneen Herns-Jensen, and Knowledge Maker Program Coordinator Chuying Jiao, as well as all the Research Assistants and support stuff who made this journal possible. We thank Dr. Sereana Naepi and know that her energy, intelligence, and advocacy as an Indigenous scholar herself make amazing things possible in amazing ways. We also thank Professor Airini whose unrelenting passion and advocacy to grow Indigenous researchers make programs like the Knowledge Makers possible. Finally, and most importantly, we thank the Indigenous students who committed themselves to the Knowledge Makers program. We look forward to hearing about your research journeys in future years.

TRU Open Press

# Elder Doe Thomas

Tk'emlúps te Secwe'pemc
Thompson Rivers University

## XPQENWELLEN (ATTAINED KNOWLEDGE)

### What is Knowledge?

Several years ago, I joined Cplul'kw'ten (Gathering Place) here at Thompsons Rivers University as one of the four Elders at House 5. Our roles as mentors, at least for me, is understanding the ever-evolving atmosphere around us.

I have also had the privilege and honor to participate with several different departments in various capacities. For example, I have provided opening remarks and/or prayers, lead sharing circles, assisted in collaboration of hosting campus wide feast, and facilitated various beading groups with different topics where Secwepemc history, values and traditions were discussed.

The goal of Xpqenwellen was to dismantle the education and resource silos that can occur in large institutions thereby allowing Elder participation not only from House 5 but also engaging and participating with other departments and faculty.

Xpqenwellen integrates Indigenous knowledge and practices with western health promotion framework to strengthen student and employee literacy about decolonization and Indigenization and encourages reflexive practice and action towards truth and reconciliation.

Our collaboration with the Wellness Center, Elders and Indigenous staff from various faculties hasve successfully offered and hosted approximately 26 events over the past 3 years. We engaged with Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders (on campus and community). We have connected with over 1000 TRU participants via numerous events and activities. We accomplished this with Sharing Circles, Beading Series (Remembrance Day, Murdered and Missing Indigenous women and girls and Two-Spirited People, Campus Feast, Berry Walk, Healing balms and tinctures, Consent Tea, Embrace Mental Health event, and SWAT Leader training.

As a result of this fantastic opportunity, I have been able to participate with Adventure Tourism, Master's in human rights, Co-op students, Law group and ESTR group. Our upcoming projects include Consent Café – Indigenous Partners Collaboration, celebrating the 10th Anniversary of Consent Tea, expanding student wellness ambassador training, and the Breaking Bannock initiative, which explores ( how connecting over our food can benefit our mental health..

I love and treasure the time I spend at TRU. The shared experiences and attained knowledge with students from all over the world. I solidified my belief that we never stop learning as long as we are willing to keep an open mind, be respectful and be kind.

Each new day can bring a sense of wonder and enlightenment as well as new challenges that can affirm self- esteem, self-confidence and self- identity and help pave the way for success no matter where our journeys take us to.

Kukstemc,
Doe Thomas


# In loving memory of Jeffrey McNeil-Seymour

Jeffrey transcended into the spirit world in June 2023 after a long battle with his health. He was an incredible light in this world that sparked joy in every space he entered, and dedicated his life to advocating for Indigenous peoples, two-spirit people, youth and land.

Jeffrey spent his life on a constant quest to learn and positively change the world around him. He did this through his work as a professor of Social Work at Thompson Rivers University as well as at the Toronto Metropolitan University. Jeffrey was a talented researcher, author and speaker. Prior to his work as a professor, Jeffrey attended TRU and was an integral part of the Knowledge Makers program.

Amongst his many talents, he was a passionate organizer and truth teller who was unafraid to discuss his life, his struggles, and his resiliency.

He called us all to action to make this world a better place for those around us, and his clear vision of Indigenous resurgence is still alive and inspiring us today. Jeffrey is remembered with love, from all of us at Knowledge Makers. As Jeffrey would say, we will #Carrieon for him (a tribute to his most loved Carrie Fisher).

We are actively decolonizing our bodies and resisting the continued exploitation of colonization. We are finding our way to understanding our bodies as our first and most cherished home. We are resisting and reclaiming our bodies as our original homes with every act of embodied joy and pleasure.

~ *Ellis Rondquist*

Sukh Heer Matonovich
Director of Student Research and Graduate Studies
Thompson Rivers University

# LEARNING FROM THE PLACES AND SPACES WHERE WE RESIDE

I am honoured to be given the opportunity to share some thoughts as an introduction to this Special Edition of the Knowledge Makers Journal. As the Director for Student Research and Graduate Studies I'm tasked with providing an array of pan-university student supports, including research mentorship, student research funding, program development and student research training. It is a privilege to work with hundreds of students each year, students who are both curious and passionate about their studies and how their studies might make a difference in the world.

The Knowledge Makers program represents TRU's most celebrated undergraduate research program. I am thankful to the students and my colleagues in the Knowledge Makers program who continually inspire me with their teachings and support. As we reflect on our practices in Student Research, we seek to challenge our Western worldview of what we know and how we seek answers to complex issues. We are (re)learning best practices in research from Indigenous knowledge and ways presented by the Knowledge Makers.

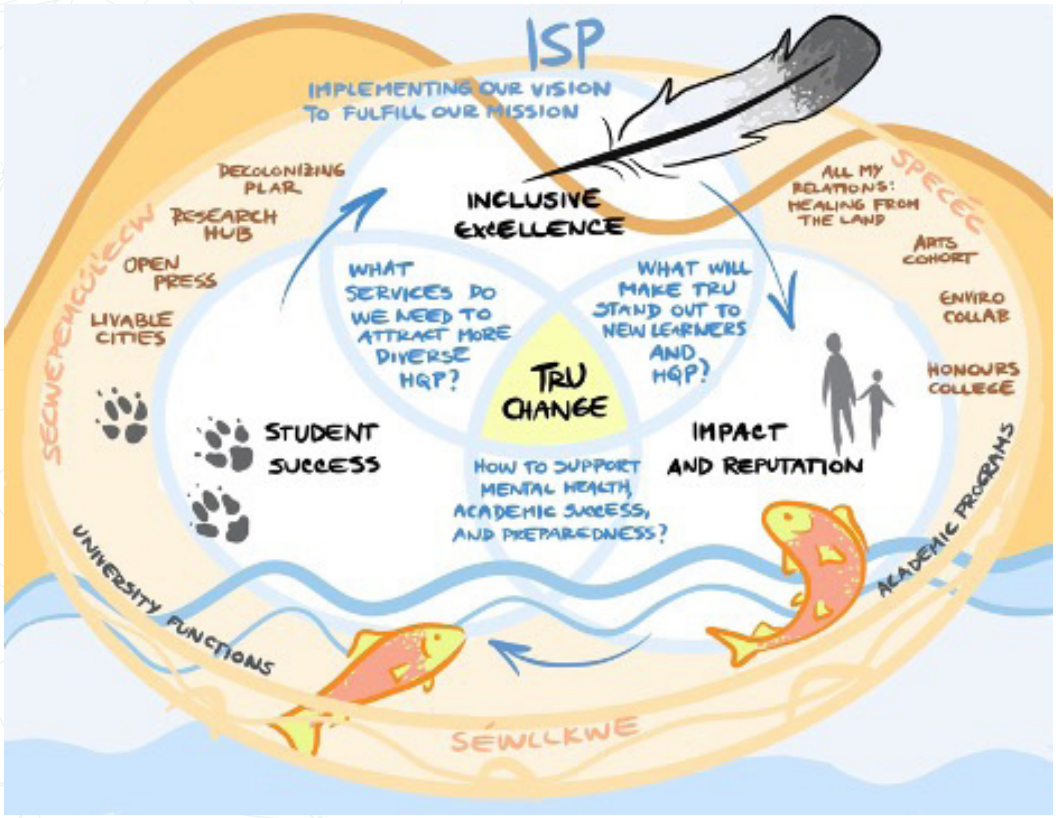
In its ninth year, the Knowledge Makers remains inspirational and a powerful voice contributing to an ongoing conversation about the theory, practice, and ethics of research. Through that conversation we have come to appreciate more fully the importance of locating learning and inquiry in the places and spaces where we reside. The Knowledge Makers program continues to build its legacy as a physical place and virtual space that cultivates a community of Indigenous Scholars. Through experiential learning opportunities such as the Te ao Hurihuri Maori Cultural Exchange Program, students have the chance to experience and extend community collaboration, cultural immersion, and hands-on learning that deepens understanding and engagement with their communities, traditions and ways of knowing.

The Knowledge Maker's example has motivated us all to re-examine our approaches to working with one another, and to think about how knowledge is created and shared. Developing innovative ways of sharing and teaching research within and beyond TRU has been a key focus as we work to make knowledge more accessible to students and communities.

As we work towards reconsidering and decolonizing Western worldviews of knowledge and learning for students engaged in research at TRU, we emphasize the importance of learning communities, community engagement, community mentorship, and peer-to-peer learning. As seen with the Knowledge Makers program, building a caring community is the first step toward engaging in meaningful research. TRU's new Research Hub, the creation of the TRUChange initiative, and the ongoing development of TRU's Honours College (honouring Indigenous approaches to learning), have been influenced by the example of the Knowledge Makers, and attempts to speak to the intentional creation of research communities as places and spaces that contribute to feelings of belonging and safety, helping students approach research in terms of experiences, values, traditions, and relationships.

In a rapidly changing world, the lessons we are learning from the Knowledge Makers program and through the publication of the Knowledge Makers Journal are inspiring us as we continue to build places and spaces that are informed and influenced by Indigenous knowledge and ways to support and strengthen student research and student success at Thompson Rivers University.

Image 1.




**Caption:** The TRUChange integrated strategic planning initiative, led by TRU's Provost's Office, seeks to foster university-wide integration of services and academic supports for students, with a key focus on Indigenization. Diagram by Marie Bartlett and Ted Gottfriedson.

TRU Open Press

Shay Paul
Tk'emlups te Secwepemc
Bachelor of Tourism
Thompson Rivers University

# ANALYZING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN SECWEPEMC'ULUCW: REALIZING A PATHWAY TO INDIGENOUS DIETARY HEALTH THROUGH CULTURAL RECONNECTION

## Abstract

For thousands of years, the Secwepemc people have been cultivating, harvesting, and connecting with the land of the Interior Plateau. Age-old traditions and harvesting practices have laid a pathway toward merging culture with the land and its bounty. Since settlement came to the Interior, one of the effects of being disconnected from the land has been substantial diet change. The result can be seen in Indigenous bodies that are overrepresented in health data reporting on obesity, cardiovascular disease, and Type 2 diabetes in comparison with any other non-Indigenous population. Reintroducing traditional means of food procurement supports better dietary practices and offers a cultural reconnection to traditions and community.
**Keywords:** Indigenous health, traditional diets, Indigenous food sovereignty.

## Introduction

This article examines how Indigenous food sovereignty and health can be deeply entwined with cultural traditions and practices. People in Secwepemc'ulucw had been using cultivation and harvest practices for centuries but, after European contact, those people have been subjected to profound change not only in land-use practices but also in nutritional intake.

With supporting research and observation, I show that Indigenous groups are overrepresented in dietary health concerns, including Type 2 diabetes (Burnside et al., 2023), dyslipidemia (Young et al, 2000), and cardiovascular disease (Haman et al., 2010), among others. Although many researchers and dietitians have had thoughts about how to combat the continuation of these high disease rates, the answer may be far simpler than imagined. The Secwepemc stories and teachings come from the land and can be seen and read in the world around us. The people of this area used the land as a food source and as a way to teach younger generations valuable knowledge. What more can the land tell us about such things? Perhaps the answer is not in a book or a lecture, but out there, with the plants and the animals that walk beside us.

## Land Development and the Effects on Seasonal Rounds

The Secwepemc people and surrounding nations were not nomadic in the traditional sense—they did not simply wander around the Interior, but rather, they followed calculated seasonal rotations and migrations of animals called seasonal rounds (Turner, 2015). The Interior Salish groups had numerous cultivation sites, visiting different locations throughout the year to harvest plants at different growth stages, as many of the plants the people consumed through the year ripened at different times (Ignace, 2016). The people would often travel along the banks of the Thompson and Fraser rivers, fish in the surrounding tributaries around Xixyúm (Hi-hium Lake), Ctáltsenten (Green Lake), Tsṗ éten (Gustafson Lake), Q'eséten (Loon Lake),

Sṗ estwécwemstem (Bonaparte Lake), and Pipsell (Jacko Lake), and follow the ripening zones into the higher elevations through the summer (Ignace, 2016).

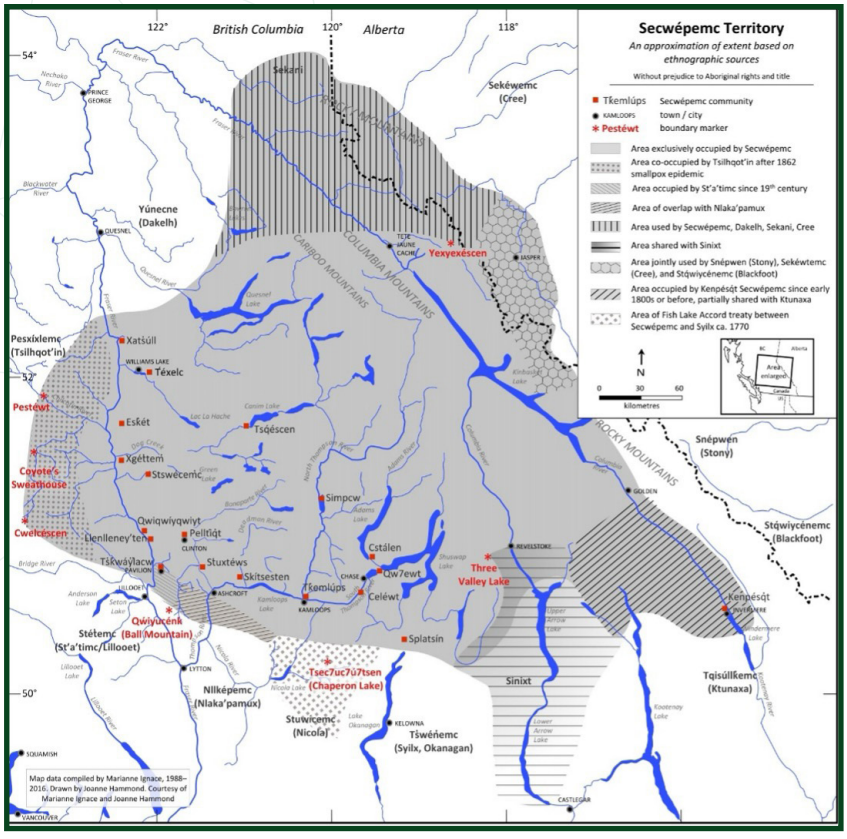
As the land in Secwepemc'ulucw began to develop into settlements and later work camps

and towns, the seasonal rounds were disrupted, and harvest sites were lost. In her Master's Thesis, Ann Catherine Garibaldi (2003) interviewed Neskonlith Elder, Dr. Marie Thomas, on her experiences harvesting wapato (Broadleafed arrowhead) in the Shuswap area, who shared that ranching, housing developments, and resort construction have impacted valuable traditional harvest sites and left once abundant locations barren of traditional food sources.

The Interior of BC was a rich landscape with many different resources. Secwepemc'ulucw became a crossroads for many, inviting settlement, natural resource extraction, and agricultural development. The Secwepemc people and neighbouring nations began to feel the pressure of Western expansion on their homeland and saw firsthand how it impacted their seasonal rounds. National Parks restricted harvesting (Mason, 2014), agriculture and ranching impacted the soil health and plant growth (Garibaldi, 2003), railway and highway implementation brought invasive plant species (Thomas et al, 2016), and fire suppression suffocated traditional plant growth and renewal (Turner, 1999). According to Nancy Turner (1999),

> They used to burn one hill and use the other… But now, because the white man really watches us, we don't burn anything. We realize already, it seems the things that were eaten by our forefathers have disappeared from the places where they burned. It seems that already almost everything has disappeared. Maybe it is because it's weedy. All kinds of things grow and they don't burn. If you go to burn then you get into trouble because the white men want to grow trees. Because they changed our ways… Then we forget the good food of our earliest forefathers. Now they have disappeared because the hills grew weedy and no-one seems to tend them, no-one clears there as our forefathers did so thoroughly…. There we went berry picking long ago. Now nothing. The food plants have now all gone. They have disappeared…. We named other grounds of ours around here; called them "The Picking Places" because that is where we went to pick berries. Now you will not

**Figure 1. Map of Secwepemc Territory**




**Source:** Hammond & Ignace 2021. Map data was provided by Marianne Ignace and drawn by Joanne Hammond. Image courtesy of Joanne Hammond (2021).

find one single berry there. (p190. )

In this excerpt from Nancy Turner's chapter in In Indians, Fire and the Land in the Pacific Northwest (1999), she interviews a Stl'atl'imx Elder by the name of Baptise Richie and his experience with burning practices in the Mount Currie area. It can be seen from the memories shared above that the history of land development in the region is not a far-off occurrence of a deeply historical event but can be remembered by those living today. The changes to land use and harvesting can still be remembered by the grandparents of the current generation, who are still learning to adapt to the Western customs their children have been raised on.

## National Parks as A Tool in Colonization

Wilderness is a hallowed ground; it is at the origin of speech, as in the phrase "voice in the wilderness." It is the void and the voiding (tohu-bohu); clearing, the clearing; a wasteland, a nest of wild beasts, the raging sea, the Teutonic night, the forest; 'quelques arpents de neige vers le Canada, terres des sauvage' [a few acres of snow towards Canada, land of the savages]; Terre sauvage [Wilderness]. Excerpt from Picture and Witness at the Site of Wilderness by Johnathan Bordo (2000).

There were many historical contributions toward the damage to Indigenous health, from reserve initiatives to crownland development. Still, perhaps the most pertinent event for the people of the Interior Plateau was the development of National Parks. The glorification of the wild, untamed lands of the West and the expectations that accompanied the idea impacted several different tribes along the Rockies, including the Secwepemc (Mason, 2014).

Throughout the 19th century, the mindset of settlers began to change from exploring this new world to building a romantic vision of the wilderness. It was first an artistic movement that started to capture this romanticism of the wild through painting and prose, stoking the fire toward the rapidly growing wilderness preservation movement (Hall, 2002). Hall (2002) shows that "the relationship of settler to wilderness was seen as crucial to the formation of national identity" (p. 289).

National Parks were created for economic and tourism opportunities and impacted Indigenous groups by restricting hunting, gathering, and even their rights to live in a specific area (Mason, 2014). Modelling their own legislation on the successful US Yellowstone Park Act, the Canadian government implemented a very similar statute titled the Rocky Mountain Parks Act in 1887. This banned the use and occupation of the land by any so-called trespassers who did not adhere to the park regulations, unfairly targeting Indigenous groups who relied on the land for sustenance and cultural practices (Mason, 2014).

Some of the key harvest areas that the Secwepemc used and relied on were in areas now known as Mt. Revelstoke National Park, Wells Grey Provincial Park, Banff National Park, and Jasper National Park (Thomas, 2016). Losing access to these areas and being subjected to the reserve system, many of the people faced severe impacts on their harvesting rounds. This loss of access began to encourage people to stay on reserves and to rely on government rations of Western products to survive (Mason, 2014).

## Traditional Plants and Nutritional Intake

The most concerning and rampant health conditions recorded in Indigenous populations are obesity (Bell et al., 2017), Type 2 diabetes (Burnside et al., 2023), dyslipidemia (Young et al, 2000), cardiovascular disease (Haman, 2010) and metabolic syndrome (Lavigne-Robichaud et al., 2017). These conditions occur at rates far higher in Indigenous populations than in comparative non-Indigenous populations, with a data-collection estimation of 8 in 10 Indigenous people developing Type 2 diabetes, compared with only 5 in 10 non-Indigenous peoples developing the same condition (Turin et al., 2016). Indigenous populations also have a higher chance of developing dietary health conditions at a younger age than non-Indigenous populations.

The first and most blatant contribution to such dietary issues was the historical change in food systems and food access, as discussed briefly. Scientifically speaking, there were astronomical differences in the biological compounds found in the food types Indigenous people traditionally ate, compared with the food Europeans

introduced.

A commonly held belief among researchers is that Indigenous peoples have what is called a "thrifty gene" that has evolved to create a slow metabolism and carry more fat due to extreme food shortage (Hay, 2018). As Travis Hay explores in his dissertation (2018), the theory was originally proposed by the American geneticist, James V. Neel, in 1962, but only truly began to gain traction as an international phenomenon in 1999, after Robert Hegele published an article on a possible genetic mutation that predisposes Indigenous people to Type 2 diabetes.

In 1989, Neel began to denounce his own research, going so far as to say "the data that hypothesis was based on has largely collapsed" (Hay, 2018, p. 130). Hay continues this examination, stating that the research Neel was referring to was conducted under questionable methods and can be considered speculation at best (Hay, 2018).

This ideology has had harmful consequences on the health of Indigenous people and perpetuates an inaccurate and damaging stereotype that modern Indigenous people are obese because of sedentary lifestyles and excess amounts of abundant foods (Hay, 2018). It was not genes but nutrient availability in food sources that caused such a drastic and varied difference.

As Nicole Hale and Gideon Mailer (2017) discuss in their book, Decolonizing the Diet, traditional food sources were high in micronutrients and vitamins and minerals, which sustained Indigenous bodies differently than the traditional European diet that contained food crops with higher caloric levels. These Indigenous communities were adept at foraging these abundant resources and utilizing all parts of the plants, from the flower buds and seeds, to the roots and tubers of plants, with each plant part containing rich and valuable nutrients (see Figure 2). Hale and Gideon (2017) also discuss how people with European ancestry have a metabolic system that has slowly evolved and developed to handle an increase in bodily insulin and blood-sugar levels, whereas Indigenous bodies in comparison, didn't have the same gradual exposure

**Figure 2. Balsamorhiza sagittata**

**Source:** Drawn by Shay Paul 2023.

(2017).

The diet of many Indigenous groups in the Southern Interior consisted of a mixture of plant food sources, fish, and game meats gathered throughout the seasonal round. A large portion of the diet included a diverse list of plant foods including root vegetables, green vegetables, berries and fleshy fruits, seeds, and nuts, mushrooms and lichen, as well as cambium bark and inner bark (Turner, 2015a). The people of the Interior Plateau had nearly 50% of their total nutrient intake in the form of roots, tubers, corms, bulbs, and rhizomes (Ignace, 2016).

Many of the staples of Indigenous diets in the Interior consisted of foods with high micronutrient levels, which include phytochemicals, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants—most commonly coming from plant food sources (Kuhnlein et al., 2016). However, foods with high macronutrients such as protein, fats, carbohydrates, and fiber were also supplemented into Indigenous diets in smaller portions, but the nutritional makeup of the

food items had a different digestive rate of breakdown compared to more modern variants of the Western diet (Hale, 2017).

For example, the white potato and the arrowleaf balsam root were two popular root vegetables during the early settlement in the Interior Plateau. The potato was a popular crop as it is energy-dense with higher carbohydrate levels (King & Slavin, 2013), and the balsamroot was a long plant traditionally harvested by the Secwepemc people (Turner, 2015), considered to be an important and versatile plant due to the edible roots, root crowns, shoots, and seeds (Bannister & Thomas, 2016). Though these two vegetables had similar uses, it is important to note they are completely different plants with contrasting nutrient makeup.

As can be seen in the data in Table 1, the balsamroot has an incredibly high rate of both macronutrients and micronutrients in comparison with the white potato, both being prepared in comparatively similar ways. Kuhnlein et al. (2016) go on to describe the heat-breakdown cycle as pertinent to breaking down more complex carbohydrates in vegetables such as balsamroot so that they are easier to digest. In addition to simplified digestive compounds, the people of the Interior Plateau would commonly mix their diet with a variety of different food sources obtained in small portions and did not often consume a single food plant in excess (Ignace, 2016). This is just one example of the toll that nutritional change in a postsettler context had on Indigenous bodies and dietary practices.

## Stories from the Land and How It Connects Us

Seasonal rounds and food harvesting and procurement go far beyond being a simple means to collect food for consumption. Harvesting was a very important part of intergenerational knowledge exchange and connecting people. Harvesting was a collective job done by all people in the tribe and referred to as knucwentwécw, or "helping one another" (Ignace, 2016).

Stories and teaching were told during harvest times, songs were sung while berry picking, and origin stories—or legends—were spun to teach the ways of the land (Ignace et al., 2016). Many of the stories that were created were direct observations or teachings that were passed down orally through generations. For example, the balsamroot or spring sunflower was observed to be dug up by bears and left to dry in the sun. The people learned from Grizzly that the balsamroot was too bitter to eat raw and that by leaving it in the sun (or later, cooking it in an earth oven), the root became soft and sweet (Ignace, 2016). Modern scientific data shows that raw balsamroot doesn't contain as many nutrients, but after the root

> "Indigenous populations also have a higher chance of developing dietary health conditions at a younger age than non-Indigenous populations. The first and most blatant contribution to such dietary issues was the historical change in food systems and food access."
>
> - Shay Paul

**Table 1. Balsamorhiza sagittata**

| Food (100g) | Calories (kcal) | TDF (g) | CHO (g) | Fat (g) | Protein (g) | Iron (mg) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Balsamroot (dried taproot) | 273 | 27 | 80 | 5.2 | 3.5 | 2.0 |
| White potato (flesh and skin, baked) | 94 | 2.1 | 21.08 | 0.15 | 2.10 | 0.64 |

Data for the balsamroot courtesy of Kuhnlein (2016), and data for the white potato courtesy of King (2013).

goes through a

heat-breakdown cycle, a variety of nutrients become available, and the inulin inside the taproot breaks down into fructose to give it a sweet taste (Bannister & Thomas, 2016).

The importance of cultural knowledge and teachings is directly intertwined with how and when the people of the Interior Plateau harvested and moved camps. The Secwepemc took signs from the landscape, recording and keeping track of phenological indicators which helped determine how the environment moved through the seasons and when plants and animals would mature (Lantz & Turner, 2003). An example of a phenological indicator that the Secwepemc used is when the soapberry ripened, it signaled that the sockeye salmon would start their spawning migration (Turner, 2015).

Continuing to practice and pass down these teachings is not only a way to continue cultural traditions but also a way to find a path toward a healthier mind and a healthier body. The Secwepemc worldview teaches that all things are intertwined and that the combination creates an intricate balance of life. Take for example the following passage: *The environment is seen as a whole; all the elements of the environment, seen and unseen, tangible and spiritual, are interconnected in a seamless web inextricably linked to human behaviors, actions, and attitudes. People and other animals, plants and fungi, water, mountains, celestial bodies, and supernatural entities, spirits and forces are not regarded as separate and distinct. Rather, they are bound to each other and to the place where they reside through cultural traditions and interactive, reciprocal relationships. (Ignace et al, 2016, p. 414)*

To be connected to the landscape and environment proffers another level of kinship for many Indigenous people, a deeper tie that transcends mere appreciation, one that feels embedded in the earth (Schill et al., 2019). Cultural exchange, food harvesting, working together as a community, and language are all interconnected and directly tied to the mental health of many Indigenous people (Booth & Skelton, 2011). Fostering the reconnection to land and place would directly impact the mental, and furthermore, physical health of individuals in a positive direction (Schill et al., 2019).

In the Indigenous worldview, it is understood that communities are a large support structure for individuals, and that having an established network can help both mental and physical ailments. It is not far off to suggest that the healthy body of one individual starts with the health of community and their place within it.

## Conclusion

Environmental change (Thomas et al., 2016), land development (Garibaldi, 2003), and the loss of culture and language (Schill et al., 2019) have had a detrimental impact on the accessibility of food sovereignty as our ancestors knew it, but the knowledge and the connection remains underneath. Indigenous peoples, and especially the Secwepemc have strong ties to the land and their knowledge of it, even if that knowledge is not yet realized or understood by younger generations (Ignace & Turner, 2016).

We are entering an age of revitalization, and certain teachings are returning after the drastic change colonialism and assimilation brought to the Interior. Through community initiatives and the revival of traditional food systems and support for Indigenous food procurement, communities are coming back

> “It’s land-based healing and learning work, and it’s transformative.”
>
> - Dawn Morrison

together and reconnecting to the land their ancestors cultivated and cared for (Ignace & Turner, 2016).

Take for example the work of Dawn Morrison and the Working Group for Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS) with their community-based youth initiatives. The Neskonlith Reserve is home to one of their many projects, the Indigenous Food and Freedom School, where the main focus is "developing plans and proposals for mapping out and advocating for the designation of a Secwepemc Foodlands Conservation Area" (Gilpin, 2020). The transformative work they are undertaking not only provides framework for communities but offers culturally safe ways to reconnect to tradition (Haren, 2022).

With all the destruction colonialism brought not only to the land, but to the spirits of the people, practices and teachings may not be able to return to the way they were before, but that doesn't mean something else cannot emerge from the ashes. Like the slopes of the mountains healing through a seasonal burn, budding flowers and morels will emerge from the embers and breathe new life into the lands again. Continuing to encourage, support, and build up these initiatives while lifting up community members will continue a pathway toward positive change on a wholistic level (Schill et al., 2019).

## References


Bannister, K. & Thomas, M. (2016). The importance of Secwepemc cultural knowledge in understanding the antimicrobial chemistry of balsamroot (Balsamorhiza sagittata). Secwepemc Plants and People: Research Papers in Ethnobotany. 334–336.

Bell, R., Smith, C., Hale, L., Kira, G., & Tumilty, S. (2017). Understanding obesity in the context of an Indigenous population—A qualitative study. Obesity Research & Clinical Practice. 11, 558–566.

Booth, A. L. & Skelton, N. W. (2011). "You spoil everything!" Indigenous peoples and the consequences of industrial development in British Columbia. Environment, Development and Sustainability, 13(2011), 685–702. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-011-9284-x.

Burnside, H., Firestone, M., Downey, B., Ayaz, B., & Parry, M. (2023). Exploring the Lived Experience of Self-management Practices of Indigenous Men, Women and Two-spirited Individuals Living With Type 2 Diabetes in Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand: A Scoping Review. Canadian journal of diabetes, 47(5), 455–472.e15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcjd.2023.03.007

Garibaldi, A. C. (2003). Bridging Ethnobotany, Autecology and Restoration: The Study of Wapato (Sagittaria latifolia Willd.; Alismataceae) in Interior British Columbia [Masters Thesis, University of Victoria]. ETD (Electronic Theses and Dissertations).

Gilpin, E. (2020). We desperately need to be talking about food sovereignty. Special Report: First Nations Forward. National Observer. https://www.nationalobserver.com/2020/06/09/features/we-desperately-need-be-talking-about-foo d-sovereignty

Hale, N. E., & Mailer, G. A.(2019). Metabolic health and immunity in Native America, 1750–1950. In Decolonizing the Diet: Nutrition, Immunity and Warning from Early America. 137–173. Anthem Press.

Hall, C. M. (2002). The changing cultural geography of the frontier: National parks and wilderness as frontier remnant. Tourism in Frontier Areas. Lexington Books.

Haman, F., Fontaine-Bisson, B., Batal, M., Imbeault, P., Blais, J. M., & Robidoux, M. A. (2010). Obesity and type 2 diabetes in Northern Canada's remote First Nations communities: The dietary dilemma. International Journal of Obesity, 34. 24–31. doi: 10.1038/ijo.2021.236.

Hammond, J. & Ignace, M. (2021). Map of Secwepemc Territory: An approximate extent based on ethnographic sources. [Map]. Republic of Archaeology.

Haren, K. V. (2022, June 1). Research highlights importance of Indigenous food sovereignty. Thompson Rivers University Newsroom. https://inside.tru.ca/2022/06/01/research-highlights-importance-of-in-

digenous-food-sovereignty/.

Hay, T. (2018). The science of settler colonialism: A Canadian history of the thrifty gene hypothesis [Doctoral dissertation, York University]. http://hdl.handle.net/10315/35012.

Ignace, M. B., Turner, N. J. & Peacock, S. L. (2016). Re tmicw te skukwstéls es tuwitentels: Secwepemc traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom now and in the future. In M. B. Ignace, N. J. Turner, & S. L. Peacock (Eds.), Secwepemc Plants and People: Research Papers in Ethnobotany. (pp. 407–439). Society of Ethnobiology.

Ignace, R. E. & Ignace, M. B. (2016). Re tsúwet.s-kucw ne Secwepemcúl̓ ecw: Secwepemc resource use and sense of place. In M. B. Ignace, N. J. Turner, & S. L. Peacock (Eds.), Secwepemc Plants and People: Research Papers in Ethnobotany (pp. 28–43). Society of Ethnobiology.

King, J. C., & Slavin, J. L. (2013). White potatoes, human health, and dietary guidance. Advances in Nutrition 4(3), 393S–401S. https://doi.org/10.3945/an.112.003525.

Kuhnlein, H. V., Loewen, D. C., Peacock, S., Leggee, D., Turner, N. (2016). Nutrients in selected Secwepemc traditional food species. In M. B. Ignace, N. J. Turner, & S. L. Peacock (Eds.), Secwepemc Plants and People: Research Papers in Ethnobotany, (pp. 209–211). Society of Ethnobiology.

Lantz, T., and Turner, N. J. (2003). Traditional Phenological Knowledge (TPK) of Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia. Journal of Ethnobiology 23(2):263–286.

Lavigne-Robichaud, M., Moubarac, J., Lantagne-Lopez, S., Johnson-Down, L., Batal, M., Sidi, E. A. L., & Lucas, M. (2017). Diet quality indices in relation to metabolic syndrome in an Indigenous Cree (Eeyouch) population in Northern Quebec, Canada. Public Health Nutrition, 21, 172–180.

Mason, C. W. (2014). Colonial encounters, conservation, and sport hunting in Banff National Park. Spirit of the Rockies: Reasserting an Indigenous Presence in Banff National Park. University of Toronto Press.

Paul, S. (2023). Balsamorhiza sagittata [watercolour and ink]. Kamloops, BC. Canada.

Schill, K., Terbasket, E., Thurston, W. E., Kurtz, D., Page, S., McLean, F., Jim, R., & Oelke, N. (2019). Everything is related and it all leads up to my mental well-being: A qualitative study of the determinants of mental wellness amongst urban Indigenous Elders. British Journal of Social Work, 49(4), 860–879. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcz046.

Turin, T. C., Saad, N., Jun, M., Tonelli, M., Ma, Z., Barnabe, C. C. M., Manns, B., & Hemmelgarn, B. (2016). Lifetime risk of diabetes among First Nations and non-First Nations people. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 188(16), 1147–1153.

Thomas, M., Turner, N., & Garibaldi, A. C. (2016). "Everything is deteriorating": Environmental and cultural loss in Secwepemc Territory. In M. B. Ignace, N. J. Turner, & S. L. Peacock (Eds.), Secwepemc Plants and People: Research Papers in Ethnobotany (pp. 350–365). Society of Ethnobiology.

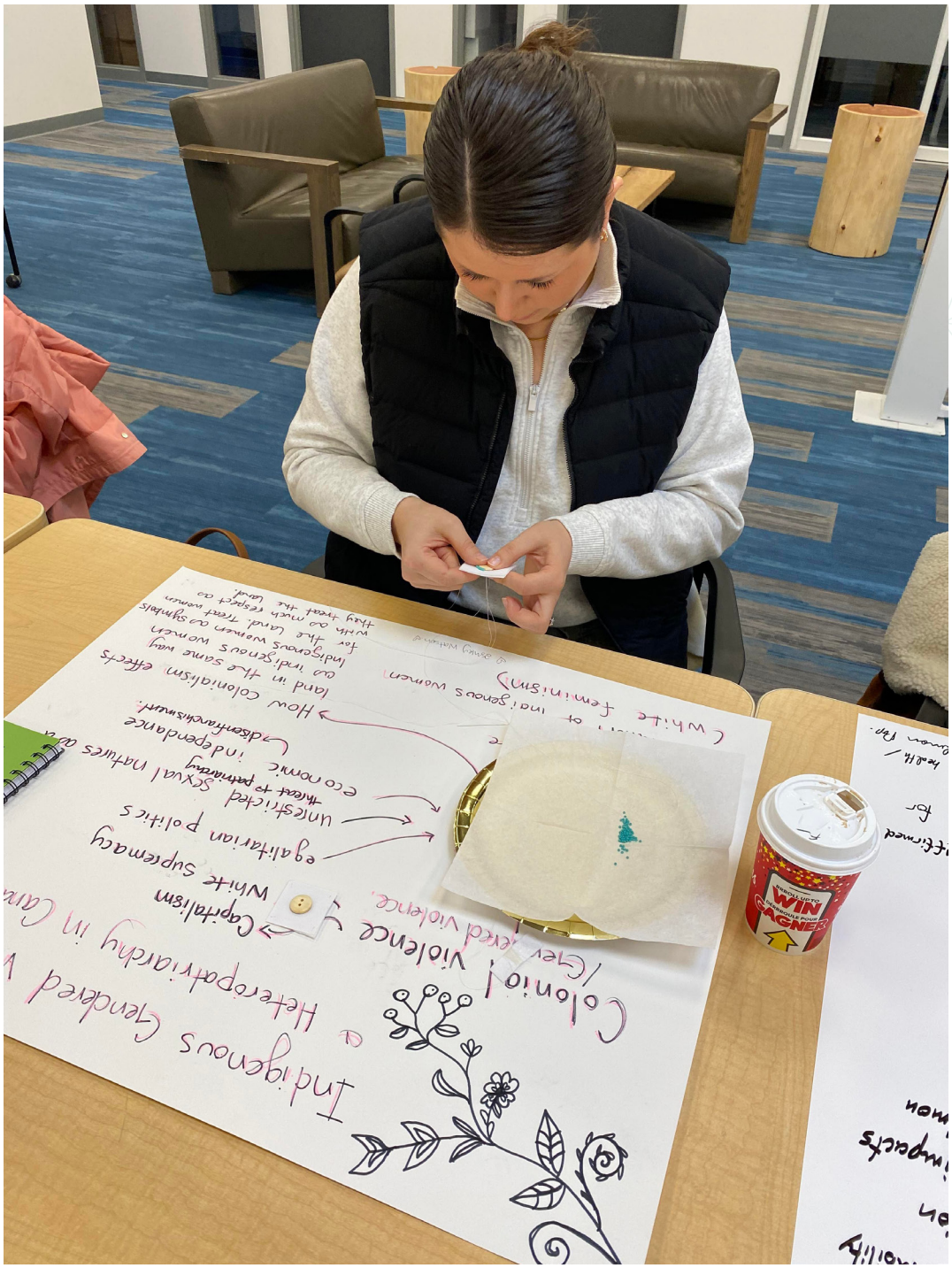
Turner, N. (1999) "Time to burn": Traditional use of fire to enhance resource production by Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia. In R. Boyd (Ed.). Indians, Fire and the Land in the Pacific Northwest, (pp. 189–171). Oregon State University Press.

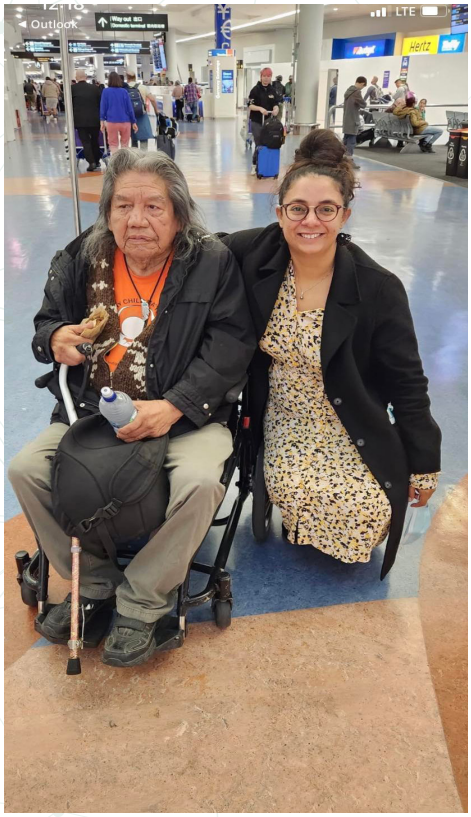
Turner, N. (2015a). Plants as food: Development, diversity, and dissemination. In Ancient Pathways, Ancestral Knowledge: Ethnobotany and Ecological Wisdom of Indigenous Peoples of Northwestern North America 1, (pp. 266–278). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Turner, N. (2015b). Moving for the harvest: Seasonal rounds and plant knowledge. Ancient Pathways, Ancestral Knowledge: Ethnobotany and Ecological Wisdom of Indigenous Peoples of Northwestern North America. 2, 18–50. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Young, T. K., Reading, J., Elias, B., & O'Niel, J. D. (2000). Type 2 diabetes mellitus

in Canada's First Nations: Status of an epidemic in progress. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 163(5), 561–566.




Outlook
LTE
Hertz


SH HOT
NI DONUTS

Jewel Phillips
Lytton First Nation,
Political Science & Philosophy
Thompson Rivers University

# THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE RAILWAY WITHIN LYTTON FIRST NATIONS

On June 30, 2021, the community of Lytton First Nations and the Village of Lytton experienced a record-breaking heatwave, known as the western heat dome. During this heatwave, the temperature reached an unprecedented 49.6°C in the daytime, marking the highest temperature ever recorded in Canada (Government of Canada, 2022). Due to this incredible heat, there was massive loss of livestock that were unable to cool themselves, as well as multiple cases of heatstroke and distress within the community that resulted in hospitalizations. At approximately 4:30 p.m. the start of a major BC wildfire was spotted and resulted in the town burning down. The fire reached a total of 83,000 hectares by the end of August (Cohen & Westhaver, 2022). During the heatwave, Canada National (CN) Railway and Canada Pacific (CP) Railway trains were running at full capacity, leading community members to speculate that the fire was started by a spark on the railway lines, which some locals claimed to have witnessed. The cause of the fire has not been officially announced, but the destruction due to this event has caused the members of Lytton First Nations to reflect on the environmental impact the railway has had on the community from the moment it was built. The railway has a lengthy track record of causing numerous environmental disasters in First Nations communities. In 2019, there were 100 reported fires attributed to rail operations, followed by 76 reported fires in 2020 (Bains, 2021).

The railway company has proven time and time again that it has no remorse or guilt, and those who benefit from it feel a sense of power over First Nations communities. They have never been held accountable for their mistreatment of the members and leaders of Lytton First Nations. It's crucial to proactively raise public awareness about the troubling track record of the railway industry, which has caused environmental disasters in Lytton First Nations communities. Recognizing the intersection of climate change, industrial activities, and the vulnerabilities of Indigenous communities is of utmost importance. The railway company must take necessary actions, ensuring that the voices of the communities are heard, that their concerns are treated seriously, and that their rights are fully respected.

The people of Lytton First Nations have inhabited the land since time immemorial, surviving solely on traditional foods and resources. Gathering traditional foods helps maintain a healthy diet and lowers food costs for families; it is a necessary way of life for First Nations people. The rising temperatures are causing shifts in the distribution of ungulate species in specific areas (Dawe & Boutin, 2016). These ungulate species serve as a primary source of meat protein for the Thompson-Nicola region. However, the increased frequency and severity of wildfires have adversely impacted the habitats of these vital ungulate species. This, in turn, has further compounded the food security challenges faced by First Nations communities due to climate change.

During the summertime, harvesting Indian celery, wild potatoes, asparagus, and saskatoon berries in the valley constitutes the traditional method of food collection for the Lytton First

Nations. Asparagus typically thrives along riverbanks. Notably, both railways (CN and CP) run alongside the same rivers. During the summer months, the railway company employs pesticides and herbicides to mitigate the risk of fires. However, these pesticides can be highly toxic for consumption by both humans and animals. The railway company regularly applies these pesticides to asparagus patches each year, accompanied by the placement of warning signs in the treated areas. However, there are multiple locations where these warning signs are conspicuously absent. This absence can lead residents to unknowingly harvest asparagus that may have been adversely affected by the spraying. Distinguishing whether the asparagus has been sprayed is challenging through visual inspection alone, which can lead community members to inadvertently harvest toxic asparagus. Meanwhile, these pesticides can permeate the soil, ultimately finding their way into the waterways to damage soil. In 2017, the Canadian National Railway was found guilty of spraying pesticides and herbicides along the Skeena River, leading to a fine of $2.5 million: "a charge of violating the Fisheries Act by using pesticides in or around waters frequented by fish" (The Canadian Press, 2021). CN was then added to the Environmental Offenders Registry for their impact on fish through the use of pesticides and herbicides.

The largest impact on the salmon in Lytton First Nations was in 1912 when the railway was building a second track on the other side of the river. The government was determined to finish the track within 3 years, which led to the use of dynamite that caused falling rock (Roden, 2021). They were frantically working, drilling, and blasting the land without proper assessment. It was documented that "numerous railroad workers lost their lives in the dynamite explosions, and their lifeless bodies were observed floating downstream in the river" (Meggs, 1991, p. 90). Additionally, following the explosions, a group of 64 men attempted to escape on a raft but tragically never reappeared alive. The salmon loss resulting from the Hells Gate explosion endured for three generations (Pacific Salmon Commission, n.d.). The explosion rendered the river impassable for salmon, leading to a period of famine (Meggs, 1991). The Nlaka'pamux people from the area tried everything they could to help the fish: they even used traditional dip nets to carry salmon from one side of the rock to the other (Haugen, 2022). The area is now named the Hells Gate slide as it was the greatest single environmental disaster in the province's history; officials covered up the magnitude of this disaster. Fishing continued, although the fish were unable to spawn. When the decline in fish became noticeable, officials attempted to eliminate Aboriginal fishing rather than try to fix the slide's effects (Meggs, 1991). The need for another railway to enter the area was questioned. Still, politicians and advocates saw the railway as an economic opportunity as they had $21,750 per kilometer and tax-free status as long as the railway was built by July 1, 1914 (Meggs, 1991). The workers were dedicated to reaching the timeline, but road gangs were unable to keep up with the amount of work that had to be done, which led to them breaking the law and blowing debris directly into the rivers. At that time, railway workers primarily consisted of immigrants and Indigenous men. 4,000 of these workers were compelled to subsist on rations and received such meager wages that they couldn't even afford the train fare home. One anonymous worker expressed a disturbing sentiment, stating, that "'Men were considered cheaper to the contractor than timber that could have prevented the rockfall responsible for the accident.' If the railway thought so little of men, then the salmon which swarmed the Fraser each fall must have seemed inconsequential indeed" (Meggs, 1991, p. 92). The Canadian Northern Railway (CNOR), a federal railway company, denied any responsibility for the previous landslides. However, they continued blasting, which led to another massive landslide at Hell's Gate, resulting in half of the mountainside collapsing into the river. During this time, the Indigenous people had used their dip nets to carry an estimated 16,500 sockeye and 850 spring salmon that autumn (Meggs, 1991). The major decline in salmon after the Hell's Gate slide led to the Pacific Salmon Treaty Act, as Canada needed funds from the United States to help recover fish migration patterns (Evenden, 2000). Canada and the United States have been working together and splitting the cost of the Hell's Gate recovery resulting in $1.47 million in total funds (Pacific Salmon Commission, n.d.). The Hell's Gate slide has had the biggest impact on fish and is still an unfishable area to the Nlaka'pamux. Councilor

John Haugen (2022) states that "there was nothing worse than this moment for our salmon."

The Canadian Railway continued to assert its dominance through the decades. This became very prevalent, as seen through first-hand experience, when CNR began blasting to make room for the twin track without consultation or warning to the leadership of Lytton First Nations, including Chief Ruby Dunstan and the Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council (NNTC). The twin tracking events took place throughout the 1980s, and during this time, environmental impact assessments were not being done, only geological assessments (J. Haugen, personal communication, March 9, 2022). Failure to assess the blasting led to erosion in the area, resulting in a grave site in Indian Registry (IR) 26 falling into the river. CNR tried to put structures to hold the grave site up, but they were unable to keep up with weather events (J. Haugen, personal communication, March 9, 2022). CNR has never acknowledged what they have done to the families impacted in IR 26, and it remains a sensitive topic for the community of Lytton First Nations (J. Haugen, personal communication, March 9, 2022). Chief Ruby Dunstan opposed the twin track, stating:

"They never saw us as real people who could think for themselves, they do not have a good track record of working with LFN. They destroyed our fishing trails, our farming lands, they impacted our fish, and took our land because they believed they had the right to". (R. Dunstan, personal communication, January 26, 2022).

Lytton First Nations members never felt heard or respected by railway representatives; they knew the railway's history and the threat they posed to the land and water. The court cases for the twin tracking events took place over the course of 10 years. LFN and NNTC used many resources and spent approximately $1 million to pay for court fees, including lawyers and travel expenses. CNR tried to exhaust LFN and NNTC's finances by dragging the trials out and having Nlaka'pamux leadership travel across Canada for court. CNR's lawyer at the time had full belief that the railway was more dominant than the Nlaka'pamux as he went to a community meeting in Lytton and stated in the middle of a meeting "I just want to remind you people that CN is next to god and that we own part of this land too" (R. Dunstan, personal communication, January 26, 2022). The lawyer who came into the community created a mass upset in the nation and this lasting disrespect has stuck with the community to this day. A CNR representative also mentioned the same statement that CN was "next to god" in court, which can be found in the Supreme Court records (R. Dunstan, personal communication, January 26, 2022). The statement that the CNR representatives believed their company was next to god showed that they unequivocally believed in their dominance over First Nations communities and were confident that they would win in the Supreme Court of Canada. At this moment, the twin track is the longest-standing injunction in the commonwealth which protects Nlaka'pamux fisheries (Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council, 2023).

On July 31, 2006, a CPR coal train fell into the Thompson River in Lytton. According to the incident report, there were a total of 20 train cars that derailed, with 12 of them falling into the river, carrying 120 tons per car (Government of Canada, 2017). The BC government claimed that the environmental impact of the coal train falling into the river was minimal. At the same time, Lytton First Nations was put on a "no consumption" advisory where no members were allowed to fish

> "The railway company has proven time and time again that it has no remorse or guilt, and those who benefit from it feel a sense of power over First Nations communities. They have never been held accountable for their mistreatment of the members and leaders of Lytton First Nations.
>
> The railway company must take necessary actions, ensuring that the voices of the communities are heard, that their con¬cerns are treated seriously, and that their rights are fully respected."
>
> - Jewel Phillips

through the rest of the season (British Columbia Ministry of Environment, 2006). Haugen states that after the railway had assessed the situation, they told LFN leadership that the water would clean itself. When members were told they were not able to consume the fish for the remainder of the summer due to the fish being exposed to toxic chemicals, it caused food insecurity. Many Indigenous members use preservation through freezing, canning, wind drying, and smoking to save the fish throughout the winter months. The train derailment also resulted in the rafting companies shutting down, and as these companies created many job opportunities for members, with their closures many individuals lost their livelihoods. Only four days after the coal train derailment, nine CNR train cars carrying grain went off the tracks. The report showed "the train was at a track interchange when the accident occurred." According to Moreau (2006), "Dan Holbrook of the Transportation Safety Board of Canada said the train was switching from one track to another rarely used track avoiding a track blocked because of a Canadian Pacific derailment earlier that same week." The railways concluded that it was an accident. Just a month before the CPR train cars fell in the Thompson, two CNR employees died in an accident when a car went off the tracks and fell down the mountainside just north of Lytton (Moreau, 2006). The railways have a long history of unsafe actions solely to continue the transfer of goods from one place to another, and once an accident does happen, those in power work diligently to smooth it over in the media and cover up the detrimental effects it has on those living in the area. All the train derailments occurred within two months of each other and were only recorded in the Lytton area. The railways continue to operate dangerously as they are not concerned about the well-being of employees, communities, and the land.

Haugen and Dunstan can both recall approximately three fires in Lytton that were started by the railway and stated that the railway had failed to acknowledge any of them. The only time the railway has been held accountable for creating a wildfire was in 2016, when a spark from the train turned into a wildfire that burned throughout the west side of Lytton through to the end of August. Sixteen homes were put on evacuation order and although the houses survived, many families were impacted as barns, farmland, watersheds, and irrigation systems all burned down. Dunstan says her family has had to rebuild their barn three times, each time losing all the hay they had worked hard to obtain during the summer. This hay is crucial for providing her family with finances. Chief Ruby Dunstan, along with her daughter and a police officer, were all witnesses when the railway sparked on South Spencer Road on the west side of Lytton in 2016. The police officer used his radio to inform the CNR employees. Dunstan said the employees laughed and said, "yeah right" when told their train car started a fire. This moment led to a 17 hectares wildfire (R. Dunstan, personal communication, January 26, 2022) but CNR denied all responsibility for starting the fire. Haugen states that the 2016 wildfire court case went on for many years before it was announced that CNR was guilty. However, in December 2022, the BC Supreme Court predominantly upheld a ruling, resulting in Canadian National Railway being obligated to pay a sum exceeding $16 million due to their involvement in a wildfire that endured for several months in the vicinity of Lytton in 2015 (Lindsay, 2022). This legal decision aligns with the provisions of BC's wildfire regulations, specifically outlined in Section 5 of the BC Wildfire Act. According to this section, individuals, excluding those engaged in industrial activities, are generally prohibited from igniting, fueling, or using open fires in forest or grassland areas or within a 1-kilometer radius of these areas. Furthermore, Section 6 of the Act stipulates that individuals conducting industrial activities must carry out these activities in a manner and at a time that reasonably prevents the initiation of fires. If a fire does originate within or near industrial activities, those responsible are bound by mandatory duties as specified in the Act.

Haugen emphasized the significant financial strain that wildfires impose on communities and services given the extensive efforts required to control and manage such fires. This financial responsibility is underscored by the law. Given that railway companies are multibillion-dollar enterprises, they bear the responsibility for covering the costs associated with destruction resulting from incidents for which they are at fault.

The community of Lytton First Nations

feels their relationship with the railway has been unequal since the railways seized the land without consultation, and CNR and CPR continue to build without consent. Our people are angry; our people have reached a point from which there is no coming back. Lytton First Nations has never seen any compensation from the railways for using the Nations unceded lands and profiting from their destruction. The railway tracks are situated on both sides of the town, causing the town to vibrate when trains pass by throughout the day. These trains are exceptionally noisy, leading to issues of noise pollution and disruptions. Sound levels exceeding 55 decibels and those within the 65 to 75 decibel range induce physical stress on the body, contributing to conditions such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and heart attacks (Berglund et al., 1999). However, in Canada, the average noise level produced by passing trains can reach as high as 85 decibels (Lucas et al., 2017). Railway employees have been observed entering properties, cutting fences, damaging fishing trails, and tampering with irrigation pipes (R. Dunstan, personal communication, January 26, 2022). Dunstan says that "I try not to, but I feel a lot of animosity towards the railway, they have taken everything, and we lost everything." Lytton's leadership have tried to build a relationship with the railway's representatives. Haugen mentions it is hard to see the result when you rarely get a response. The Nlaka'pamux people will remain on their land and will continue to stand up against industry to protect the lands and fish. They will continue to work toward an equitable relationship with the railways. CNR and CPR have a long way to go before there is progress toward reconciliation with the First Nations peoples in the Nlaka'pamux territory. We will be here when they are ready to take responsibility.

## References


Bains, C. (2021, July 15). Lytton, B.C. fire a wake-up call for railway safety during extreme heat: TSB head. CTV News, Vancouver. https://bc.ctvnews.ca/lytton-b-c-fire-a-wake-up-call-for-railway-safety-during-extreme-heat-tsb-head-1.5510304.

Berglund, B., Lindvall, T., & Schwela, D. H. (1999). Guidelines for community noise. World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/a68672.

CBC News. (2006, August 1). Coal train derails in B.C. Interior. CBC News. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/coal-train-derails-in-b-c-interior-1.607918.

Cohen, J., & Westhaver, A. (2022). An examination of the Lytton, British Columbia wildland-urban fire destruction: Summary report to the British Columbia FireSmart committee. Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction. https://firesmartbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/An-examination-of-the-Lytton-BC-wildland-urban-fire-destruction.pdf.

Dawe, K. L., & Boutin, S. (2016). Climate change is the primary driver of white-tailed deer (Odocoileus virginianus) range expansion at the northern extent of its range; land use is secondary. Ecology and Evolution, 6(18), 6435–6451. https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.2316.

Evenden. (2000). Remaking Hells Gate: Salmon, Science, and the Fraser River, 1938-1948 . BC Studies, 127. https://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/bcstudies/article/view/1538

Government of British Columbia. (n.d.). Past spill incidents. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/spills-environmental-emergencies/spill-incidents/past-spill-incidents.

Government of Canada. (2022, June 26). Surviving the heat: The impacts of the 2021 western heat dome in Canada. https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/blogs/science-health/surviving-heat-impacts-2021-western-heat-dome-canada

Government of Canada, T. S. B. of C. (2017, February 23). Railway Investigation Report R06C0104. https://www.tsb.gc.ca/eng/rapports-reports/rail/2006/r06c0104/r06c0104.html?wbdisable=true

Lindsay, B. (2022, December 29). Court confirms CN is on the hook for $16M for starting B.C. Wildfire. CBC News. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/

british-columbia/court-confirms-cn-is-on-the-hook-for-16m-for-starting-b-c-wildfire-1.6700095.

Lucas, P. S., de Carvalho, R. G., & Grilo, C. (2017). Railway disturbances on wildlife: Types, effects, and mitigation measures. In Railway Ecology (pp. 81–99). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57496-7_6

Meggs, G. (1991). Salmon: The decline of the British Columbia fishery. Douglas & McIntyre.

Ministry of Environment. (2006, August 3). Lytton incident information update. https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news_releases_200-2009/2006env0068-001012.htm.

Moreau, V. (2006). Two trains derail in one week near Lytton. Pique Newsmagazine. https://www.piquenewsmagazine.com/whistler-news/two-trains-derail-in-one-week-near-lytton-2473665.

Nlaka'Pamux Nation Tribal Council (NNTC). (2023, June 8). Nlaka'Pamux Nation Tribal Council. NNTC. https://nntc.ca/

Pacific Salmon Commission. (n.d.). Our history. https://www.psc.org/about-us/history-purpose/our-history/.

Roden, B. (2021). A history of Lytton, from First Nations to the gold rush to disastrous fires. Victoria News. https://www.vicnews.com/news/a-history-of-lytton-from-first-nations-to-the-gold-rush-to-disastrous-fires-87623.

The Canadian Press. (2021, September 16). CN fined $2.5 million for spraying pesticides near the Skeena River in B.C. CBC News. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/cn-pesticide-fine-bc-1.6178672.

Jacob Boisclair
Metis
BA Double Major in English & Philosophy
Thompson Rivers University

# NEGLIGENCE, FAILURE, IRREPARABLE DAMAGE: AN ANALYSIS OF PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL JURISPRUDENCE WITHIN THE MOUNT POLLEY MINE DISASTER

## Relation

Weytkp xweweytp, Jacob Boisclair ren skwekwst, te Kamloops te Secwepemcúl'ecw re st7' é7kwen.

Hello, my name is Jacob Boisclair. I am from Kamloops in the territories of the Secwepemc Nation.

I was born and raised in Kamloops, a small city located on the unceded territories of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc. Growing up here, I spent countless hours in surrounding forests, lakes, rivers, and hillsides, which engraved in me a deep sense of appreciation of, respect for, and relation with this land. As a Metis scholar and guest upon this land, I am incredibly grateful to be able to study, work, play, and participate with this land. I intend for my work and studies to provide actionable change rather than be inert. To this end, this article details the events and lives of those involved with the Mount Polley Mine disaster and how they were affected by it.

## Overview

The Mount Polley Mine disaster occurred on August 4, 2014, when the tailings pond dam failed. It was one of the largest environmental disasters in Canadian history. The breach of the tailings dam released millions of cubic meters of mine waste and tailings into nearby waterways, including Quesnel Lake. This disaster had devastating consequences for local ecosystems and the Indigenous communities that rely on the area's natural resources for their livelihoods. The breach caused approximately 24 million cubic meters of contaminated materials to spill into Quesnel Lake, Hazeltine Creek, and Polley Lake (Meissner, 2019). The broad scope of the ecological effects of this disaster are still being felt today. For context, Lavoie (2016) shows that "The collapse of the Mount Polley tailings pond dam destroyed or permanently affected more than 2.6 million square meters of aquatic and riparian habitat." In this article, I explore the causes of the Mount Polley Mine disaster, its environmental and social impacts, the response of the Canadian government and mining industry, and the ongoing efforts to prevent future disasters. The exact cause of the Mount Polley Mine disaster is still a subject of debate. However, investigations by the British Columbia government and independent experts have identified several factors that may have contributed to the failure of the tailings dam. These include inadequate dam design and construction, inadequate water management, and insufficient monitoring and oversight by government regulators (Lavoie, 2016). Imperial Metals, the owners of the mine, also built on unstable foundation materials, which made it more vulnerable to failure (Lavoie, 2016).

## Nations Affected

The following Nations all reported to have been affected either emotionally, physically, spiritually, or economically by this disaster:?Esdilagh

First Nation, Lhtako Dene First Nation, Nak'azdli Band, Simpcw First Nation, Sekw'el'wás First Nation, Spuzzum First Nation, Stswemecem'c Xgat'tem, T'it'q'et First Nation, T'exelcemc, T'eqt'aqtn'mux First Nation, Tl'azt'en Nation, Tl'esqox First Nation, Tl'etinqox First Nation, Tsal'alh First Nation, Tsi Deldel First Nation, Xaxli'p First Nation, Xat'sull First Nation, Xeni Gwet'in First Nation, Xwisten First Nation, and Yunesit'in Government (Shandro et al., 2016). The Mount Polley Mine disaster had significant social impacts, particularly on the Indigenous communities in the area. The Lhtako Dene Nation, whose territory includes the area around Quesnel Lake, was severely impacted by the disaster. Quesnel lake is a vital source of fish for the Lhtako Dene people, and the release of the tailings had a significant impact on their traditional fishing practices (Shandro et al., 2016). The disaster also had a significant impact on their cultural practices, as many of those practices are centered on the natural environment. For instance, salmon fishing is an important sociocultural activity that strengthens bonds among community members. Occurring every year, these events are critical for these communities to maintain their way of life. The salmon embody a time when the entire community can come together in the harvesting, preparing, and preserving for the future, teaching younger generations skills, processes, and traditions (Shandro et al., 2016). Elder Mike Arnouse from Adams Lake further discussed the cultural-communal importance of salmon harvesting while speaking during the Knowledge Makers workshop hosted on the unceded territory of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc.

## Salmon

Polley Lake, Hazeltine Creek, and Quesnel Lake all drain into the Fraser River, an incredibly important watershed for salmon spawning. The Fraser River is one of the main entryways that Pacific BC salmon use to get to their spawning areas, including the salmon populations of Adam's River and Shuswap Lake (Adams Lake Indian Band, 2021). The strength of the relationship between the Indigenous peoples located within the Fraser watershed and the salmon that spawn there cannot be understated. The cultural and traditional significance of the salmon is paramount for all First Nation communities on the Fraser who have depended on and harvested salmon in these areas since time immemorial (Arnouse, M., 2023). In a health assessment report published in 2016 that looked at the effects of the Mount Polley Mine disaster on the aforementioned First Nation communities, 21 reported experiencing a "decrease in individual fishing practices" (Shandro et al., 2016, 8–9). Furthermore, the disaster has had significant social impacts on local Indigenous communities, who have been disproportionately affected by the contamination of their traditional lands and waters. The Williams Lake Indian Band, located downstream from the Mount Polley Mine, has reported a decline in fish stocks and the loss of traditional harvesting practices due to the contamination of Quesnel Lake. The disaster has also had a significant impact on the mental health of local Indigenous communities, who have experienced increased stress, anxiety, and trauma because of the environmental damage and loss of cultural practices (Shandro et al., 2016).

## Toxic Bioavailability

Gregory G. Pyle, Raegan D. Plomp, Lauren Zink, and Jaime L. Klemish, researchers at the University of Lethbridge, conducted tests on the contaminated areas affected by the tailings pond failure. Particularly, they studied invertebrates like freshwater scuds, or Hyalella, an important food source for juvenile salmon and other fish species. They found that "Hyalella having direct access to metal-contaminated sediments showed reduced survival and growth relative to those in reference or control treatments" and that "These results suggest that metals from the fine sediments associated with the Mount Polley Mine disaster are bioavailable and potentially toxic to epibenthic invertebrates, even several years after the initial breach" (Pyle et al., 2022, 70380). Bioavailability speaks to the process by which harmful toxins, in this case sediments containing chemicals and heavy metals from the mine tailings, can enter the food chain of an ecosystem. When these toxins enter the food chain, they can go through a process called bioaccumulation, wherein a predator eats multiple prey carrying small amounts of toxins, which then accumulate to a larger,

combined amount within the predator. This process can repeat multiple times within an ecosystem until it reaches a tertiary predator, such as people. Since the researchers' findings show that these harmful toxins are bioavailable, it means they also have the potential to bioaccumulate (Pyle et al., 2022). The environmental impacts of the Mount Polley Mine disaster are significant and are expected to be long lasting. The release of millions of cubic meters of mine waste and tailings into nearby waterways caused the water to turn cloudy and brown, and the sediment to settle at the bottom of the lake. The toxic chemicals in the mine waste pose a threat to aquatic life and other wildlife that depend on the lake's ecosystem. The release of the tailings also affects the water quality of the Fraser River, which is a vital source of drinking water and irrigation for the region.

The disaster has also had significant impacts on the forests in the area, as the toxic chemicals in the tailings have seeped into the soil, affecting the growth of plants and other vegetation. A Human Health Risk Assessment created by Golder Associates Ltd. and written by Trish Miller, Reidar Zapf-Gilje, Victoria Hart, and Christina Quinn on behalf of Imperial Metals found that the groundwater underneath Hazeltine creek contained "iron, manganese, arsenic, molybdenum, and sulfate" at levels in excess of those deemed safe for human consumption (Miller et al., 2017, 4). Furthermore, while this report assures us that certain food subsistence sources are low risk for adverse health effects, it does claim to find elevated levels of aluminum, copper, and vanadium in "berries, [traditional] plants, deer meat, deer liver, moose meat, moose liver, grouse, fish, and cattle" within this area, as well as in surface water (Miller et al., 2017, 4). These factors contribute to hesitation and unease among Indigenous communities in their collection and harvesting of the subsistence foods, and of their use in traditional medicines that these communities rely on.

## Legislation

Since the Mount Polley Mine disaster, the BC government has introduced new regulations and legislature to amend the Mines Act. However, while the government now requires independent expert panels to advise owners (and regulators) on whether tailings storage facilities at new mines are "designed, constructed and operated appropriately, safely and effectively," this advice is non-binding. The company is under no legal obligation to act on it" (Pollon, 2017).While the BC government did announce that they were going to fine Imperial Metals, the company that owns Mount Polley Mine, no such fines have been issued; in fact, Mount Polley Mine was allowed to continue operations by the BC government less than a year after the spill (Pollon, 2017). The Canadian government and the mining industry were criticized for their response to the Mount Polley Mine disaster. Many argued that the government and industry failed to take adequate steps to prevent the disaster and mitigate its impacts. The government was also criticized for its slow response to the disaster and for its lack of transparency in its communications with the public. In response to the disaster, the government of British Columbia implemented several measures to prevent future disasters. These included changes to regulations governing the mining industry, increased monitoring of tailings dams, and improved water management practices. The government also established an independent panel to review the disaster and make recommendations for improvements (Pollon, 2017). As mentioned earlier, Mount Polley Mine produced a Human Health Risk Assessment Report, performed by Golder Associates Ltd, which sets out a plan for remediation efforts as well as evaluations of the affected areas for toxicity and harm to life (Miller et al., 2017). These steps have been deemed insufficient. For instance, Mining Watch Canada has accused the government of failing to hold Imperial Metals accountable for the disaster and failing to adequately regulate the mining industry. And, in November 2022, Mining Watch Canada brought criminal charges against the BC government for its role in the Mount Polley Mine disaster, alleging that the government failed to enforce regulations and protect the environment (Lavoie, 2016).

## Negligence

In a section of Hart (2008)'s publication, Negligence, Mens Rea, and Criminal Responsibility, he focuses primarily on what negligence is, and provides a multitude of definitions for negligence in its varying forms. Specifically, one of the definitions of negligence is "a failure to take reasonable precautions against harm, unaccompanied either by intention to do harm or an appreciation of the risk of harm" (Hart, 1968, p. 137). If the governmental agencies which oversaw this industry had done their due diligence and fulfilled their fiduciary duty to the public and environment (public interest), then one could easily speculate that the events of Mount Polley Mine disaster would have never transpired. A fiduciary duty is a legal or ethical relationship of trust, often meaning that one party ought to act with the beneficence of another party in mind. If the laws already in place were sufficient, then the disaster never would have occurred. For instance, an independent group that has the legal power to implement checks and balances on the autonomy of the business and corporations within the mining industry, but separate from it, could, through regular screenings, provide mandatory recommendations to changes in mining infrastructure and practice on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, additional involvement with local Indigenous peoples, such as those who could be affected by a disaster, perhaps such as the Mount Polley Mine tailings breach, wherein meaningful input by these groups may alter or negate the autonomy of these businesses and corporations, could also prove an effective measure to prevent similar disasters from occurring.

A promise made by the BC government was that BC taxpayers would not be contributing to the cleanup cost of the tailings breach. However, even though Mount Polley has paid $12 million in restitutions, "One economist has estimated that British Columbians are on the hook for a $40 million cleanup bill for the Mount Polley disaster" (Pollon, 2019). The BC government also gave themselves a deadline to fine Imperial Metals under the Mines Act as well as the Environmental Management Act, both of which are provincial statutes. However, they have issued no fines and the time limit to do so has already passed. In 2019, the window to issue fines under the federal Fisheries Act also passed with no government action having been taken (Meissner, 2019). Furthermore, in an official statement in the Biennial Report on Contaminated Sites, which details over 80 mining sites the Crown is responsible for, it is stated that "the Province has recognized $508 million in liabilities related to contaminated sites" (Forests, 2016). Five years after the disaster, the cleanup and remediation of the Mount Polley Mine site are still ongoing, and taxpayers are still on the hook for the cost of the cleanup (Lavoie, 2019). A report by The Narwhal in November 2022 found that taxpayers have already paid over $40 million for the cleanup, and that the final cost could be much higher. The report also found

> "The Mount Polley Mine disaster was a catastrophic event that had significant environmental, social, and economic impacts on the local communities and the surround¬ing ecosystems. The disaster highlighted the risks and consequences of large-scale mining operations and the importance of adequate regulation and oversight."
>
> - Jacob Boisclair

that the recommendations of the expert panel that was appointed to investigate the disaster have not been fully implemented, and that they are not legally bound to follow these recommendations (Pollon, 2019). The fear of providing more strict regulations to enforce accountability on mining companies is that it may discourage investment in the province and in the resource development industry. However, this is exactly what must be done. Mining corporations ought to be held accountable, not just to the extent of remediated efforts when something goes wrong, but for putting every effort into preventing events such as the Mount Polley Mine disaster. The government of BC must introduce stronger repercussions when mining corporations fail to meet industry standards as set out in legislation, which ought to include provisions for land restoration and remediation once a mine closes.

## Indigenous Rights

As was decided in R v. Sparrow, "The words 'recognition and affirmation'...incorporate the government's responsibility to act in a fiduciary capacity with respect to aboriginal peoples and so import some restraint on the exercise of sovereign power" (R. v. Sparrow, 1990). The court further quoted Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, wherein the following is provided: "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed" (R. v. Sparrow, 1990). This means that there must be reasonable grounds for the government to impose restrictions on Aboriginal Rights. In their First Nations Health Authority Report researching the social impacts of the dam breach on local Indigenous communities, Shandro et al. (2016) state that "the dam breach has resulted in changes to First Nation fishing practices, which has resulted in shifts in diet composition, physical activity, and cultural practices" (p. 50). Bev Sellars, chair of the First Nations Women Advocating for Responsible Mining and a councilor of the Xat'sull First Nation in Williams Lake said, "The disaster that was the Mount Polley tailings pond collapse is not over for those of us who live and depend on the lands and waters and particularly on the salmon that have always sustained us" (Lavoie, 2016, 28). The continuing effects of the disaster are impacting Indigenous people's ability to practice their rights through cultural and traditional means of subsistence and commercial fishing. Deficiencies in the BC Mines Act have allowed for the unreasonable infringement of Indigenous rights.

The Mount Polley Mine disaster was a catastrophic event that had significant environmental, social, and economic impacts on the local communities and the surrounding ecosystems. The disaster highlighted the risks and consequences of large-scale mining operations and the importance of adequate regulation and oversight. It also underscored the need for greater accountability and responsibility on the part of mining companies and governments. While cleanup and remediation efforts are ongoing, the long-term impacts of the disaster are still uncertain, and there is a need for continued monitoring and assessment of the situation.

## References

Adams Lake Indian Band. (2021, January 12). Press release. https://adamslakeband.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ALIB-Adams-RIver-Salmon-Restoration-Press-Release-Jan-12-2021.pdf.

Arnouse, M. (Elder), Secwepemc Nation. (2023, February 26). Significance of Salmon. Group Workshop. Shared on the unceded territory of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc.

Forests. (2016, June 9). Biennial report on contaminated sites released. BC Gov News. https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016FLNR0114-000985.

Hart, H. L. A., 'NEGLIGENCE, MENS REA, AND CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY', Punishment and Responsibility: Essays in the Philosophy of Law, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2008; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Jan. 2009), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199534777.003.0006, accessed 8 May 2024.

Lavoie, J. (2022, November 5). Mount Polley, B.C. government target of criminal charges brought by mining watchdog. The Narwhal. https://thenarwhal.ca/

mount-polley-b-c-government-target-criminal-charges-brought-mining-watchdog/.

Meissner, D. (2019, August 4). Mount Polley Mine disaster 5 years later; emotions, accountability unresolved. CBC News. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/mount-polley-mine-disaster-5-years-later-emotions-accountability-unresolved-1.5236160.

Golder Associates, (2017, May 11). Mount Polley Rehabilitation and Remediation Strategy; Human Health Risk Assessment. Mount Polley Mining Corporation. https://imperialmetals.com/assets/docs/mt-polley/HHRA_11MAY_17.pdf.

Pollon, Christopher. (2017, April 12). What's changed on the ground since the Mount Polley Mine disaster? The Tyee. https://thetyee.ca/News/2017/04/12/Mount-Polley-Disaster-Changes/.

Pollon, Christopher. (2019, November 25). Five years after Mount Polley disaster, taxpayers still on hook for cleaning up mining accidents. The Narwhal. https://thenarwhal.ca/five-years-mount-polley-disaster-taxpayers-hook-cleaning-up-mining-accidents/.

Pyle, G.G., Plomp, R.D., Zink, L., & Klemish, J. L. (2022). Invertebrate metal accumulation and toxicity from sediments affected by the Mount Polley mine disaster. Environmental Science and Pollution Research 29, 70380–70395. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-022-20677-1.

R v Sparrow, [1990] 1 SCR 1075, 1990 CanLII 104. https://canlii.ca/t/1fsvj.

Shandro, J., M. Winkler, L. Jokinen, and A. Stockwell. (2016, January). Health impact assessment for the 2014 Mount Polley Mine tailings dam breach. Screening and scoping phase report.

Rod McCormick
Director of All my Relations Indigenous Research Centre
Thompson Rivers University

# ACADEMIC FREEDOM: A RIGHT OR A RESPONSIBILITY

## Rights, Freedoms, and Responsibility

This brief paper talks about the concept of responsibility, rights, and freedom. One of the founding principles of Knowledge makers is that we see research as a form of service to our communities. We see it as our responsibility to create and to share knowledge in a good way. That sense of responsibility is sometimes at odds with mainstream academic principles such as Academic Freedom. A few years ago, I had the opportunity to help my university draft a new statement on academic freedom. A crucial element of academic freedom is the pursuit of knowledge and truth. An excerpt from the statement explains this:

This requires free inquiry, unhindered by whether it involves ideas that may run counter to the beliefs or interests of some members of the community or society at large. Academic freedom includes the right to criticize ideas, norms, and existing social institutions. It consists of the right to publish or disseminate one's research through peer-reviewed scholarly publications, the classroom or online, as well as public forums, such as news and social media.

Page 1 -TRU statement on academic freedom https://www.tru.ca/president/statement-on-academic-freedom.html

As laudable and important as this is you might detect an emphasis on individual rights. While drafting the University statement we had the opportunity to balance this with Indigenous perspectives illustrating our responsibilities:

Within the Haudenosaunee, the concept of Ganigonhi:oh, "the good mind" illustrates an ethical responsibility to use one's mind in a way that balances reason and passion, recognizing that both are important. The "good way" ideal asks us to respect the inherent dignity of all, balancing the desires and needs of the individual and the community (Newhouse, 2018). Tkemlups te Secwepemc, the host Nation for TRU, has a word that summarizes similar teachings: Knucwetwecw, which means to help each other to cooperate (Ignace & Ignace, 2017).

Page 2 -TRU statement on academic freedom https://www.tru.ca/president/statement-on-academic-freedom.html

For many Indigenous peoples of turtle island, we take our responsibilities to the earth and to our people very seriously. That responsibility doesn't just mean to our immediate family but for the next seven generations. In the words of Oren Lyons, Chief of the Onondaga Nation: "We are looking ahead, as it is one of the first mandates given to us as chiefs, to make sure and to make every decision that we make relate to the welfare and well-being of the seventh generation to come. ... What about the seventh generation? Where are you taking them? What will they have?" (Vecsey & Venables, p. 3, 2018).

In terms of research, the concept of responsibility has been emphasized by many of our communities and organizations as one of the 4 R's of Indigenous research: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility (Archibald et al., 2006). In mainstream society the emphasis on Individual rights and individual freedom is not balanced with the need for collective responsibility. The lack of this collective responsibility has become all too evident by means of the denial and lack of action regarding the environment and our inevitable experience of global warming and environmental disasters. Indigenous peoples

long ago recognized our interdependence with the earth and all of creation be it two legged or four legged. In closing I will leave you this statement by the existential psychiatrist Dr. Viktor Frankl: "Freedom, however, is not the last word. Freedom is only part of the story and half of the truth. Freedom is but the negative aspect of the whole phenomenon whose positive aspect is responsibleness. In fact, freedom is in danger of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibleness (Frankl, p. 52, 1992)

## References


Archibald, J., Jovel, E, McCormick, R., Vedan, R., & Thira, D. (2006) Creating Transformative Aboriginal Health research: The BC ACADRE at three years. Canadian Journal of Native Education, 29(1), 4-11.

Baugh, B, et al. "Statement on Academic Freedom." Statement on Academic Freedom, Thompson Rivers University, 2021, www.tru.ca/president/statement-on-academic-freedom.html.

Frankl, V. E. (1992). Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy (4th ed.) (I. Lasch, Trans.). Beacon Press.

Ignace, M. & Ignace, R. (2017). Secwepemc people, land and laws: Yeir7 re stsqeyskucw. Montreal & Kingston On: McGill-Queens University Press.

Newhouse, D., (2018) DEBWEWIN: To speak the truth NISHNABEK DE'BWEWIN: Telling our truths https://academicmatters.ca/assets/AcademicMatters_Fall2018.pdf

Vecsey, C & Venables, R. (1 December 1980). "An Iroquois Perspective". American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in Native American History. New York: Syracuse University Press. pp. 173–174. ISBN 9780815622277.


Research & G
All My
Relatio
YOU ARE.


KNOWLEDGE
MAKERS

I, like most people, leave the reserve to find more opportunities and to sometimes escape from a poor lifestyle. I grew up on the reserve and have good memories, but the negative experiences cloud even the best of times. I'd rather not dwell on this because there is so much good happening in my community and this place is part of me.

~ *Kirsten Alfred*

# Victoria Besse

Metis Cree and Scottish/English descent
BA in Psychology
Thompson Rivers University



*I dedicate my writing to my Métis relations, wherever you are in your journey is exactly where you are meant to be.*

*As I work from home on this project, I acknowledge that I am learning on the unceded Traditional Territory of the Okanagan Syilx People. I also acknowledge Thompson Rivers University in which I study, located on Tk'emlups te Secwépemc territory, situated within the unceded ancestral lands of the Secwépemc Nation.*

*I wish to give many thanks to the Knowledge Keepers for providing this invaluable experience to me. I am forever grateful that you entrusted me with this responsibility and allowed me a place to use my voice and share my story.Thank you, Dian Henderson. Your kindness and support is unmatched and unwavering. I am grateful for your wisdom and thoughtful encouraging ways. You are truly an inspiration to me. I could not have had a better mentor. You always brought me back to my heart and spirit and seem to know that is exactly where I need to be.*

*Many thanks to my family for your continued support and understanding. My sister, Debbie, for introducing me to the application of the Knowledge Keepers and opening my eyes to believe this could be a possibility for me. My husband, Trevor, and my children, Rachelle, Danica, Shay, and Brooke—you are truly all my world. You never complained when I took time away to complete this project. You recognized that it did not come easy for me but continued to cheer me on and encourage me every step of the way. Thank you to Frida, my international daughter from Germany. Your time here was so limited, yet you always understood the importance of finishing this project and continued to want the best for me. I appreciate your thoughtfulness and patience.*


# A CRISIS OF IDENTITY: SELF-DISCOVERY IN THE WRITINGS OF ANCESTORS

## Introduction

Taanishi! Vickie dishinihkaashoon. Chilliwack d'ooshchiin. Okanagan ni wiikin. Hi, my name is Vickie and I am Métis derived from Cree, Scottish, and English Settler descent. My introduction was spoken in Michif, one of the primary languages of the Métis people.

The act of granting words from one generation to another is a remarkable gift that ancestors can bestow to the receiver. Indigenous storytelling is much like literature in that it can take one to another place in time, allowing a person to connect to history

and walk where one has never walked before. As the great Métis leader Louis Riel once said, "We must cherish our inheritance. We must preserve our nationality for the youth of our future. The story should be written down to pass on" (Manitoba Métis Federation, n.d.). Riel's words resonate deeply with me, as I continue to explore my own Métis identity and search for the answers I need for a connection to self and community. Prior to the 20th century, the Métis culture was primarily an oral culture, with traditions and beliefs passed down through community living. Without this act of passing down oral teachings, the inheritance of one's nationality might not be preserved for future generations. Colonization disrupted Indigenous oral traditions and many Indigenous Peoples including Métis, like me, are having to piece together their identity through the written works of others rather than through oral traditions.

Like numerous others, I discovered my Métis heritage later in life and have had to rely on the rich resource of written words and stories to provide a window into Métis beliefs, identity, and values. These writings have inspired me to discover, embrace, and build my own identity within my culture. The stronger one's cultural identity, the more equipped an individual can be to contribute to the community and leave an inheritance for generations to come. When one can connect to themselves, one's ability to connect to all living things is possible. This article documents a small part of my personal journey through the written words of ancestors to lay claim to lost identity.

## Where my story begins

This article examines how my childhood contributed to my sense of loss and disconnection from my Métis heritage, and how the written words of my ancestors and Indigenous kin have helped me explore healing, wholeness, and connection. I share how the excerpts of my third great-grandfather Joseph Cook have enabled me to imagine his life story and provide a connection to my Métis values and culture. My grandfather's voice has gifted me with personal connection, belonging, and learning, and he has opened a window into where I have come from which inspires me toward a future where I can give back to my Métis community and future generations.

I was born in Chilliwack, British Columbia, and raised in Kamloops by a family who appreciated the 70s and 80s aesthetics of green-trimmed grass and white picket fences. In one childhood photo, my sister and I are seen wearing plaid European-style pants and "Indian" logo t-shirts.

While some may see this as a representation of the Métis, I view it as an example of colonialism where stereotypes are used

**Picture 1.**

to promote a superior society. Stereotyping is used by colonizers because it creates an identity with a large group of people, be it correct or not, and employs a system of representation ("Colonial Discourse," 2007). By wearing this clothing, we could be viewed as members of the dominant society, and no one would guess we had Indigenous ancestry. This provided protection for us in our early years.

Not everyone was entirely convinced we did not have Indigenous roots, however, because when my sister was a teenager, she asked our grandma if we had Cree relations. Our grandma confirmed that our great-grandfather, her father, was Cree, but she made it clear that it was a taboo topic by telling us we must not talk about it. I often wondered why my sister asked; was it that her skin tanned so dark and quick in the summer months or was it that she was more in-tune with things unseen than I was? I didn't ask because "we don't talk about it."

Not being told about being Métis is a common experience for many Métis people. Generations grew up either being ashamed of being Métis or completely unaware of their cultural heritage (Grandmothers Indigenous Teachings, 2019). After the Métis were defeated in 1885 at the Northwest Resistance, many dispersed across Canada and those who could "pass as white" in the dominant society did so to avoid discrimination and predatory government systems. Assimilating is about trying to belong and to be accepted somewhere, but the cost is the loss of connection to one's cultural identity and community.

Although my family assimilated, the consequences of my lost cultural identity were significant, and I did not escape the effects of an oppressed and uprooted peoples. My childhood was enveloped by domestic violence, divorce, forced adoption, and substance abuse. My identity was formed around this trauma, and I learned to establish the roles of protector, pleaser, and fixer. These roles gave me a sense of control in my world, but they were not rooted in a solid foundation; they were built from fear and insecurity.

My early years had a significant impact on my decisions moving forward. Being led by the roles I learned to play, I chose a partner whose behaviors reinforced my roles and by the time I was 30, I endured the end of my relationship, the suicide of my father, my own bankruptcy, family poverty, and single parenthood. It truly does take a community to raise a child and community is something I did not have. Although my character was shaped in survival mode, it was not where my identity could be found. According to Jennifer Kogan, LICSW, "To connect to others, it's important that we first connect to ourselves. We need to be grounded in who we are before we can have healthy relationships with others." Identity is knowing and connecting to self, whereas survival mode is a state of disconnection from self. Connection to self is key to learning how to live fully and not just merely surviving in one's environment (Turmaud, 2020). I would like to say I longed for this connection but at this time I was not yet aware I was disconnected.

Continuing to be stuck in survival mode led me to a career as a 911 RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) dispatcher, which affirmed my role as protector and provided me with enough money to feed my children. It was while I was employed with the RCMP that I discovered my Métis lineage. I had spent the day with my aunt who supplied me with this treasured family knowledge. It was a surreal moment, and I was overwhelmed with emotion and an innate connection to circumstances much larger than myself. I recall driving home after meeting with my aunt and envisioning a forest floor of pine needles and soil. I was surrounded by trees and a stream was trickling through the forest. I felt deeply connected to the earth, and for the first time, I felt like the Earth was my home. I longed to take off my shoes and let the life of the earth rise and fill my hungry body. I felt like my ancestors were giving me a great big hug and saying "Welcome, we have been waiting for you." Up until this moment I often felt like a leaf that aimlessly floated through the air, searching for guidance and wisdom only to be whisked away by the next strong wind, my feet never feeling firmly planted on the ground. My Métis connection became the seed I required to grow my roots. As Wardleigh (n.d.) said, "Learning your family history

can help you embrace and understand where you came from and can open your eyes to how beautiful and unique you are." With this newfound connection to my ancestors and earth, I began the journey back to myself but needed to acknowledge I was still a newborn baby. Seeds and roots do not grow overnight; they must be fed and nurtured, and this is something I did not have time for. I was working 12-hour shifts, day and night, and I lacked time and energy for exploration. I required more guidance to lead me to my ancestral relations.

This guidance came in the form of two impactful 911 calls by Indigenous people. The experience I had with them helped steer my trajectory and their voices reminded me of the importance of connection and self-discovery. The first profound call was with an elderly Indigenous woman, her heart still aching from the loss of her son years ago. As we spoke for 45 minutes while she was awaiting the arrival of the police, she expressed the love she had for her dog, the immense joy her flourishing garden brought her, and the warmth she felt sharing her harvest with neighbors. Our conversation flowed like that of lifelong friends. When the police arrived, her heartfelt words, "Thank you, I love you," touched me deeply, and I responded in kind. I felt a sense of connection, to her, to myself, to a greater community as my heart began to unfurl.

The next transformative 911 call that guided my direction came from an Indigenous man, who, overwhelmed by my questions, pronounced "How am I supposed to know, I'm just a f'in Indian." His raw vulnerability stopped me in my tracks, emotions surging, pulling me back to my core. With empathy and sincerity, I assured him that he matters, that he is unique and special, and that he must learn who he is. As I offered him these words of encouragement, I realized they reflected my own yearning for self-discovery. Most intriguing about these calls was the connection I felt with my Indigenous callers. I was moved to explore this connection and discovered the Indigenous Peoples' principle of connectivity (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2017)–that everything in the universe is connected including the spirit world and the mortal world, the sea to the land, the sky to the ground, and us to each other. In support of this principle, I believe my ancestors had steered the direction of my life through these calls and after 14 years, PTSD forced my early retirement from my role as a 911 dispatcher and opened the door for healing, self-exploration, and connection.

## Owning my Métis identity and establishing values

I often wondered if my life would have turned out differently if I had grown up immersed in my own cultural traditions, and this wondering is less about regret and more about possibility. Initially, all I could rely on was my imagination, which was enough to plant a seed but not enough to help it grow roots. That is why in 2019, after my departure from work, I decided to delve deeper into the readings of others to learn more about the culture of my Métis people.

One of the most impactful moments on my journey of self-discovery was when I made a personal connection to my ancestors. It validated my journey and helped the seed that had been planted to germinate. I was eager to learn about my culture, so I signed several books out of the library and began my exploration. The first book I opened was The Prairie West to 1905 (Thomas & Breen, 1975). I had high hopes, but no idea if I would find anything that related to my family. When I opened the book, I landed on an excerpt from a letter written by Joseph Cook who was the first schoolteacher at Sugar Point Manitoba. Cook was also a clerk and interpreter and was fluent in Cree and Ojibwe. In several interviews, he is mentioned as an interpreter between Chief Peguis and Reverend Cockran when they were discussing that Indigenous People must learn to farm (Rev Garrioch, 1923) It is noted that "Cook not only had a perfect knowledge of Cree but also understood the habits and peculiarities of the Indigenous and best of all was of a kindly disposition and sincerely desirous of using his knowledge to the best interests of his pupils" (Rev Garrioch, 1923, p. 74) Immediately I recognized the name Joseph Cook.

He was my third great-grandfather.

I was incredibly proud when I read

these opinions about my grandfather. He appeared to have character traits that I very much admire. I felt an attachment to his kindness and the generosity he portrayed in sharing his knowledge for the betterment of his students. I imagine he, like myself, had a protective spirit, wished to make others happy, and was motivated to solve problems. I connected to his spirit and my eyes were opened to how these traits can be used in a positive way for the benefit of others and not as a bridge to alleviate fears like I was. Cook's character traits can be seen further in his comments to the Lay Secretary (Thomas & Breen, 1975).

In the letter he wrote to the Lay Secretary at the Church Missionary Society at Red River Settlement in 1846, Joseph Cook addressed the disparity in pay between Indigenous and European Catechists. He questioned why he, as an Indigenous man, was expected to perform more duties than his European counterparts but receive half the pay. Thomas and Breen (1975) quote Cook as saying:

Now, my dear Sir, I ask the question again what right and reason has the C.M.S. to impose on me this part of duty to perform more than the European Catechists? I suppose they will say because I am only half an Englishman, this is very true, but my good Sir, I can eat as good a plum pudding as any Englishman. (p. 55)

Cook asserts his English heritage in this quote and the walk he must experience as he lives in the split world of being Indigenous and English. He confidently reminds the Secretary that despite his walk in both worlds he is just as deserving as the full Englishman who receives more pay. This is particularly significant to me because it shows that my grandfather took pride in his heritage and believed that his worth was equal to that of any other person, regardless of his ethnic background. As I face identity conflicts in my own Métis journey, through politics, or through how others view my identity, I connect back to my grandfathers' words, and I remind myself of who I am through him.

In addition, I chuckle when he says he can eat as good a plum pudding as any Englishman. His sense of humor reminds me of my grandmother, Alice Cook, who was Joseph's great-granddaughter. Alice is the grandmother I lived with when I was a child. Making this connection was profound because it breathed life into his story when I connected him to my grandmother whom I knew personally and loved dearly. Linking their sense of humor was more than just a connection; it was an ancestral umbilical cord that attached all of us together as a family, past and present.

I can also see the values my grandfather displayed in this small piece of his story, and they are reflected in the Métis Museum as being traditional Métis values. In this excerpt, his humor and pride are strong and easy to see. The Museum elaborates on the definition of these specific values saying the Métis people take pride in their identity and use humor to cope with adversity (Lawrence Barkwell, Louis Riel Institute). Laughter has provided Indigenous people with resilience and is a way to cope that promotes healing and unity.

Joseph Cook's letter to the Lay Secretary at the Church Missionary Society also highlights the inequalities that existed between the treatment of Indigenous and European Catechists. The Catechists were teachers of the Christian religion, particularly those who taught catechism. Catechism is a name given to a written work that contains a summary of all the beliefs of the faith that are then used as a teaching tool. Cook suggests that offering a written agreement of employment to Native Catechists as they did for the European Catechists could alleviate ill feelings and disagreements between them and the missionaries. He speaks not only for himself but also for his community when he says,

I can assure you Sir, we are rather beginning to get disgusted with our situation and the treatment and the distinction which has been made between us and the European Catechist and the too much Lordship being exercised over us." (CMSA, Joseph Cook to the Secretaries 29 July 1846) p.55

Through these words, I feel my grandfather's frustration and can imagine the struggles and injustices that he and his people endured. In this excerpt, instead

of using "I" as he did in the first quote, he uses "we." He was speaking on behalf of his people. Not only was he attempting to problem solve on behalf of his own community, but he was also trying to come up with a 'win-win' solution where both sides could get along and live harmoniously. His honesty and loyalty to his kin are evident in his willingness to speak up and advocate for their fair treatment. Loyalty, honesty, and community are all traditional values deeply ingrained in the Métis culture. The Métis Museum (Barkwell, L., n.d.) states the Métis people are loyal to their family and clan and never betray them. They value honesty and believe that their behavior reflects on their family. Through my grandfather's words, I recognize that honesty and loyalty are also important values to me, and it further bridges my connections to my ancestral relationships. His words also expose the importance of community which is something I was not raised with, so therefore could not understand its importance. As I read this excerpt, I envision the larger story of my grandfather's life. He demonstrates the importance of living a life that is centered around more than himself. As he shared his gifts and knowledge through teaching, interpreting, and raising his family, he embodies the importance of being grounded in the community. The significance of this is supported by David Chartrand (2007) who serves as the President of the Manitoba Métis Federation. He states this eloquently when he says, "Being Métis is not just about individual identity, but also about having kinship and family relationships within a larger Métis community. It is about sharing in the common heritage of the people to which you belong." (Chartrand, p 8,2007) My grandfather's story teaches me about the importance of being involved in a larger community outside of our family because it provides an opportunity to bring all our people together to advocate for and support each other. It is a place to rebuild and replenish our culture for future generations. It is a place of belonging.

In his final quote, my grandfather appealed to the Lay Secretary's heart by explaining the monetary impact on his family. Cook spoke of faithfully complying with the Word of God to replenish the earth and provide for his 14 children. He writes,

I shall not mention once more the distinction that has been made, which is not altogether agreeable; when I was so pressed and finding my salary so inadequate to supply the wants of my family (you must here Sir, remember I have faithfully complied with the Word of God to replenish the earth, for I am a man of 14 children…). (Thomas & Breen, 1975, p. 55)

The values that my grandfather displayed in his writings reflect the spiritual beliefs he and the Métis people held. Beliefs are an important part of identity and are a critical and essential element to help shape one's values. Beliefs reflect who one is. My grandfather believed he should be obedient to his Creator by replenishing the earth and providing for his family. Religion is an important traditional value to Métis people, and they were known to practice ways of Catholicism or Protestantism with an intertwining of First Nation's rituals and beliefs. Métis were deeply connected to their kin and had great reverence for the land and Mother Earth. The aspect of spirituality was not practiced in my family upbringing. There was no prayer or mention of higher power yet even at a very young age, I had a heart full of love for my Creator. From a Western perspective it leads me to ponder: if trauma can leave a mark on the DNA of people (epigenetics), then can spirituality also do the same? From an Indigenous perspective, it brings me back to the Indigenous Peoples' principle of connectivity—that all things are connected. I feel my grandfather's generational pattern of spirituality woven into the fabric of my own life and this brings me a sense of belonging and interconnectedness.

## Weaving of values

The values of my grandfather are woven into his writings like his values are present throughout the Métis sash, one of the Métis' most recognizable symbols (NewJourneys, 2016). The sash was used for many practical reasons but for the purposes of this article, I will address the significance of the colors and what they stand for. The red strands are symbolic of the blood that was shed over the many years the Métis people fought for their

rights. Blue is for the depth of spirit among the Métis people. Green is for the fertility of their great nation. White stands for the connection to the earth and the creator. Yellow is for prosperity and black for the dark period of suppression and dispossession of Métis lands. I notice all the colors of the sash in my grandfather's writings except for black. The red, blue, and yellow are reflected in his writings when he is fighting for their rights and requests for equality of pay on behalf of himself and his community. Green is present when it is expressed that he had replenished the earth with 14 children and white when he wrote about obedience to his Creator. Black is not present in his writings, which stands to reason because his letter was written prior to the defeat of the Métis people in 1885 at the Battle of Batoche. Despite this, what is remarkably interesting about the black stripe is how thin it is, even though it is symbolic of a time in history that resulted in the loss of their nation; given its size, it is the most insignificant part of the sash. This demonstrates a remarkable reflection of the resilience of the Métis people. When I look at the thin black stripe, I not only acknowledge the pain and suffering of the Métis Nation, but I acknowledge the spectacular resilience of the Métis people.

Picture 2.

## Passing down values

As I see these values woven into the fabric of my own story, I desire to teach my own children about the power of stories and history. I share with them stories of our relations and other Métis kin for their reflection. There are times when I witness these stories come to fruition in their hearts. I recall messaging in the words that were attributed to Louis Riel to my eldest daughter Rachelle: "My people will sleep for a hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back" (Manitoba Métis Federation, n.d.). Two years later, my daughter painted me a beautiful drum resembling the beading style of the Métis artwork. I was reminded of the words I sent her earlier and felt the power within those words to inspire growth in her spirit.

Picture 3.

Through learning about our family and Indigenous history, my second eldest daughter, Danica has been inspired to obtain her teaching degree. It is her hope to advocate for Indigenous peoples and educate them about the importance of culture, truth, and reconciliation. The more my children learn about our historical stories, the more they are inspired to grow, share, and learn about their cultural identity.

## Healing with poetry

In response to my own healing journey, I composed a poem in 2023 with the guidance of George Ella Lyon. The poem encapsulates my journey of identity and acknowledges my past while embracing a hopeful future. These words form a piece of my story for future generations.

I Am From

I am from shag carpets gold and green.
From overflowing ashtrays and custom classic cars.
I am from a tiny run-down house on the wrong side of town
With wood panel and whispering walls
I am from weeping willows and long

strong oaks
Whose leaves pile high enough to bring me joy
I am from barbies and bubbles,
From Alice and Reg
I am from pride and prejudice
And I am from both God and Mother Earth
I am from the beginning of a new culture that can "eat as good a plum pudding as any
Englishman" {GGG Grandpa Joseph Cook}
I am from William Sinclair and Nahoway
From Pemmican and Haggis
I am from Buffalo Lake Scrip and unfair deals
From defeat and discrimination
And nightmares of abandonment
I am from those moments of lost identity.
Carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders which I must now learn to let go.

My stories, including the one in this poem, demonstrate the emotional and transformative journey of discovering my Métis identity. It highlights how early life experiences and challenging circumstances can shape one's choices and roles and deter one from their authentic self. My experience emphasized the importance of connection, both to others and to one's ancestral roots, to find meaning and purpose in life.

## Summarizing my journey

My grandfather's story is about values, community, family, and injustice. By connecting to a piece of my family history through the story of my grandfather, I have begun the journey of tracing and piecing together my own cultural identity. When Jean Teillet (2019) explored Métis identity, she noted that historical stories are central to its formation and justification. She says, "The stories of the Métis Nation are the essence of its identity" (Teillet, 2019, p. 479). Through stories I have reconnected to my own values and beliefs and have been gifted a special appreciation and acceptance of my modern-day presence. Along with gratitude, I recognize the importance of revitalizing my family's culture so that perhaps one day all Métis can be closer to experiencing healing and wholeness through reclaiming their stolen identities. It has become most important that my life story is a continuation of those who came before me, to honor my relations, and myself, and give back to future generations. The importance of my grandfather's story is not to keep it in the past, it is to connect myself to the past to bring my enlightened, healed, and educated self into this present moment and work toward helping others do the same. In doing this, perhaps one day I, and others, may have future grandchildren whose spirit connects with the stories of this generation and inspires them to learn about who they are and the treasures that await them when they bond with their Métis family values and identities.

In closing, I would like to share some words from Chief Peguis included in his last Will and Testament in 1864 (Upper Fort Garry, n.d.). Here, he compares himself to an old tree that eventually rots away, but from which a new tree emerges, growing stronger and more beautiful over time. He hopes that his legacy will inspire future generations to lead fulfilling lives and that his story will be passed down through many generations in his family. I share this here because Peguis encapsulates the epitome of passing down stories for future generations and leaving this earth resolved in the works one has

> "I felt like the Earth was my home. I longed to take off my shoes and let the life of the earth rise and fill my hungry body. I felt like my ancestors were giving me a great big hug and saying "Welcome, we have been waiting for you"."
>
> - Victoria Besse

accomplished.

> Had I been unfaithful to my situation I would not think to leave such a thing to my son; but I can say with clear conscience that I have been faithful both to the Whites & the Indians…
>
> When a tree grows be it ever so strong and large; it rots away gradually & down it goes at last, but through time another young tree shoots forth from there, & as it grows, it gathers beauty and strength. I compare myself of the former & that of the latter to my son…
>
> This paper I hope will be handed down through many generations in my family that all may know what life I have led. (Upper Fort Garry, n.d.)

Peguis reminds me that words are eternal, and although humans are not, they can continue to connect to humanity in the present time through the stories they leave behind. Having the opportunity to unearth my identity through the stories of my ancestors has inspired me to reflect on what it means to live a meaningful life that aligns with my historical and current family values. This attachment to my identity and values enables me to live my life with a clear conscience and it stirs my heart to embrace nature in its entirety and seek to develop the skill of two-eyed seeing (Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012, p. 335) to work reciprocally among all groups for the betterment of Mother Earth. In doing this, I can be confident that the stories I pass down can be ones that both my relations, myself, and my Creator can be proud of.

## References


Barkwell, L. (n.d.) Traditional Metis Values. https://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/14668.Traditional%20Metis%20Values.pdf.

Chartrand, P. L. A. H. (2007). Niw_Hk_M_Kanak ("All My Relations"): Metis-First Nations Relations. [Research paper for the National Centre for First Nations Governance.] https://fngovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/paul_chartrand.pdf.

City of Good. (2021, April 14). Taking part in community helps you discover yourself. https://cityofgood.sg/articles/community-helps-you-discover-yourself/.

Colonial discourse of otherness: Stereotyping and fetishism. (2007). Material Worlds: Art and Agency in the Near East and Africa. https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/materialworlds/1857.html#:~:text=It%20is%20based%20on%20an,to%20promote%20their%20superior%20society.

Endangered Languages Project. (n.d.). Michif. https://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/crg.

Facing History & Ourselves. (2019, September 20). Language and Worldview. https://www.facinghistory.org/en-ca/resource-library/language-worldview.

Grandmothers Indigenous Teachings. (2019). Metis Identity: The Road from Trauma to Wellness. https://fcssbc.ca/sf-docs/conference/oct_2019_metis_identity.pdf.

Healthy U. (2022, February 22). Reconnecting with the Metis culture. https://news.umanitoba.ca/reconnecting-with-the-metis-culture/.

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. (2017, August 30). What does Indigenous connectivity mean? https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-does-indigenous-connectivity-mean.

Manitoba Métis Federation. (n.d.). Louis Riel Quotes. https://www.mmf.mb.ca/louis-riel-quotes.

Molenaar, C. (2020) Indigenous oral histories and primary sources. The Canadian Encyclopedia. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indigenous-oral-histories-and-primary-sources.

Moses, D. D., & Goldie, T. (1997). An anthology of Canadian native literature. Oxford University Press.

NewJourneys. (2016, May 25). The story of the Metis Sash. https://newjourneys.ca/en/articles/the-story-of-the-metis-sash.

Rev Garrioch, A.C. (1923). First Furrows, A history of the early settlement of the Red River Country, including that of Portage la Prairie 1923 Manitoba

Canada. Stovel Company LTD.
SmartMinds. (n.d.). How Your Beliefs Shape Your Life. https://www.smartminds.io/how-beliefs-shape-life/.
The Metis Sash. (n.d.) The Knowledge keepers Diary. https://www.portagecollege.ca/documents/events/corporate/knowledge%20keepers/Knowledge-Keeper3.pdf.
Thomas, L. G., & Breen, D. H. (1975). The prairie west to 1905: A Canadian sourcebook. Oxford University Press.
Turmaud, D. R. (2020, June 30). Why survival mode isn't the best way to live. Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/lifting-the-veil-trauma/202006/why-survival-mode-isnt-the-best-way-live.
Two-eyed seeing. (n. d.). https://www.2eyed-seeing.ca/about-5.
Upper Fort Garry. (n.d.). Chief Peguis' last will and testament. https://www.upperfortgarry.com/story/chief-peguis-last-will-and-testament.
Wardleigh, C. (n.d.). 5 benefits of knowing your family history. Select Health. https://selecthealth.org/blog/2019/08/5-benefits-of-knowing-your-family-history.

TRU Open Press

# Casey Collins

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc
Bachelor of Business Administration
Thompson Rivers University

*I am grateful to be writing from the traditional lands of Secwepemc Nation. I acknowledge and respect the Elders and people(s) both in the past and present who have sacrificed, lost, and loved for my opportunity to use this land to raise and educate myself and my children.*

*"Knowing your story is to have a sense of belonging with this, you learn responsibility & with this, you will develop a sense of peace." REMEMBERING OUR ANCESTORS*

*My name, Casey Barron confident, resilient, skeptical, empathetic, intelligent, tough, effervescent, ambitious, procrastinator*

*To others, I am a mother, wife, daughter, sister friend, confidant, student cowgirl and trouble— not in any particular order*

*I also hold a status card, making me a Registered Indian at the approval of the Canadian Government*

## WHAT DOES 'BELONGING' MEAN TO YOU?

My Secwepemc family begins with my paternal grandmother. She is a Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc Elder, an active community member. My other family members, aunt, uncle, cousin, and sister, are all recognized Band members within the Tk'emlúps community. Our family resides mainly in the safety and vastness of the Thompson Valley.

I began my initial Indian Status application to Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in the fall of 2018, at the same time as my full biological sister. The process was both tedious and lengthy, with no communication options other than waiting for snail-mail letters, which took a minimum of five months each to arrive throughout the process. This was my first lesson about how dysfunctional the relationship between the Government System and Indigenous peoples continues to be. Following up is difficult because files do not get assigned to a single agent; rather, they move through the process seeing various people and departments, treated as if they are on an assembly line with a poor tracking system. Once you can reach an INAC agent on the phone, the only information you receive is a rough estimate of where the file is at and a recommendation to wait another 30 to 60 days for a letter. My full biological sister is three years older than me, and she also started her application in the fall of 2018. We referenced one another in our applications to show additional family lineage. Her application somehow made it through the system quicker than mine by five months. INAC finally deemed me a Registered Indian in December 2020.

In November of 2015, Tk'emlúps te

Secwepemc Band (TteS) took back from INAC the responsibility for their Band membership, with a five-year grace period to allow status and membership applications to continue through the existing (at the time) process called Section 11 Band (Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc, 2023). The Section 11 Band is described as follows:

Section 11 of the Indian Act describes membership rules for Band lists maintained by the Indian Registrar. Membership on these lists is dependent upon an individual's eligibility for registration as a status Indian under the Indian Act. If an individual is registered and identifies with a Band whose Band lists are maintained by the Indian Registrar, then this individual automatically becomes a member of the Band. (Assembly of First Nations, n.d, p. 2)

Meanwhile, TteS was expected to establish a membership committee and accept such bylaw changes. The grace period ended in November 2020, leaving me a Registered Indian without a Band to belong to as I was "registered after November 3, 2020, … [and] must wait to apply for membership to Tk'emlups te Secwepemc" (Ttes Membership Department, email January 2022). With no membership committee in place, I cannot be accepted as a member. It is a huge step forward in the move take control of Band membership and to have the ability to not have the inclusion rights of families dictated by the government under criteria that Bands have no recourse or ability to change. I am happy that this change has been made. I am also hurt and confused that such a step forward is not being honored. TteS has not made membership a priority over the last five years, and it has left a lot of individuals without belonging. I feel lost, forgotten, and unimportant. I am not the only one who feels this way. I acknowledge there is a lot of work to be done to have the committee come together. It is as though the fight to hold our membership governance has been all but forgotten; from an administrative perspective Chief and Council are not following the Membership Code Bylaws they have committed to by approval. The bylaws are as follows:

10.1 Within forty-five (45) working days of the enactment of this code, the Chief and Council must.

a) appoint a Membership Committee that shall consist of one (1) representative from each of the thirteen (13) Grassroots families;

b) Enact by-laws governing the duties and authority of the Membership Committee. (Tk'emlups te Secwepemc Membership Code, Section 10, June 10, 2020)

In 2023, there is still no movement on the formation of the committee. 2020 Membership Code Bylaw states that 13 members from the 'grassroots families' make the committee with supporting signatories from their families. When younger members farther down the grassroots lineage try to take up the task, there is little support due to a multitude of bureaucratic and seemingly petty reasons. I feel the committee will never come together and the responsibility for membership will fall back to the government, or membership will dwindle over time to devastating numbers. Note that my sister, aunt, cousin, uncle, and grandmother have been acknowledged and accepted into Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc Nation.

I feel rejected and inferior.

My questions are: ***Who gets to belong?'***
***Who gets to decide who belongs and how?***

Belonging is an action and a feeling, the act or sense of belonging; it has weighted meaning (Oxford Dictionary). In my opinion, for children and young adults, belongings are a void or a lack of direction we are looking to fill or find. It generates an action, whether negative or positive, to show others, the perceived gatekeepers, that we should be accepted into the group. The maturity that comes from misguided attempts at belonging changes the dynamic; thus, at 29 years old, belonging is a "sliding scale feeling" that I experience, and the feeling prompts the action to want to or try to become a part of something. A dictionary definition is black and white, literally and figuratively. You either have an affinity for a place or situation or you don't. You are a member, or you are not. I belong at my job, like it, and am good at it, though, I wouldn't suffer an identity crisis if I no longer worked there. I belong hard and fast

when I am with my mother and sister. This is a constant. I would experience an identity crisis if I were to be excluded. I am an integral part of my family, and I belong. I also belong to a Rodeo association. However, if I moved to the provinces, I would eventually belong to another association, which would facilitate new relationships and I would belong. Belonging has different degrees, colors, and definitions; in the purest form, it is self-identity. A Forbes article published in 2021 by T. Brower shares that

"Belonging is a fundamental part of being human: We need people, and this need is hardwired into our brains. A recent MIT study found we crave interactions in the same region of our brains where we crave food, and another study showed we experience social exclusion in the same region of our brain where we experience physical pain" (Brower, 2021, para 6)

***"What does belonging mean to you?"*** This is an important question because it feels different to all of us, it weighs differently on each of us. The Canadian Government, under the Indian Act, has deemed me deserving of First Nations Status. However, I do not yet belong to a Band. What if fighting through the process, I am not allowed to belong to the Band that my family identifies with? Worse yet, I am afforded Band membership, but my children are later deprived of membership. What then?

My children (and I) have been notified that they are not deserving of status due to the Second-Generation Rule. My father fell in love with a non-Status individual and, 20 years later, I have fallen in love with another non-Status individual. Sifting and sorting through the contradictory guidelines, arbitrarily applied rules, and bureaucracy, I wonder about individuals with a strong connection with their ancestry, who have been raised with strong Indigenous cultural teachings, or who have little other support. What do all these rules and guidelines do to their definition of belonging, and how could it be more equitably decided?

## Band Membership

Section 10 of the Indian Act allows Bands to control membership (Indian Act, Section 10, 1985). This means, if you are a Registered Indian, it does not automatically mean you are a member of your First Nation Band. Each Nation has its own criteria for membership listed within the membership codes that the First Nation Community ratifies. This also means that a person can become a citizen of a First Nation while not being a Registered Indian. The criteria for becoming a First Nation member without being a Registered Indian are important to understand as the purity of bloodlines is depleting. There are no requirements other than those stated in the Assembly of First Nations Fact Sheet by the Canadian federal government: "Family ancestry is used to see if the individual's parents or grandparents were members or if they were entitled to be members of the Band as well" (Indian Act, Section 10, First Nations Authority to Determine Band Membership, 1985.)

While INAC held responsibility for Band membership, the criteria required (a) being confirmed a Registered Indian; (b) proof of ancestry membership to selected Band or a proven relation holding Band membership.

Band membership code is different for any Band that holds responsibility for its own membership decisions. The membership code is created and accepted by a Bands Chief and Council, and it can include such criteria as, but not be limited to, the following:

- To be, or not to be a Registered Indian.
- Acquiring membership by, only or any of, birth, adoption, marriage, residency, history.
- Dual Band Membership is or is not acceptale.
- Blood quantum factor.
- Possibly cultural reintegration requirements.
- Who decides: Elders, Members by quorum, Chief, and Council.

## Indian Act Amendments

Canada experienced a movement that created the need for introducing multiple amendments to the Indian Act between 1876 and 1951, all revisions that continued servicing the original objective of the Indian Act: "The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change" (John A.

MacDonald, 1887 as cited in Joseph, 2016).

I have learned that the meaning of amendment does not mean to better or further a written agreement or policy, just to change it. Some of the amendments included in the Indian Act circa 1876-1951 are:

- Imposing elections of Chief and Council systems, 1869 to present.
- Creation of reserves, 1876–present
- Permit system to control sales of Indigenous farmed goods, 1881–2014
- Prohibiting ammunition and alcohol sales to Indians, 1882– present (only in some counties)
- Declaring potlatch and other cultural ceremonies illegal, 1884–1951
- Creating Residential Schools, 1886–1996

These policies and amendments perpetuate stereotypes imposed on Indigenous peoples and include the notion that Indigenous peoples are financial drains on the rest of Canadian society for example, the widely distributed annual report from the Department of the Interior shows that

Our Indian legislation generally rests on the principle, that the Aborigines are to be kept in a condition of tutelage and treated as wards or children of the State. ...the true interests of the Aborigines and of the State alike require that every effort should be made to aid the red man in lifting himself out of his condition of tutelage and dependence, and that is clearly our wisdom and our duty, through education and every other means, to prepare him for a higher civilization by encouraging him to assume the privileges and responsibilities of full citizenship. (Department of the Interior, Annual Report for the year ended 30th June 1876 Parliament, 1887, p. xiv work cited as UBC, 2009)

The most effective way to break any cycle is to step out of it. The World Psychiatric Association (WPA) claims that the act of breaking down barriers to success is an integral part of interrupting multigenerational cycles (Roy et al., 2017). Another widely overlooked supporting factor of the successful ending of negative cycles is community and family support systems. The WPA (2016) shows that individuals' resiliency is related to genetic, epigenetic, and developmental factors as well as neurobiology (Roy et al., 2017). Within this focus, the way that social systems affect individuals and the lack of resiliency afforded by cultural, economic, and political systems are overlooked. This results in the creation of stereotypes that are self-fulfilling and self-perpetuated as they are socially cemented due to decades of government policy and restrictions, misunderstandings, and lack of communication. Changing the narrative from within is necessary and can start with the exclusivity of Band memberships and sharing of culture with anyone who wishes to be present.

## Other Membership Models

Australia, in 1788, was at the beginning of the marginalization of Aboriginals. Many Indigenous people were killed by disease and poisoning as evidenced in the article "'no moral doubt...': Aboriginal Evidence and the Kangaroo Creek Poisoning, 1847–1849" by J. Lydon (1996). Pacification by force culminated in the 1880s when settlers were allowed to deal with the Aborigines as they saw fit, which led to an era of horrific massacres of men, women, and children, causing the extinction of some tribes. The massacre was written into law as follows: "It shall be unlawful for Aborigines or Half-castes, not in lawful employment to be or remain" (Aborigines Act 1905, Section 39). By the 1940s, the Aboriginal peoples became either fringe groups hiding in Australia's vast bush country or were missionized and assimilated to the modern world, forming much of the labor force. The orchestrated extinction was rapid: "The disappearance of Aboriginal people in southeast Australia was so rapid that the belief arose that all would soon die out" (Berndt & Tonkinson, n.d.). It was not until 1978 that the government started recognizing native land titles; even then, the courts went through three more court sessions before finalizing, in 2006, set sections of land that were awarded to Aboriginals as per Berndt and Tonkinson.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) states that the criteria to belong as Indigenous is as follows: three of four are required.

- Prove blood quantity.
- Proof of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

genealogy.

- Identifying as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.
- Being accepted as such by the community in which you live, or formerly lived.

To belong, you must fulfill at least three out of these four criteria.

**"The way you look or how you live are not requirements"**—Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2022.

The tribe culture in Australia shows a harsh contrast to Canada's First Nations. Australian tribes ask that an individual who self-identifies as an Aboriginal can participate, support, and add value to the Aboriginal community they choose, and tribes can provide a recommendation from the community to the federal government.

In the United States, the federal government requirements for being considered a Native American are that one must enroll in one of the 573 federally recognized tribes. To register for Native American Status, one must be affiliated with a federally recognized tribe and one cannot register for Native American Status without affiliation to one of those tribes. The onus is on the individual applying for status to contact the tribe for the requirement to enroll and to obtain ancestry documents. Tribal requirements preserve the unique character and traditions of each tribe; as such, each tribe establishes membership criteria including shared customs, traditions, language, and tribal blood. The criteria vary from tribe to tribe, so uniform membership requirements do not exist. Each tribe has different enrollment criteria. However, all have a blood quantum minimum which also varies. Some require 25% and some are 1/16th ancestry, meaning one great-great-grandparent.

## Consequences of Restricted Band Membership

In the eyes of the Canadian Government, the Sinixt First Nation is extinct and has been for six decades; however, the people of this Band are still alive. This is an example of potential complications that can arise when Band memberships are restricted in ways enabled and structured by past government regulations. When numbers of Indigenous Band memberships dwindle and Bands do not allow dual memberships or require blood quantum over community involvement, we see numbers of Indigenous people continue to drop. Thus, the unique traditions, ceremonies, and culture of the specific tribe are lost. Once a Band or Nation is considered extinct by the government it is not likely to be revived regardless of blood quantum proof. An example of this is of the Beothuk people of Newfoundland. The last known member of the Beothuk people died in 1829; however, with technology being affordable and DNA testing kits that track ancestry widely available, we may find people today with Beothuk ancestry. The journal Genome published an article in 2020 by S. M. Carr supporting the claims of individuals as well as another tribe of being descendants of the Beothuk peoples. There are substantial, biological studies that show "Indigenous identity involves dynamic interactions of politics, culture, and biology, beyond that of simplistic measures of genetic affinity. Equally important is a nuanced appreciation of ethical considerations for the community, and knowledge of their genealogy and history" (Tallbear, 2013, p. 252).

## Potential Solutions

First, it would be interesting to see what changes communities would call for if a committee was put together with the sole purpose of amending policies from within a Band that proves to be too restrictive and promote exclusivity to the point of eventual extinction. The article "Until There is Not a Single Indian in Canada"( Facing History & Ourselves, 2021) reminds us that during the height of the Residential School system, policies were created and amended by the government to support "extreme assimilation" without input from the people. We need to dial back the restrictions and make amendments that support Band membership, internal cultural knowledge, and traditional ways so they can be better practiced, taught, and sustained. When a tribe no longer exists in the eyes of the government, the traditions will be forgotten.

Interior British Columbia is making progress in educating all children, regardless of their status, about Indigenous peoples and cultures. With guardian(s) approval the school district brings Indigenous teachings to the schools to share with students, which is a great step in bridging the gap of knowledge and communication. Being Indigenous is not tied to my identity—I wish it was. I wish that being Indigenous was tied to my soul. Perhaps I would discover that fire inside if I could just sit in the culture and traditions, breathe deeply, see it around me, and feel it fill me from within, but I am not afforded that opportunity. My earlier quote from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS, 2022) resonates so purely for this reason: "The way you look or how you live are not requirements" (p. 1). I am proud to self-identify and proud to say I am a status holder regardless of Band membership and I choose to give back to my community regardless of any list held in the memberships department. For me, it is about belonging and breaking the cycle of exclusivity within the community. I am not in the "inner circle." Lateral violence and prejudice are not necessarily perpetrated with malicious intent. It is something that seems to happen when any group or individual has suffered immensely at the hands of others. This is learned behavior just as generational trauma sustained from assimilation lateral violence became a means to survival. However, it does not have a place when trying to move forward in a positive way. I do not have the "right" last name, but I do what I can to make my non-Band member children feel comfortable and proud of their heritage and feed their curiosity without community support or biases toward myself and my children.

> "We need to dial back the restrictions and make amendments that support Band membership, internal cultural knowledge, and traditional ways so they can be better practiced, taught, and sustained. When a tribe no longer exists in the eyes of the government, the traditions will be forgotten."
>
> - Casey Collins

## Immediate Changes

Amendments to the membership code for the purposes of consideration to foster sustainability and community engagement as demonstrated in other membership models would be to have criteria that accounted for a few of the following:

- Community involvement and support networks.
- Self-identification.
- Letters of support from current Band members or Elders.
- Having a list of qualifiers and a requirement to meet a specific number of them in writing with a clearly defined appeal process to go before the membership committee that accounts for unforeseen situations.
- An interest in learning and participating.
- Documentation of lineage regardless of blood quantum.
- If lineage documentation cannot be produced, blood quantum should be sufficient.
- Ratifying family members.

As a Nation, we must start the healing, take the first steps at a grassroots level. We must welcome people regardless of government papers, no matter which bill or legislative criteria they fall under. There is strength in numbers. Our Bands hold the key to increase those numbers. I wish teachings to be shared openly and broadly, to be "awed" at and revered. Indigenous medicines, ceremonies and stories have so much to offer the mind, body, and soul. The notion of balance, sharing, healing, and learning from within is lost without Indigenous counterparts to teach. First Nations teachings tell us that "All are provided by our mother, the Earth. Indigenous peoples are caretakers of Mother Earth, realizing, respecting her gifts, water, air, fire and earth. First Nations peoples have a special relationship with the Earth and all living things in it" (Facing History & Ourselves, 2019, para 4). We all belong to stand on Mother Earth, we belong shoulder to shoulder not just to show our individuality but as a force of change, as the voices for those who were silenced for belonging. Once changes are made at a community level, INAC

can be approached to make changes at a government level that supports the direction that Nations should be considering taking: a list of qualifiers to meet a number but not all, and that Band acceptance be an integral part of the supporting documentation to a status application regardless of blood quantum. A Day to Listen that occurs annually on June 30 is another excellent example of initiatives that are showing a desire to move toward inclusion, and so is the school district initiative to support teachings of Indigenous stories and beliefs. There is strength in numbers—the Great Bear and the seven birds tell us that even the smallest of animals can conquer the largest obstacle if we work as one, with a common goal.

## Closing

Taking membership control back from the government is the first part of the task. The second part is to take a serious look inward and consider the membership codes and the culture the Band wants to project to the community and those who do not yet belong. Indigenous peoples can change the landscape of stereotypes and cultures from within by building resilience into the very social structure of the community, and it begins with Band membership and community engagement. It is not Indigenous peoples' responsibility to repair the damages done by decades of pain and broken promises. We need to allow space for non-Indigenous individuals to feel welcomed to the discussion and belong to a positive movement. It is accepted that Indigenous peoples have been disadvantaged by intergenerational trauma. Therefore, it can also be true that non-Indigenous people have been bombarded by intergenerational messaging and negative beliefs surrounding Indigenous peoples, and there is some common ground in that. According to B. Duriez and B. Soenens, "Results thus suggest that the parent-adolescent similarity in racism largely results from a more fundamental intergenerational transmission of ideology" (2009, p.906). Racism cannot be fought with racism, and years of disadvantage and oppression cannot be reconciled with exclusion. This would mean changes to most Band membership codes, Indian Act amendments moving toward the Australian Aborigines qualifier criteria, and making self-identification and community support and involvement more important than blood quantity.

I was not raised in a community and had no Indigenous teachings or influence growing up. I had "viewers access only" but I was curious about religion, philosophies, and deities. Regardless of environment, our bodies remember those that created us, decades of people shaping who we are. My family harvests their own beef from cattle we raise and we process all our animals as a family. Four generations participate, each with their own task throughout the process of the day. I became exceedingly curious about how to make use of the no consumable parts of the animals. I researched and am self-taught in caring for and bleaching skulls to paint them in a way that would honor the animal and my family. I have no elder to teach me traditional ways, I have no resources to teach me traditional ways, and the meanings and reasonings of the symbols and images I feel to paint the skulls. Each project lacks reasoning and understanding. I have learned that what I believe in is called Blood Memory, a concept realized and shared by Indigenous peoples in various Nations. Indigenous Elders often say that memory is in the blood and bone, that our stories are passed not just verbally but through a kind of genetic memory (Marubbio, 2019). I look forward to the day I am found included and belonging to my Indigenous ancestry and can explore my Indigenous identity. My journey of identity is lonely. I am learning I am not alone while finding my way.

## References

Western, A (1905), Aborigines Act 1905, (1905). https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-55208686/view?partId=nla.obj-55209481

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. (2022). Proof of Aboriginality. Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. https://aiatsis.gov.au/proof-aboriginality.

Berndt, R, M. & Tonkinson, R.. (n.d.). Australian Aboriginal peoples—Aboriginal peoples

in Australian society. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Australian-Aboriginal/Aboriginal-peoples-in-Australian-society.

Brower, T. (2021b, July 20). Missing your people: Why belonging is so important and how to create it. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/tracybrower/2021/01/10/missing-your-people-why-belonging-is-so-important-and-how-to-create-it/?sh=47d9f4e17c43

Carr, S. M. (2020). Evidence for the persistence of ancient Beothuk and Maritime Archaic mitochondrial DNA genome lineages among modern Native American peoples. Genome, 63(7), 349–355.

Duriez, B., & Soenens, B. (2009). The intergenerational transmission of racism: The role of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation. Journal of Research in Personality, 43(5), 906–909. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0092656609001573.

Facing History & Ourselves, "Words, Places, and Belonging," last updated September 20, 2019. https://www.facinghistory.org/en-ca/resource-library/words-places-belonging

Indian Act (1985), RSC 1985, c I-5, https://canlii.ca/t/5439p retrieved on 2023-05-06

Joseph, B. (2016). 10 Quotes John A. Macdonald made about First Nations. Retrieved from: https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/10-quotes-john-a.-macdonald-made-about-first-nations

Lydon, J. (1996). 'no moral doubt': Aboriginal evidence and the Kangaroo Creek poisoning, 1847–1849. Aboriginal History, 20(1996), 151–175.

First Nations Studies Program. (2009, January). Government policy. indigenousfoundations. https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/government_policy/

Marubbio, M. E. (2019). Blood Memory: Native American Film Series [Video Documentary].

Roy, B., & Dwivedi, Y. (2017). Understanding epigenetic architecture of suicide neurobiology: A critical perspective. Neuroscience and biobehavioral reviews, 72, 10–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2016.10.031

S. M., & Sippel, L. (2016, February 1). Why are some individuals more resilient than others: The role of social support. World Psychiatry, 15(1), 77–79. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4780285/.Tallbear, K. (2013). Native American DNA. University of Minnesota Press.

Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc. (2024, January 21). Membership. T̓kemlúps te Secwépemc. https://tkemlups.ca/community-services/membership/

T̓kemlúps te Secwépemc. (2020, June 21). Membership code. https://tkemlups.ca/members-portal/membership-code/

"Until there is not a single Indian in Canada." Facing History & Ourselves. (2021). https://www.facinghistory.org/en-ca/resource-library/until-there-not-single-indian-canada

# Charlene Quinney

Plains Cree Nation
Human Service Diploma
Thompson Rivers University


# FINDING YOURSELF, YOUR SPIRIT, YOUR WILL TO SURVIVE


## Abstract

Muskwa (the bear in Plains Cree) is a very sacred animal. A bear represents bravery, strength, protection, and defense of energetic boundaries. Bears often appear in our lives when we are being taught about navigating the "wildness" or wilderness within our soul. The bear showing up in your life is a powerful symbol in spiritual language, so having it appear in your life can deepen your connection and relationship to the spiritual realm, and to your inner wisdom (Putnam, 2022).


## Introduction

The trials and tribulations of a poor little Indigenous girl growing up in a small reservation called Frog Lake, Alberta, played a significant role in how her life would develop. An ideal life was not in the stars from the minute she was born, as her birth would tear apart the family that was already hanging on by a thread due to family violence and alcohol.

With all the chaos she would be taken to a foster home for the first years of her life but would eventually be taken back to her stepdad and his parents, who showed her the love she needed. This is where she would get the love and compassion to get herself through the hardest times of her life. It was the backbone that allowed her to love the family that she has created today. This is her—my—story.

## Who Am I?

I am a Plains Cree First Nation woman born to my biological parents (who were never legally married) Dorothy Stanley and Thomas Abraham (deceased February 2015). I was raised by my stepdad Harvey Quinney (deceased August 2011) and his parents (my step-grandparents) Thomas (deceased 1980) and Aldina Quinney (deceased Jan 1989). I have 14 half brothers and sisters (two brothers have passed on). I am also the proud mother of three sons and one daughter (Joel, Jamie, Jude, and Lindsey) whom I have raised on my own.

## Lost Soul

In my upbringing, I struggled with many adversities that I have had to overcome. I survived sexual abuse, family violence, alcoholism, abandonment, and abusive relationships that I often felt trapped in. Somewhere along the way, I lost myself and I lost my will to keep our traditions alive. Alcoholism, interpersonal violence, and abuse such as those that I faced are realities that many Indigenous people experience due to the long-lasting impacts of colonialism. Statistics Canada (2016) reports that 43% of Indigenous people living off reserve reported excessive heavy drinking, and that up to 56% of Indigenous people experience sexual abuse. These shared experiences happen because of the fractures in our family systems caused by Residential Schools, the Indian Act, and the ongoing intergenerational trauma. You would never know just by looking at me that I did not respect our people at one point, that I was not always proud to be who I am today, that I never even considered myself a First Nation member of Frog Lake. You would also think by looking at my

children, that they too would follow in our ancestors' footsteps, and pass on these traditions. I am sad to say that it has all ended with me currently, as I grew accustomed to how the colonizers wanted us to live. This is my story, but this is also part of a larger story directly tied to living within a colonial society as an Indigenous woman. This is one that is shared by and with more people and communities than just me.

I walked away from the teachings of our Cree language, teachings that would have taught me to pick sweetgrass, berries, medicines, to skin a deer or rabbit, hunt ducks, and dry meat, skills that were needed to survive like many others before me. I used to attend sacred and special ceremonies such as the Ghost Dance, Sweats, and Sun Dances for healing. As a family we would also gather at Powwows and Round Dances to meet and enjoy with other families and relatives. This was something to be proud of. As in many traditions, "ceremonies are gifts given; they are as sacred tools given to us so we can bridge the physical and spiritual world" (Johnson & Wiebe, 2021, p. 438). These gatherings are also critically important to the fostering of community, and the transmission of cultural traditions and information to community members and beyond. Prichard (2021) reminds us that "powwows create and perform information that is not available any other way and signify the importance of dance to [Indigenous] lifeways" (p. 5).

## Being Proud

I am now starting to take a stand and fight for my life. I took back my life from the one and only thing I could not escape: alcohol. I could not let go of the only crutch I knew from the age of 12. It was my rock that made me feel numb, fearless, invincible, and powerful. It was a way to forget the guilt I felt for running from my identity and my past. Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon occurrence for Indigenous peoples. Statistics Canada reported in 2016 that 35% of Indigenous peoples who live off reserve suffer from alcohol use disorder (AUD). The disorder often promotes a cycle of guilt and shame for its users, as it did for me (Potter-Effron, 2013). Potter-Effron (2013) highlights the fact that using alcohol as a way to numb feelings of shame and guilt, also called "sedative scripts," is one of the most common ways addictive patterns with alcohol form (p. 112). Thankfully, I was able to seek assistance and heal.

After six weeks at a family treatment program called Kackaamin in Port Alberni, British Columbia, at the age of 43, I discovered a new sense of worth. Kackaamin is a program that prioritizes a blend of both Indigenous and traditional scholarly approaches to addiction recovery, operating through a holistic lens (Kackaamin Family Development Centre, 2023). It is based on trauma-informed practices and highlights the fact that healthy families contribute to healthy communities, which, as Prichard (2021) discussed, is a cornerstone of Indigenous society. With the help and encouragement from friends and family, I rediscovered what I genuinely loved. My kids, music, writing, singing, dancing, drawing, and most of all, myself (the true Plains Cree woman I was born to be). With so many of our people fighting for our rights, I too wanted to hold my head up high having learned more about others' lived experiences through different outlets such as movies, books, news articles and coverage, and even from guest speakers. It hit home, but it also gave me a sense of relief that I was not the only one who had gone through the life I had to endure. It was like they were telling my story as well.

The stories of Residential School survivors and being a third generation to suffer intergenerational trauma gave me the will to start the journey of connecting with my ancestors' teachings. Intergenerational trauma, defined as "the shared collective experiences of sustained and numerous attacks on a group that may accumulate over generations" was originally conceptualized and documented by researchers who studied the lasting effects of trauma on descendants of Holocaust survivors (Barker et al., 2019). It is now well-documented by Canadian Indigenous populations and is understood to be a direct result of British colonization of Indigenous lands and territories, with the Residential School system being

only a piece in the larger puzzle (Barker et al., 2019). The themes of intergenerational trauma are evident when I watch the different episodes of 8th Fire, We Were Children, Where the Spirit Lives, and Indian Horse. Watching those episodes is like reliving my whole life again. Reading books like Stolen Life, you get the experience through a first-hand narrative. I now know that First Nations and Aboriginal peoples globally experienced the same impact of colonization. According to Belanger (2014) "We have already paid the price. It's time to accept the many blessings that the creator has in store for us. We must honor our people who sacrificed everything through honoring ourselves, we will also heal the wounds of our ancestors and the unborn generations" (p. 332).

> "It also gave me a sense of relief that I was not the only one who had gone through the life I had to endure. It was like they were telling my story as well.
>
> It may not seem like there is a light at the end of the tunnel; there may be little hope to overcome barriers that seem insurmountable, but there is hope within me and within all of us."
>
> - Charlene Quinney

I was given a new sense of what our people needed to move forward in life. We need Truth and Reconciliation, we need to know we matter, we need to keep fighting for our lost spirits to find their way, and we need to protect our cultures and traditions for our children. We need to be proud to show them our ways, to be proud of where we come from. As more First Nations people work together, we will find our paths again. We will not be stigmatized, criticized, and deemed less than anyone else in society. We will be respected once again so that our children will break the cycle.

## Healing and Moving Forward

Finding a balance between my emotions and what I am learning will be the key in helping myself and others heal. As hard as it can be to relive the emotions, hear the heartbreak of so much loss and sadness, it is important that I keep teaching the truth. I find at times I need to smudge and say a prayer for strength and guidance to get my knowledge out, so that I too can share my story with confidence as a survivor. I hope that my story can help at least one person find their value, their strengths, and most of all, their voices to be heard. Finding a balance in who I am and what I want in life, while coming from a background of uncertainty, struggles, addictions, and abuse, has been a difficult challenge but is one I am proud of. Among this story of trouble and woes there is a survivor who got sober, went to university, and is now working in a field that allows me to give back to others who have gone through similar situations. It may not seem like there is a light at the end of the tunnel; there may be little hope to overcome barriers that seem insurmountable, but there is hope within me and within all of us. This has changed for me just within the last few years. As our warriors take a stand, I will stand behind them and make my children proud to be Plains Cree again. I will be proud to be who I am.

I was told that Muskwa (the bear) is my protector and lives within my soul. When my physical, mental, and spiritual being was in a chaotic state, I feared him in my dreams. When life was content, I would not. This is my spirit animal that lives within my heart and soul, who keeps me grounded and on the right path, and gives me the will to keep on surviving any challenges that may come

my way. Although he may be dormant, his strength is what carries me, enables me to keep doing what I am doing today, to keep finding myself, giving me courage, and a voice to help many others like me. I have a great protector.

## References


Barker, B., Sedgemore, K., Tourangeau, M., Lagimodiere, L., Milloy, J., Dong, H., Hayashi, K., Shoveller, J., Kerr, T., & DeBeck, K. (2019). Intergenerational trauma: The relationship between residential schools and the child welfare system among young people who use drugs in Vancouver, Canada. Journal of Adolescent Health, 65(2), 248–254. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.01.022.

Belanger, Yale D. (2014). Ways of knowing. Nelson Education.

Corbiere, K. (2019, November 27). Opinion: Alcohol and indigenous people. Anishinabek News. https://anishinabeknews.ca/2019/11/27/opinion-alcohol-and-indigenous-people/

Wiebe, R., & Johnson, Y. (1999). Stolen life: the journey of a Cree woman. 1st Vintage Canada ed. Toronto, Vintage Canada.

Kackaamin Family Development Centre. (2023). About Kackaamin.https://www.kackaamin.org/about-kackaamin.

Potter-Efron, R., & Carruth, B. (2002). Shame, Guilt, and Alcoholism: Treatment Issues in Clinical Practice, Second Edition (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315809090

Prichard, R. (2021). Socially distanced Powwows. Dance Education in Practice, 7(4), 4–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/23734833.2021.1988284.

Putnam, R. (2022). What it means to see a bear: Spiritual meaning and symbolism. https://crystalclearintuition.com/bear-meaning/.

Chuying Jiao
*Knowledge Maker Program Coordinator*
*Thompson Rivers University*

# CULTURAL EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE MAKER PROGRAM: A JOURNEY OF PRIVILEGING INDIGENOUS VOICES, BELIEFS, AND ACTIONS

## Bridging Academic Excellence and Cultural Empowerment for Indigenous Students

The Knowledge Maker program acts as a culturally appropriate support mechanism to respond to Indigenous people's needs by incorporating their cultural beliefs and practices into the academic world. This program can develop students' academic and embodied subjectivities, creating a sense of belonging and nurturing their multiple responsibilities toward their communities. Turning their research into actions helps prepare them for leadership roles that then enables them to interrogate and transform their communities. Indigenous voices need to be heard in the academic world, and the research impacting the academic world needs to come from the Indigenous communities' members directly. Knowledge Makers provides a platform that encourages Indigenous students to do research that is meaningful to their communities, it builds a positive identity, hope, and agency that enables students to change the world for the better, in their own First Nations communities and in the larger world.

I got involved in the Knowledge Makers Program in the 2023 academic year while in my final semester in the Master of Education program at Thompson Rivers University, at this time I was working on my thesis project around Indigenous social work. I started with Knowledge Makers as a program Learning Strategist, and now am currently working as a Program Coordinator. Working in a role like this provided me with a lot of opportunities where I was able to interface with the students directly and learn a lot about how to respond to their needs, as well as the problems they face in their day-to-day lives. Knowledge Makers is an innovative and interdisciplinary teaching model created to support Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students who wants to learn about research and knowledge production as Indigenous scholars. As the Coordinator of the Knowledge Makers (KM) program for the past two years, I have had the opportunity to see the success of these Indigenous students through their involvement with this program. I have come to understand it is much more than just research – it is about students translating their research into positive change in their community and then turning their passion into skills they can return to their communities. Knowledge Makers advocates for including Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students in research not only for academic achievement but also as a tool for regaining cultural identity and transforming Indigenous communities (Knowledge Makers, 2024). It focuses on applying knowledge to support Indigenous people in conducting research, amplifying their voices, and restoring their power in the academic world. In this context, achieving academic success in KM is about more than movement up the educational hierarchy, which Western institutions have traditionally defined. Instead, the goal is assisting students to learn more about their Nations, their historical context, and their culture, together with their ability to use this knowledge effectively for the betterment of their communities. In other words, this platform allows Indigenous research to break free

from the Western standard framework and returns the voice to Indigenous students and their communities (Naepi, et al, 2019). From my perspective, KM is not just a program but a culturally rich platform that empowers Indigenous students by aligning their education with their cultural identities, turning beliefs into impactful actions that combine academic learning and cultural knowledge. In doing so, KM was able to blend Indigenous knowledge with Western academic frameworks, providing students with the tools to amplify their voices and create meaningful change within both their communities and the broader educational world.

## Starting from Research Ending up With Action

The KM program supports Indigenous students by intentionally having them participate in culturally appropriate research that relates to the needs of their people. In the 2-day workshops, one-on-one mentoring and presenting their work (Knowledge Makers, 2024), students do not only learn about the foundational research skills, but they also acquire confidence on how to use the knowledge they have acquired to empower their societies and themselves. Our students come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Some of them already have a specific area of interest and know what they want to focus on throughout the entire process. On the other hand, some students, despite having rich life experiences and being able to identify the challenges of being Indigenous in the current world, do not know how to expand these experiences into a clear topic or develop that idea into actual research. However, they all share one thing in common: they are experts in their own lived experiences of being Indigenous in Canada. This unique perspective is something we need to listen to and support.

One meaningful example that sticks with me is one of our knowledge makers students from Volume 9; when he first joined our initial workshop in February 2023 he was very shy and barely spoke about himself or participated in the workshop. Yet, as the workshop progressed and through subsequent one-on-one meetings, I discovered that he had extensive experiences with the systemic racism he encountered at TRU. This insight led him to pursue research on the impact of systemic racism within Canada's education system, particularly in relation to Indigenous students. Despite being a first-year fine arts student and initially lacking confidence in his ideas, by the end of the workshop and our meetings, he produced a compelling and insightful research article critically examining the Canadian post-secondary education system. At the celebration of Volume 9, he stood up and read his paper in front of all the students, TRU faculty members, and his family. As one of the members who witnessed all these changes, I can see the power of how this progress is shifting his confidence from "I don't know much about research" to "I'm confident enough to speak out for myself and to privilege my voice—my voice and perspective matter." Knowledge Makers create this supportive environment, allowing Indigenous students to turn their passion into something workable, to form their ideas, and to make research a means to understand issues and increase public awareness (Neapi, et al., 2021). It reflects the broader journey of empowerment and self-realization that education can inspire.

Another example I can think of is one of the students from Knowledge Makers Volume 9, who wrote a paper about Indigenous reclamation and body sovereignty. After the workshop, they came to a one-on-one meeting to explain their ideas about the topic they wanted to address. They are currently working with another department at TRU on sexual health and stated, "I have this kind of knowledge—what can I do with it?" It's not just about to publishing a research paper, but they want to have the ability to create practical approaches to learning that allows people to actually engage with their research and to be able to pass on the knowledge that they have. Jeneen, the Associate Director at All My Relations, sat with this student and brainstormed ways to make their goals a reality. In the end, they came up with the idea of offering a workshop on sex and body sovereignty at TRU. Along with offering this workshop, we helped them collect data on their workshop participants experiences and this opportunity has made them excited to pursue a Masters

on this topic once they complete their Undergraduate degree.

## Creating Connections Beyond

Empowering Indigenous students to use research as a tool for social impact, and turning their insights and passions into initiatives that resonate within their communities is a fascinating process. The Knowledge Makers program is not limited to a national scale but extends its impact internationally. The program has created robust partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations, both here and abroad, as part of its aim to empower Indigenous students in connecting their academic goals with the requirements of their communities. The collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO), expanded the program internationally and give us the opportunity worldwide to learn and support international Indigenous people. We have been able to assist international Indigenous people with expressing and privileging the knowledge their communities hold, and to talk about the issues that Indigenous people facing worldwide, such as food security and sustainability. On March 15th, five Indigenous women from all over the world came to share their knowledge with Knowledge Makers and the larger TRU community. Another 14 remained online, discussing their research during the conference. All these women, like our past Knowledge Makers cohort, come from vastly different backgrounds: some have spent their entire lives working in rural areas with their nomadic communities, some serve as Māori community leaders in the North Island of New Zealand, and others are Master's students working on their theses. Among them, we have international students, mothers, farmers, community leaders, beekeepers, and research assistants just to name a few. These women bring a wealth of knowledge in their respective fields and from their perspective communities, and their work highlights the pressing issues their communities face in the era of globalization. despite their diverse backgrounds and roles, all these women share a deep commitment to preserving their communities' cultural knowledge and addressing the challenges posed by globalization through their unique expertise and leadership. The UNFAO and Knowledge Makers programs provide an opportunity for these women to engage with one another, creating a community of shared experiences and knowledge. Indigenous peoples should never neglect one another. As I quote from one of our brilliant colleagues and host during our time in New Zealand, Luke Moss, "The ocean is not something that separates us, but connects us together." (2024) I believe the Knowledge Makers program can serve as a bridge, linking Secwepemcul'ecw to the world.

"KM is not just a journal for research to published in, it eventually becomes a community" (Bandura, 2021, p.79). Last year, we established cultural exchange programs with Māori communities in New Zealand, where students participated in 14-day learning visits to engage with Indigenous knowledge and research methods alongside Māori scholars and community members. Sixteen students took part in this enriching cultural exchange experience. Their relationships didn't end with the trip but continued to grow afterward. This program creates opportunities for Indigenous students to connect and form lasting friendships. One student from a past Knowledge Makers cohort who got to participate expressed that he wanted to be involved in more cultural events that reflect his own people and community—something he didn't often experience while growing up. From my perspective, I have seen how students who participate in this program form meaningful friendships, expand their networks, and use what they've learned through Knowledge Makers to find jobs they are passionate about. Knowledge Makers transforms research from being purely academic, breaking students away from Western standards, into something they can actively work on, allowing them to see and discover themselves. I have witnessed significant changes in the students who participate in this program, particularly in how these deep connections foster both personal and professional growth. Like Sandra Bandura (2021) stated about the Knowledge Maker program, it was intended for bring people together, connect people together and sharing the beautiful knowledge and stories in between people, and a process that continues to grow and evolve.

## References

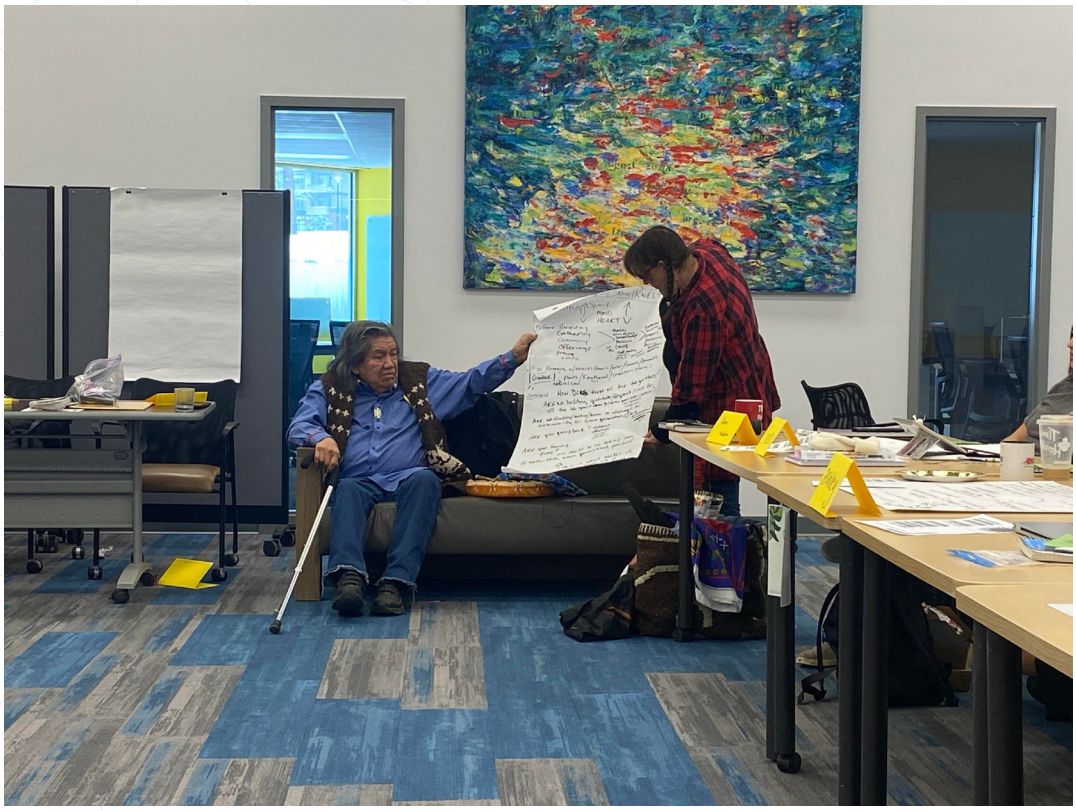
Courtoreille, Q. (2023). Implicit Racism and How It Affects Indigenous People in our Current Education System in Canada. KnowledgeMakers, 9, 91–100.

Knowledge Makers. (2024, September 23). Knowledge Makers. Knowledge Makers Journal. https://knowledgemakers.trubox.ca/

Naepi, Serana, & Airini. (2019). Knowledge makers: Indigenous student undergraduate researchers and Research. Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly, 2(3), 52–61. https://doi.org/10.18833/spur/2/3/7

Naepi, Sereana, Banura, S., & Edwards, L. (2021). Looking Back: The First Five Years of Knowledge Makers. KnowledgeMakers, 6, 77–81.

Rondquist, E. (2023). Reclaiming Sex and Pleasure. KnowledgeMakers , 9, 85–90.



Brian Burciaga
West Moberly First Nations
Bachelors of Engineering
Thompson Rivers University

# ASSESSING THE ENERGY EFFICIENCIES OF AMD AND INTEL PROCESSORS ON BROWSER TOOLS

## Abstract

After Apple designed their computers with their new M1/M2 processors, tests have shown their efficiencies. Compared with their previous iteration of Mac computers with Intel processors, the M1/M2 processors have tested to be more efficient. However, these tests have been run through Cinebench, Adobe Software, and other benchmarking tools. These tests do not consider a typical student's use case at a university. My study reveals the efficiency of AMD and Intel performance in regard to browser tests. The tests involve typing, video playback, and other types of tabs and browser windows.

## I. INTRODUCTION

During 2022, there was an energy crisis in Europe due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It got me thinking about how oil and gas prices rose in North America, and whether the amount of energy we consume is sustainable. Additionally, if it is unsustainable to consume this much power, what could be done on a local level to help? Obviously, it is challenging to change the majority's mindset on cutting back on energy use. However, in this article, I provide some suggestions for alternative technology that people could use to save energy specifically at Thompson Rivers University (TRU).

TRU has instances of energy waste in certain locations and scenarios. One such example is the uninterrupted use of high-power electronics like TVs for advertisements and computer labs 24/7 resulting in high energy consumption and its associated costs.

This article discusses how we can reduce energy consumption in the computer labs at TRU. The main issue is that there are numerous computer labs on campus that need to be on all day for students to access lab software remotely. For example, between 2020 and 2022 classes were conducted online due to the pandemic, and despite remote learning, students still needed access to the on-campus computers. The question is, how much energy is being consumed by the computers through this process? Could there be alternatives for computers that are more energy efficient? If not, could there be ways to cut down energy consumption? Would these changes be significant enough?

Using cloud computing as an alternative for physical computers can be one solution. Generally, cloud computing uses one super computer to run many virtual machines on a system (i.e., one computer can host 200 users at once). However, this does have some issues that I will explain later in subsequent sections.

Another alternative is to use energy-efficient computers. For example, the new Apple computers with M1/M2 processors have long battery life and draw low power. It is important to determine whether this is true. If so, it is necessary to quantify the amount of energy truly saved from using these computers.

## II. BACKGROUND

## A. Cloud Computers

Cloud data centers are an essential component of today's IT infrastructure, providing computing power, storage, and network infrastructure to users over the internet. However, as mentioned, energy consumption is a significant concern for data centers due to high-power consumption of computer equipment and cooling systems. The energy cost and high carbon emissions associated with data centers are a growing concern, and efforts to improve their efficiency are necessary to mitigate their environmental impact.

The energy consumption of data centers has been steadily increasing over the years, with a growth rate of about 12% per year. In 2014, data centers worldwide consumed about 26 GW of energy, which is approximately 1.4% of global energy consumption. The cost of energy consumption for US data centers alone was about 4.5 billion USD in 2006, and cloud data centers produced approximately 116.2 million metric tons of CO2 emissions in the same year.

As a major player in the cloud computing industry, Google has been taking steps to reduce its energy consumption and carbon footprint. In 2017, the company announced that it had achieved its goal of sourcing 100% of its energy from renewable sources, and it continues to invest in renewable energy projects. However, there is much work to be done to improve the efficiency of data centers and reduce their environmental impact. For example, servers in data centers typically lack energy uniformity and consume a significant amount of power even at low utilization rates. The peak power consumption of servers often reaches 80% or more of their maximum power, even when they are only operating at 10% to 50% of their peak load. This results in significant energy waste and inefficiency.

Cooling and air conditioning units account for a significant portion of the energy consumption in data centers, typically around 30%. However, this energy consumption could be reduced by implementing more efficient cooling methods. Free cooling uses outside air to cool the data center instead of energy-intensive air conditioning units. Additionally, building data centers in locations with cooler climates can further minimize their reliance on energy-intensive cooling systems.

Another source of power inefficiency in data centers is the power conversion process. UPS (uninterruptible power supply) modules used for power conversion often operate at low rates of efficiency that are typically between 10% and 40% of their full capacity. This results in significant energy waste and overall energy inefficiency (Uchechukwu, Li, and Shen, 2014).

When I first began to explore the solution of using cloud computers at TRU, I looked at the state of the computer labs in 2016/2017. I was uncertain whether the computer labs in 2016/2017 were based on cloud technology, but I was aware that they were not operated using traditional desktop computers. The next question that I asked was why would TRU make the change to desktop computers rather than to cloud computing?

I have sent emails to the IT department at TRU to ask this question. In their reply, they mentioned that the systems in 2016/2017 used VDI (Virtual Desktop Infrastructure). VDI is a system that was set up on premises that typically involved a dedicated server. It is not necessarily cloud-based, but functioned similarly. The system hosted 200 virtual machines in their systems prior to 2017.

The switch to traditional machines was because of the cost of the license and maintenance for VDIs. The licensing cost would be "ballooning" according to TRU. There were also resource constraints and an attempt to streamline IT processes by switching. If the service were to go down, it would affect 200 users instead of just one machine. When I was trying to login remotely, the sessions went down on several instances.

The benefits to traditional desktops is there's more redundancy. If something were to happen to the network traffic you don't necessarily lose your work when using a desktop. If one component fails, the whole computer lab does not go down. Even though the tech industry pushes cloud computing, traditional machines are more robust.

## B. ARM and x86

It is necessary to provide some background information and dispel certain misconceptions surrounding the two ISAs (Instruction Set Architectures) before delving into the explanation of the other alternative.

The deliberation between the efficiency of RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computer; e.g., ARM) and CISC (Complex Instruction Set Computer; e.g., x86) ISAs is still ongoing as both are appearing in new markets. ARM-based servers are being used for energy efficiency, while x86-based mobile and low power devices are used for higher performance. However, there is a significant difference in power consumption between the two, with ARM implementations using 1–2 W and x86 implementations using 5–36 W.

To understand the impact of the ISA on performance and power, studies must consider various factors such as chip process technology node, device optimization, memory bandwidth, I/O device effects, operating system, compiler, and workloads executed. Energy measurements and analysis also pose additional challenges due to implementation on boards and managing energy across the board.

Based on studies of machines with similar designs, models, operating systems, compiler, and workloads, it was found that the ISA-independent microarchitecture differences dominate performance, power, and energy impacts. x86 has a lower CPI (cycles per instruction) than ARM-based computers, but ARM has a smaller binary size and instruction length. Microarchitectures are responsible for inefficiencies in performance, not the ISA itself.

An examination of the charts showed that ARM-based CPUs (central processing units) consume significantly less normalized power than x86 chips, indicating that microarchitecture is a factor in building energy-efficient systems. The i7 (x86) is optimized more for performance than power efficiency, leading to high energy costs when performance is low.

Regardless of ISA, balancing power and performance leads to energy-efficient cores. It is the microarchitecture and design methods that truly matter when building efficient systems. However, the processors that were tested were designed in 2013. The standards for efficiency and performance would have to change to account for the current generation processors (Blem, Menon, and Sankaralingam, 2013). The tests were run on the operating system Linux where it can dictate how to manage efficiency. This could vary based on systems, from Windows, to Linux or MacOS (Blem, Menon, & Sankaralingam, 2013; Wechsler, 2006).

## C. Apple

The 2022 article by Ali, Tanveer, Aziz, Usman, and Azam discussed the switch from x86 to ARM SoCs (M1) made by Apple in 2020 and compared the advantages of ARM in terms of power saving, efficiency, and performance. The researchers included major computing device types in their study and found that the M1 chipset has the best power to performance ratio, with similar or even better performance compared to x86 competitors while keeping down TDP (thermal design power). The article also noted that CISC (Intel x86 or AMD) consume a lot of power while pushing performance and that ISA design and implementation can either reduce or increase power. The authors make a case for IOT (Internet of things) devices to be based on ARM for their low power consumption and suggest that ARM-based servers may be a viable option for cloud, servers, or data centers, given that servers account for 57% of electricity costs and are currently based on CISC architecture (Ali, Tanveer, Aziz, Usman, & Azam, 2022).

In 2020, Apple switched from Intel x86 to ARM-based M1 chips. ARM offers advantages in terms of power efficiency, performance, and versatility. The M1 chipset has the best power to performance ratio and performs well on multithreaded tests while keeping TDP low. CISC-based processors like Intel x86 and AMD Ryzen Thread Ripper consume a lot of power while pushing performance. ARM is preferred for IOT due to its low power consumption. Rosetta 2 software allows running Intel x86 apps on M1 Macs, but it needs more CPU power to translate the

apps. However, there are hardware tweaks to implement x86 instructions to mix ARM and x86 architectures, resulting in better performance. CrossOver software allows M1 Macs to run Windows applications. Some Mac programs fail to run on M1 chips because they were built strictly for Intel-based machines. M1 Macs are ridiculously responsive with no stutters or lagging, even when running multiple applications and a video game.

**Table 1**. For the amount of watts it pushes, it is surprising how performant the Mac Mini is.

| App Load | Temperatures (Celsius) | Power (Watt) |
|---|---|---|
| Peak | 77 | 32 |
| Load | 70 | 24 |
| Idle | 27 | 7 |
| Ambient | 21 | 2 |

The M1 Mac Mini performs well in multithreading and single-threaded use, outperforming the older Intel i7 model Mac Mini and competing with the AMD Ryzen processor. However, it does not beat the i9 iMac. The M1 Mac Mini is also more affordable than the i7 Mac Mini configuration, which is 400 CAD more expensive. The M1 Mac Mini also outperforms the Intel Mac Mini and iMac when it comes to compiling with Xcode Benchmark. Adobe applications currently perform better on Intel-based Macs, but it is possible that they may perform better on M1 Macs if they are translated. However, the M1 chip was not compared to Intel versions of Mac computers. They did compare an AMD Ryzen 5 5600, but it would have been nice to have a comparison with modern Intel versions of that year (Linus Tech Tips, 2020).

With concerns in the forefront about whether software is compatible on Apple computers, is there any alternative that is based on Intel or AMD? Turns out, Intel may be another option when comparing the modern generation of processors.

## D. Intel (x86)

Intel is a big player when it comes to the processor given there is a GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) market now. Intel released their first set of processors on November 15, 1971 (Intel, n.d.). On their website, Intel claims: "As we continue to focus on delivering capabilities that best meet customer needs, it has also become important to look at delivering optimal performance combined with energy efficiency." They aim to focus on metrics like performance per watt. It can be done by increasing the data per instructions, or SIMD (single instruction multiple data). The designers of these processors can use this method, as well as try to adjust the frequency of the processor to maximize efficiency. Intel does aim to focus on performance, energy efficiency, and scalability of multicore processors (Wechsler, 2006).

Their sixth generation of processors, also known as Skylake, delivered record levels of performance and battery life. Their main focus was to focus on user perceivable performance, responsiveness, and efficiency. They examined how they transmit more data at a lower frequency. For example, if the previous generation processor transfers 2 GBs at 3 GHz, but the Skylake processor transfers 2 GBs at 2.3 GHz then it would be deemed more efficient.

Small passively cooled systems pulled 4.5 W when it came to power management, while high-performance desktops pulled 95 W. It is good to mention that the operating system (e.g. Windows, MacOS) controls the processors' utilization. The operating system assumption is that processor utilization runs high to run on high-performance P-states and vice versa. However, the operating system has two limitations:

Utilization evaluation is performed over four 10s of ms otherwise it is too intrusive. Limited visibility of workloads is instant at runtime behaviour. In other words, it does not know if the workload is bounded by memory latency. As well, when running at high clock frequency it will also wait for data to return, which wastes energy.

Intel circumvents this by using an algorithm to determine operating system P-state selection (i.e., determined by CPU). This resulted in a 14% performance and efficiency increase. The algorithm implements

if performance is needed. If it is, then the P-state is increased at the cost of energy efficiency.

Skylake came out in 2015 so it is outdated compared to today's 12th and 13th generation processors. However, the article did highlight how Intel had been focusing on efficiency for a while now (Doweck et al., 2017).

## E. AMD (x86)

The ACPI (Advanced Configuration and Power Interface) defines power-saving interfaces. Performance-states (P-states) allow for selecting different performance levels at runtime.

With the AMD Zen 2 architecture, a maximum of 8 P-states can be defined, although most systems may have fewer. The actual number can be obtained by polling the P-state current limit MSR (Model Specific Register). The frequency specifications include the maximum current dissipation of a single core and the voltage ID. The processor can exceed its nominal performance with Core Performance Boost.

For Precision Boost, AMD utilizes SenseMI technology. Zen 2 incorporates idle power states with instructions monitor/mwait and I/O addresses, but it does not implement clock modulation like Intel does.

AMD does implement I/O die P-states, which allows controlling the performance and power budget of the I/O die independently from the core P-states.

AMD has replaced APM (Application Power Management) with RAPL (Running Average Power Limit), which describes registers for reading package and core power consumption.

The tests mentioned in the article were conducted on an AMD EPYC 7502 processor running Ubuntu Linux. The tests involved an idling thread on core frequencies, where one thread of a core continuously executed a constant workload (e.g., C-code: while(1)) at a minimum frequency of 1.5 GHz. The frequency was monitored using the perf stat -e cycles -I 1000 command (Schöne et al., 2021). In regard to AMD efficiency, the papers I have found refer to server type processors and not desktop or laptop. It makes it difficult to compare with Intel- and ARM-based chips in a desktop or laptop setting.

## F. Previous Test Examples

The main issue is to identify which tools can be used to test computer architectures and their performance. There are tools to benchmark the performance of processors or graphics cards (e.g. Cinebench and 3D Mark), but testing the efficiency is a different story. As well, I want to have results for more general usage (e.g., MS Office, browsing, etc).

One example of testing efficiency was a study done by a tech YouTuber named Tech Notice. They mentioned that processor benchmarks test on max performance, but not based on average use. CPUs do not tend to use 100% loads all the time. Generally workflow varies based on the tasks at hand.

His video reviews tests on AMD vs Intel starting with idle consumption, then his real-world use cases for video compilation and other tasks. When they did the comparisons they found that, for idle consumption, Intel was consuming five times less than AMD.

For his tests, he used PugetBench Benchmark to test Adobe software (e.g., Photoshop) to be able to do repeatable tests for a similar workflow of his usage. The results showed the score, min wattage, max wattage, average wattage, and performance per watt. He then calculated the Kwh/year to understand how much energy is used per year. The results show that generally most of the Intel chips that were tested were more efficient than AMD.

When it comes to testing, I would like to do something similar, but test idle, MS Office, light programming, and compilation to see what the consumption would be per hour. Idle consumption is important since the university computer labs do not switch off. Another thing to note is they do test performance per watt, so it is not as simple as making something energy efficient but poorly performant (Tech Notice, 2022).

Testing software I can repeat on multiple systems is hard to find. The software is either closed source, or it uses too much processing power to make a close to realistic case and still be able to test MS Office.

As I looked for other solutions when it

came to automated testing, I explored software like IBM Rational Tester to test desktop applications. However, it can be very power hungry as it runs the automated test. For web applications, it is not too resource intensive to create automated tests (e.g. selenium, Puppeteer). However, trying to test an application that is not a part of the web browser becomes more difficult.

Another video I watched was from Linus Tech Tips explaining how they can automate testing in their labs. They developed their own software with Python and GoLang. The reason they would want to do this is to mainstream tests among many systems (Linus Tech Tips, 2022).

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was undertaken using Typescript, NodeJS, and Puppeteer to develop tests and a systematic search through Google Scholar for published citations. Three types of automated tests were developed to simulate a workload using Word Online. There is a light, medium, and heavy workload. The devices that were to be tested were 12th Gen Intel i5-1240P, 9th Gen Intel i5, and AMD.

The light test should automate logging into Office Online, open a Word document, and type an essay for about an hour. The medium test should automate opening an hour long YouTube video, logging into Office Online, open Microsoft Teams, open Outlook, and write an essay for about an hour on Word. The heavy test should open about 20 different pages in four different browsers. The links can be completely random. The fourth browser should run everything done in the medium test.

For measuring the results I used the LHM (Libre Hardware Monitor) software to record the temperature, CPU load, RAM load, and power (W). When I ran the tests I had LHM running in the background.

We were looking for answers to the following questions:

RQ1: What is the energy efficiency and performance of ARM-based desktops, especially in the context of modern educational software and tools used in universities?

RQ2: What are effective methods to measure real-world energy consumption and performance of computer lab systems, ensuring they reflect typical student usage scenarios?

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**RQ1: What is the energy efficiency and performance of ARM-based desktops, especially in the context of modern educational software and tools used in universities?**

From the results of my tests I found that Intel manages to operate tasks at a low wattage when it comes to low performance tasks. This confirms Wechsler's statement in regard to Intel changing their processors to focus on "delivering optimal performance combined with energy efficiency" (Wechsler, 2006). It makes sense how the energy efficiency from 9th to 12th generation has improved with time.

AMD's processor is also efficient when it comes to power management. This could be due to the implementation of the AMD desktop computer. It further supports the idea that ARM is not more energy efficient than x86 computers as E. Blem, J. Menon and K. Sankaralingam said (2013).

**RQ2: What are effective methods to measure real-world energy consumption and performance of computer lab systems, ensuring they reflect typical student usage scenarios?**

Most modern processors have built-in sensors. This is to monitor voltage, wattage, temperature, and load, to name a few metrics. LHM is a good tool to record this data. You can choose which sensors to monitor and plot on a line chart. However, there is no good way to print the plot.

After running tests through Selenium and Puppeteer, I found they take a minimal amount of resources to execute. There is a preference for Puppeteer. At the time I was developing tests I needed to automate logging into my student account to use Office Online. Selenium was running an older version of Chrome that was unable to log into Office Online.

When using Puppeteer, you can run multiple browsers throughout the tests. This can be useful when you have some people who have multiple tabs and browsers open.

**Table 2.** Maximum and Minimum values for energy consumption of the light load test.

| Processor | Max (Watts) | Min (Watts) |
|---|---|---|
| 12th Gen Intel i5-1240P | 10.5 | 2 |
| 9th Gen Intel i5-9500 | 31 | 6.5 |
| AMD Ryzen 5-3550H | 13 | 3.2 |

**Table 3.** Maximum and Minimum values for energy consumption of the medium load test.

| Processor | Max (Watts) | Min (Watts) |
|---|---|---|
| 12th Gen Intel i5-1240P | 19 | 3.5 |
| 9th Gen Intel i5-9500 | 34.5 | 7 |
| AMD Ryzen 5-3550H | | |

**Table 4.** Maximum and Minimum values for energy consumption of the heavy load test.

| Processor | Max (Watts) | Min (Watts) |
|---|---|---|
| 12th Gen Intel i5-1240P | 19 | 4.5 |
| 9th Gen Intel i5-9500 | 19 | 4.5 |
| AMD Ryzen 5-3550H | 22.4 | 9.5 |

## V. CONCLUSION

I found that the architecture of the system does not matter, but how it is implemented. Both AMD and Intel have proven to deliver efficiency of their processors. For example, Intel implemented an algorithm to help manage their efficiency. However, some results from the articles are from older systems. It can be hard to compare when the tests are from outdated computers. Another point is the operating system itself can help implement efficiency of a system.

Near the end of my research I did find settings in BIOS (basic input/output system) and the operating system to have automatic turn on/off. We tried looking into adjusting the voltage, but only certain motherboards and processors allow overclocking and underclocking the frequency.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the support of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC).

Nous remercions le Conseil de recherches en sciences naturelles et en génie du Canada (CRSNG) de son soutien.

## References

Ali, Z., Tanveer, T., Aziz, S., Usman, M., & Azam, A. Reassessing the performance of ARM vs. x86 with recent technological shift of Apple, 2022 International Conference on IT and Industrial Technologies (ICIT), Chiniot, Pakistan, October 3–4, 2022, doi: 10.1109/ICIT56493.2022.9988933.

Blem, E., Menon, J., & Sankaralingam, K. (2013). A detailed analysis of contemporary arm and x86 architectures. UW-Madison Technical Report.

Doweck, J., Kao, W., Lu, A. K., Mandelblat, J., Rahatekar, A., Rappoport, L., Rotem, E., Yasin, A., & Yoaz, A. (2017). Inside 6th-generation Intel core: New microarchitecture code-named Skylake, IEEE Micro. 37(2), 52–62. doi: 10.1109/MM.2017.38.

Intel. (n.d.). The story of the Intel® 4004. https://www.intel.ca/content/www/ca/en/history/museum-story-of-intel-4004.html.

Linus Tech Tips. (2020, November 29). Apple Destroyed my Expectations:

M1 Mac Mini Review [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MkrEMjPk24.

Linus Tech Tips. (2022, October 13). How we test so much hardware: MarkBench Automated Benchmarking Tool [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mD_ch49vDtw. [Accessed: June 12, 2023].

Schöne, R., Ilsche, T., Bielert, M., Velten, M., Schmidl M., & Hackenberg, D. Energy efficiency aspects of the AMD Zen 2 architecture. (2021, September 7–10). 2021 IEEE International Conference on Cluster Computing (CLUSTER), Portland, OR. doi: 10.1109/Cluster48925.2021.00087.

Tech Notice. (2022, September 5). INTEL & AMD both lied! REAL WORLD power consumption is MESSED UP [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHWxAdKK4Xg.

Uchechukwu, A., Li, K., & Shen, Y. (2014). Energy consumption in cloud computing data centers. International Journal of Cloud Computing and Services Science 3(3), 31–48.

Wechsler, O. (2006). Inside Intel® Core™ Microarchitecture: Setting New Standards for Energy-Efficient Performance, Technology [White Paper] Intel. https://www.intel.com/pressroom/kits/core2duo/pdf/ICM_whitepaper.pdf.

Devin Gambler
Bigstone Cree Nation
Masters of Business Adminstration
Thompson Rivers University

# EVOLUTION = SOVEREIGNTY

## Abstract

The role of political leaders, as described by Leadership selection in First Nation (2023), is that "of a chief and councilors who are responsible for making decisions on behalf of the First Nation and its members." In Indigenous governance structures, these leaders embody crucial responsibilities akin to those of a chief and councilors, tasked with representing and deciding for the collective interests of their respective communities. Concurrently, the landscape of economic development within Indigenous communities is evolving, with the emergence of Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations (AEDCs) marking a pivotal juncture. The Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations (AEDC) are a growing group of organizations with many registered in British Columbia: "there are an estimated 260 AEDCs across Canada with a significant number concentrated in Ontario and British Columbia, reflecting the distribution of Canadian First Nations" (White, 2016). This article delves into the symbiotic relationship between First Nations' governance models and the trajectory of AEDCs, exploring avenues for growth and the transformative potential within the current leadership paradigm.

## Separation

There are few successful First Nations governance models that exist separately from First Nations' economic development corporations. In comparison to their area's municipal and provincial counterparts, most Nations struggle with lack of infrastructure, capacity, population, budget size, and socioeconomic indicators of success. Infrastructure includes roads, sewage systems, water treatment, and buildings among other facilities. The infrastructure investment deficit across First Nations in Canada has been estimated by some experts to be between $25 billion and $30 billion, with some citing even higher figures (The Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships, 2016). Capacity is the human capital in terms of experience and education for those working within economic development. It also refers to the structure of administration and finances in a policy and working model. Population sizes of First Nations that would enable the maintenance of housing and other infrastructure needs are low. The budget sizes of First Nations are also low due to the existing funding gap as well as low revenues from own source ventures from Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations (AEDCs). According to the fact sheet summarized by Nation Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (2013), as quoted in Stokes et al. (2019), "Indigenous communities need a stable socio-economic future, based on principles of social equity, economic vitality and sustainability" (p.17 ).

Since the early 2000s, many Indigenous communities have witnessed the emergence and dramatic growth of a diverse number of individual and community-based entrepreneurial and economic development activities (Conference Board of Canada, 2017). Although there is hope, and while change is emerging at a steady pace, only a few Nations are experiencing successful

outcomes while most are struggling with inconsistency. With more than 260 AEDCs and approximately 600 First Nations in Canada, there are some similarities among local processes and institutions (White, 2016). The research conducted by the Harvard Project (2005) " summarized by Camp, on American Indian Economic Development over the past 30 years calls for a separation of business (like AEDCs) and politics (like Chief and Council) among the governance institutions of Indigenous communities where entities are often collectively owned and operated, unlike their non-Indigenous counterparts (Camp, 2005). How do the few differ from the majority? Are Nations that are struggling willing to learn and implement what's been done?

To look at solutions, we must first examine how municipal, provincial and First Nations collectives create revenue. Municipal and provincial governments draw their revenue for their budgets mainly from taxation (within their jurisdiction). First Nations are just beginning to access this area; however, it is limited especially with the provinces' jurisdictions. First Nations that are just starting down the path of taxation use, in many instances, government funding as their main source of revenue combined with own source revenue (corporations' profit, impact benefit agreements, etc.) Traditional sources of financing for non-Indigenous governments, businesses, and households typically include banks, credit unions, and government-owned financial institutions. However, due to systemic discrimination, certain legal barriers against communities, and the perceived increased risk associated with borrowing among Indigenous communities (Schembri, 2023), these communities have significantly less access to market finance than the rest of Canada (Schembri, 2023). First Nations economic development corporations are under-funded and lack capacity in terms of education or experience. According to the Aboriginal Business Survey 2016 (CCAB,2016), 68% of Indigenous business proprietors indicted that the main barrier is of run the business is either recruiting or finding skilled personnel, while 31% highlight the critical issue of securing funds (Hageman et al, 2024). The First Nations business run, in some cases, as a nonprofit with staff filling multiple roles minus the pay for daunting tasks ahead of them. Most progressive Nations are well underway to growing their own source revenue to fund their government and businesses.

## Evolution

How do First Nations help their respective economic development corporations grow and what is the next step of their journey? The next steps in the evolution of Indigenous developmental leaders would be to pool their resources and attract more private sector capital (Leach & Krawchenko, 2021). Specifically, venture capital is what First Nations in Canada should look to attract, as an alignment of investment goals can occur with some adjustments. Venture capitalists were attracted to a non-politicized board as it was stable and well structured. In fact, when it comes to First Nations in Canada, all enterprises with a profit index score of zero lacked an independent board. The implication is that a board that serves as a buffer between the (inherently) political tasks of setting tribal direction and strategy and the more specialized and technical tasks of managing enterprises contributes to success (Jorgensen, 2005). The research backed by the Harvard Project has shown that an independent board is vital for success. Essentially, the research of the Harvard Project finds that poverty in "Indian Country" is a political problem—not an economic one (Jorgensen, 2005).

Impacts that relate to this management structure, one that promotes independence for the economic development corporation, are manifold. Enterprises whose management is insulated from elected bodies (referred to as insulated enterprises) face odds of profitability of nearly seven-to-one, whereas enterprises where elected leaders participate in management face odds of profitability little better than one-to-one (Jorgensen, 2005). I have personally seen the success of First Nations economic development corporations that are insulated. Insulated enterprises attract highly skilled talent and decrease

turnover due to a stable work environment. Having worked in economic development for several First Nations, I have witnessed highly educated and experienced individuals refusing to work for their communities. Their main reasons include low pay, politics, the involvement of Chief and Council, and a lack of job security. The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study conducted by Environics Institute in 2009 shows that the majority of 18- to 24-year-olds who moved to the city did so to pursue an education (57 per cent), or a career (47 per cent). "Most urban Aboriginal peoples do not intend to return to their communities of origin to live permanently in the future, but some (first and second generation) either plan to return or remain undecided" (The Environics Institute, 2009, p. 35)

If some of your best players aren't even considering playing for the home team, then it's an organizational problem. First Nations need to focus on taxation as a stable form of revenue to fund administration, infrastructure, housing, social services, and cultural preservation, and to attract investment. This ensures growth and ensures that investment of profits creates sustainability and long-term growth. While all First Nations may pass bylaws related to the taxation of land under the Indian Act Amendment and Replacement Act (June 2023), the First Nations Fiscal Management Act (FMA) reaffirms the enhanced authority of participating First Nation governments over financial management, property taxation, and local revenues, as well as financing for infrastructure and economic development. First Nations may pass bylaws related to taxation pursuant to section 83 of the Indian Act Amendment and Replacement Act (June 2023). However, while section 83 affirms powers over individual First Nations' fiscal management, it is limited in scope and jurisdiction (First Nations Tax Commission, n.d.). Economic development corporations need to focus on procurement, community benefit, and partnerships to support their revenue generation. We can observe how independence of the economic development corporation structure can promote results and ensure the growth needed for the journey ahead.

## Sovereignty

Sovereignty for First Nations involves letting go of their power and authority over economic development. They must do this for three main reasons: liability, capacity, and profits. Corporate Directors can be held liable for decisions made during their terms of service. Canada Revenue Services defines directors' liability to have occurred if "directors did not exercise the degree of care, diligence, and skill ('due diligence') required to prevent the failure to deduct, withhold, remit, or pay" (Canada Revenue Agency, 2014). The leading case on corporate criminal liability in Canada is Canadian Dredge and Dock Co. v. The Queen [1985] 1 S.C.R. 662, in which the Supreme Court of Canada accepted the "identification" doctrine as the basis for liability (Government of Canada, 2002). This is why it's imperative to have directors that have the education and experience to make sound decisions to prevent liability. Most First Nations lack the capacity, experience, and education required to make informed decisions as a corporate director as they are in a dual role of being Chief and Council, which adds to the risk of actions the corporation takes. Often, they are put into positions where conflicts of interest may occur. They may also lack a policy that is neutral to handle disputes with people or other corporations. First Nations need to allow professionals to do what is needed with the oversight by corporate directors to drive profits. This separation will allow new opportunities, such as partnerships and venture capital investments.

> "If some of your best players aren't even considering playing for the home team, then it's an organizational problem."
>
> - Devin Gambler

Sovereignty for economic development corporations involves ensuring that good governance and the drive for profits work hand in hand. They must do this through three main approaches: structure, partnerships, and procurement. A good corporate

structure allows board representation that enhances and supports the overall corporation. The board doesn't get involved in the day to day. They work through the CEO and both support and communicate through their representative. The structure also includes legal and accounting assistance to ensure compliance.

Partnerships are key to growth and many economic development corporations are taking advantage of these mechanisms. AEDCs are major sources of employment for the community/communities they serve. An average of 278 employees works for the AEDCs interviewed and their subsidiary businesses, with a large portion (69%) reporting one to 150 employees. This represents 12,220 jobs across all 45 AEDCs interviewed (Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business, 2020). Federal procurement is a cornerstone, especially on major projects. A minimum of 5% of the value of federal contracts are awarded to Indigenous businesses (Garneau, 2022). These are highlighted examples of strategies that First Nations economic development corporations need to focus on to ensure good governance and profitable growth.

## References


Camp, R. R. (2005). Aboriginal land rights and development: Corporations and trust. International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business, 2(2), 134–148.

Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business. (2020). National perspectives on Indigenous prosperity: Aboriginal economic development corporation capacity. https://www.ccab.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Doc1-r1.pdf.

Conference Board of Canada—Northern and Aboriginal Policy. (2017). Barriers to Aboriginal entrepreneurship and options to overcome them. The National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) and Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC). https://nacca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Research-Module-3_NACCA-BDC_Feb14_2017.pdf.

First Nations Tax Commission. (n.d.). Overview: Regulatory frameworks. First Nations Tax Commission. https://fntc.ca/overview-section83-fma/.

Garneau, M. Hon. (Chair) (2022). Barriers to economic development in Indigenous communities: Report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/INAN/Reports/RP11714230/inanrp02/inanrp02-e.pdf.

Government of Canada. (2002). Corporate criminal liability—Discussion Paper, March 2002.. https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/jhr-jdp/dp-dt/bkgr-cont.html.

Government of Canada. (2023). Leadership selection in First Nations. https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1323195944486/1565366893158.

Hageman, A. (2024). Chapter 27 Financing Business . In Economic Aspects of the Indigenous Experience in Canada (2nd ed., pp. 311–313)., Queen's University.

Jorgensen, M. & Jonathan, T. (2005). What determines Indian economic success? Evidence from tribal and individual Indian enterprises. The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. Wiener Center for Social Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Leach, D. M. & Krawchenko, T. (2021, November 29–30). A place-based view on First Nations access to credit and capital: Aboriginal financial institutions. Symposium on the Indigenous Economy by the Bank of Canada/Tulo Centre/Reserve Bank of New Zealand, Ottawa. https://www.academia.edu/62191740/A_place_based_view_on_First_Nations_access_to_credit_and_capital_Aboriginal_Financial_Institutions.

NCCIH. (2023). ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS A SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS HEALTH. NCCIH KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS. https://www.nccih.ca/docs/determinants/FS-EconomicDevelopmentSDOH-2020-EN.pdf

Schembri, L. L. (2023). The Next Generation: Innovating to Improve Indigenous

Access to Finance in Canada. Fraser institute. https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/next-generation-innovating-to-improve-indigenous-access-to-finance-in-canada.pdf

Stokes, D.M., Marshall, B.G., & Veiga, M.C. (2019). Indigenous participation in resource developments: Is it a choice? The Extractive Industries and Society, 6, 50-57.

The Environics Institute. (2009). Full report - urban aboriginal peoples study. UAPS research. https://www.uaps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/UAPS-FULL-REPORT.pdf

White, K. (2016). "We want doors opened, not slammed shut": Aboriginal economic development corporations and public policy case studies from Saskatchewan. [Thesis, University of Saskatchewan], I-Portal.

I have come to understand Knowledge Makers is much more than just a research program – it is about students translating their research into positive change in their community and then turning their passion into skills they can return to their communities.

~ *Chuying Jiao*

# Marion Erickson

*Dakelh*
*Master of Education*
*Thompson Rivers University*


# DAKELH ORAL HISTORY AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: VISIONING A TWO-EYED SEEING APPROACH TO SUMMER CAMP LEADERSHIP

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on a personal experience with leadership in relationship to the concept of transformational leadership. This research seeks to better understand an experience that required conflict resolution. The narration of events is intended to help future leaders with decision making. I will briefly describe a situation and share my observations and reflections about what I learned. I will connect my observations and reflections to relevant theories that were taught to me during my times as Masters of Education student along with other materials that I find relevant to this leadership situation. To conclude, I will indicate what I have learned and how I will apply this learning in the future.

My name is Marion Erickson, daughter of Susan Erickson, member of Lhts'umusyoo (Beaver Clan). I was raised with a strong background of cultural knowledge despite being raised in care with the Ministry of Children and Families (MCFD) as a teenager. After aging out of care, I returned to my community and took on a job as a Traditional Knowledge Researcher. Following this experience, I went to university to study Community Development. My Indigenous community seemed very confused as to what Community Development was, they thought that it meant that I had skills like a social worker, though I had taken social work classes I was not trained for frontline care of vulnerable people. I preface this conflict I must admit I was hired by a non-Indigenous person and was placed into a position of power for which I did not have any educational background. I had no suicide intervention training, no first aid, and most of my degree was focused on policy development and not frontline care of vulnerable populations.

Learning to lead was a life lesson for me. In the summer of 2018, shortly after graduating with a Bachelor of Public Administration and Community Development, I was hired as a Summer Camp Leader for a sub-contractor for a non-profit organization. This summer camp was for Indigenous teens in care with MCFD for the Province of British Columbia on behalf of a First Nation community. Many of the children who attended the camp were living in non-Indigenous households and were differently abled having conditions such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, and Childhood Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The main lead of the camp was a person who, like me, was a former child in care. This person had developed good relationships with the teens in the camp, however, was very rude towards the staff and often did not treat staff with mutual respect or comradery. It appeared as though she was meaner towards the staff who were Indigenous, and the community noted a high turnover rate amongst Indigenous staff at the non-profit as a result. Knowing this high-turn-over I took the job anyways as it was the first job I could get after graduating.

## The Situation

I was instructed to bring some of the teen girls up a hill for a hike. During this hike there were many teens who ran ahead and went with a very fit younger camp lead. I took the back. In the back of the group were a few

girls with a very poor attitude about the hike. The hike was not an optional task; so, I understood why some of the teens decided that this was just not for them. Regardless, it was my job to ensure they all kept going and that we all meet up safely with the group ahead.

In traditional Dakelh culture, telling young people stories of the past is important. Telling traditional stories is a way to teach appreciation for cultural values as well as provide energy and a source of power. Telling traditional stories can revitalize the mind body and spirit in a holistic manner (Archibald, 2008). Our traditional oral stories bring strength and connection to kids in care as they provide them something they can take with them when they are away from their Dakelh culture, traditions, and community connections.

While walking up the hill, I began to tell the girls oral history stories. I told the girls who were going very slow as many stories as I could, and while they were listening they had forgotten about their negative feelings about the hike. They began to walk a little faster to remain in earshot of the stories. The youth remained very engaged with the storytelling process. When we got to the top of the hill where everyone else was sitting, the girls that were slow at the beginning told me tell these stories to their friends, who were other youth in care. After this hike, every evening before we went to sleep, they would ask me to tell them the legends from our people. I would pick stories that would specifically benefit teen girls, and I even changed one of our legends to benefit the girls who attended the camp for example:

One story I told was of the man who wanted a wife who can make waterproof mukluks. He was a very handsome man, who was a good hunter, and came from a long line of Duneza' and Tsekeza' He told the elders of the village that he will take a wife. This wife will have to know how to make waterproof mukluks, which was never done before. The elders told their granddaughters and three of the granddaughters were of age and wanted to marry him, and so they set forth trying to make the first ever pair of waterproof mukluks.

The first woman tried using birch bark but it got wet and didn't work. The second woman tried using balsam sap, which she made into glue and that didn't work. The third woman, Sashun, was very beautiful. Her hair was long and black like the crow's feathers. Her nice brown skin matched moose hide after it had been smoked. Sashun prayed to the gods to provide her with the knowledge she needed.

Ust'as, the trickster, was hunting when he came along and found her praying. Ust'as asked her what she wanted. She explained that she wanted waterproof mukluks. Ust'as told her, "I will give you the knowledge you need to make the mukluks, however, I will need something in return." Ust'as said, "I want your beauty." Sashun agreed and let Ust'as take her beauty.

She was a smart woman and so she made conditions on the deal, she negotiated that the person who she is making these mukluks for had to accept her mukluks, otherwise she would get her beauty back. Ust'as agreed. Ust'as showed her a special way to sew beaver-hide inside of moose-hide moccasins so that they will be waterproof.

As she walked away from Ust'as with her new waterproof mukluks her hair turned scraggly as if no one had ever brushed it and her face grew bumps as if she was not washing her face every day, and her clothes became dirty and unclean, and her teeth turned yellow as if she had not brushed them daily. When she showed up to go and meet the man, he took one look at her and laughed. He said, "the two other women who made the mukluks couldn't figure it out, I doubt this hag could" and so he put the mukluks on and stood in the water and his feet stayed dry. He said he could not accept the mukluks because the woman was just too ugly.

She walked away from that man, mukluks in hand, and her scraggly hair turned back to soft and black and the bumps on her face went away as her complexion cleared as it normally was since she washed her face daily, her clothes immediately became clean again, and her teeth turned back nice and white. She was once again a beautiful woman. The man, bewildered, noticed what she had become and pitied himself for not seeing her true beauty. She took the mukluks home and made them fit her feet. She became the best beaver hunter in the village due to her waterproof mukluks

and provided generously to the community. She married a handsome man from another village and had many children. The other women in the village did not marry the man either because they felt that he had shown his true colours when he had demonstrated that he was far too vain.

I changed this story from its original version to help teach the importance of hygiene which many teenagers may be just learning. I also changed the original story away including a character that had a physical deformation that was fixed by a medicine man as I wanted the girls to recognize their true beauty. When describing the women in the story who made the moccasins for the man in the story, I described the girls who were participating in the camp. I changed the story because I recognized that, in mainstream media, usually skinny, blonde-haired, blue-eyed women are depicted as being beautiful. I described a beautiful young native girl with characteristics like their own. The transformation that the girl experienced was one that I tried my best to describe as things that someone could easily change, such as brushing hair, brushing teeth, washing clothes, as to emphasize that she was already beautiful, despite the transformation. Some traditional people might not like how I changed this story; however, as an Indigenous feminist, I enjoyed changing the legend to suit the needs of this modern world.

This is example of how our stories can teach concepts such as the importance of negotiation skills, values such as the impacts of vanity, beauty standards, and morals. It is also evidence of boundaries and taking care of self, knowing how to value oneself. Walking away from someone who is mean is for the best. Witnessing how someone treats people around them is a good indicator of how they might treat others. In Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit Archibald (2008) explains the storytelling is a way of honoring and respecting the individuals and the group. Archibald (2008) emphasizes that one should not simply accept the meaning of the story and that a story can have different teachings to it that are revealed to the listener at different stages of life, when the time is right" (Law Courts Education Society, 1994 as cited in Archibald, 2008).

When the camp was over, I was driving one teen girl back to her foster family. I stopped in at the office and the young teen girl, who I had told many stories to on the hill, took it upon herself to talk to her social worker. She marched into that social workers office and told her social worker many things. She explained how frustrated she was with the foster care system, she talked about how she wished she could go home to her Dakelhne family and that she was missing her people. She demanded that her social worker not leave her case as it was for two weeks but rather assign someone else to ensure that her needs are met in the summer while her social worker took an annually scheduled vacation leave. I let her talk, I let her tell her story. I stood awestruck and bewildered as she told her story. She articulated herself in the best way her teenage self could muster, which meant that in some incidences she used name calling. I empathized with the name calling on the basis of her young age because she was just learning how to communicate respectfully. When she was done talking, she slumped on the ground and cried, her long black hair covered her eyes, and she sobbed in hallway and said "I just want to go home". The youth was then quickly and harshly told by the non-Dakelh social worker to stop crying to get up and to leave the office with very little reassurance that her story would be honoured or that anything would be done. This interaction reminded me of the stories I had heard from residential school survivors about nuns who would scream at the children who were crying and missing home. The nuns would yell and say "Shut up! Quit your crying!" I quit that job shortly after experiencing what came after this event. The manager stated that I had taught the girls bad things. She stated that my interactions with the youth resulted in the girl becoming rebellious. Needless to say, I did not stay in that position very long for a variety of reasons, however, this story in particular stood out to me.

The following summer I was hired to develop and manage an Indigenous Summer Science camp for Indigenous children to become interested in joining health careers. This camp was a great success and my stories were appreciated by the children and those in

positions higher than mine, specifically by my boss Dr. Sarah De Leeuw whose work on combatting anti-Indigenous racism in healthcare is inspiring a new generation of Indigenous folks to join healthcare positions. I was placed within the organization in a position that made sense for my skills which meant that I was being utilized for my administration leadership and the front-end staff that were hired were capable and had the certifications to keep the children safe. We have since implemented Indigenous summer science camps in over 7 Indigenous communities across northern BC. Storytelling has been woven strongly into all of these camps, which has once again empowered marginalized Indigenous youth to tell their stories and demand change in their own lives. We used storytelling for leadership endeavors, and my passion for using this type of pedagogy was strengthened by my experiences as a student of Shelly Johnson (Mukwa Musayett) who taught Privileging Indigenous oral traditions and storywork.

## Indigenous Leadership

Indigenous leadership style is more than simply the telling of stories, though this plays a big part. In describing Indigenous leadership style, Cajete, G.A. (2016) explains "[Indigenous] leaders who could create and maintain group solidarity reflected this affection for their followers. Followers, in turn, cared for and respected their leader. This affective relationship between leaders and followers combined with their adherence to a set of core cultural and community values helped many Indigenous communities survive colonization" (para 1). This description holds true for the leadership style I was taught through the story I described previously. It demonstrates how our people taught the importance of collectivity and how good behavior and values are rewarded through strengthening community connections. In contrast, Transformational Leadership is explained as having three basic functions. First, transformational leaders serve the needs of others Secondly, they charismatically lead, set a vision, instill trust, confidence and pride in working with them and thirdly, with the intellectual stimulation they offer followers of the same caliber as the leader (Castanheira & Costa, 2011 as cited in Balyer, 2012). Transformational leaders focus on capacity building for the purpose of organizational change (Bayler, 2012) whereas many Dakelh leaders focus on capacity building for the purpose of community change and the longevity of the natural environment for future generations. Bayler, (2012) explains that transformational leaders work to increase their subordinates' skills and enhance their knowledge from their own experiences. In Dakelh traditional ways of knowing all community members are responsible to and for encouraging the growth of people in the community and people will pass knowledge through oral history especially valuing the knowledge of elders. Dakelh culture includes the added complexity of our clans that were inherited matrilineally.

When reflecting upon the environment of a summer camp as being a place of learning, I consider how Transformational Leadership impacts school environments. Many times, the types of activities the students do in schoolwork very well for summer camp environments. Hall et al. (2008) claim that Transformational Leadership approach can help school administrators become exceptional leaders. I wondered if Transformational Leadership would support a summer camp environment. I then reflected on a meeting on the topic of Education in Nakazdli and Ts'ohdai our hereditary chief notes that leadership practices brought in by Settlers does not support the revitalization of our language and culture and often times hinder the efforts of our community in passing down our culture and traditions to the next generation because they focus too much on teaching everything in English values and culture and through western ways of knowing (Ts'ohdai, 2021). They also usually have been born from a leadership style that has been developed under colonial governance structures which hinders our efforts to strengthen our own Balhats governance which has within it, its own conflict resolution style. Over the past few weeks, I have been deeply reflecting on the difference between Dakelh leadership styles of governance and colonial governance. Under colonial governance, many times Roberts Rules of Order are used. These rules require that someone be the chair, and the chair decides who speaks much like in

colonial times when lords would attempt to get the attention of the king. In Dakelh leadership style, the hereditary chiefs ensure that what needs to be said by their clan is said. Sometimes this involves giving each person time to talk, and other times this involves hiring a "speaker" who speaks on behalf of the clan. This speaker will gather all the thoughts and important information from the clan and ensure that all is said. In my lifetime I have recognized there is a benefit to using Roberts Rules of Order, but also, some very huge flaws. For instance, the smallest voice, the most vulnerable, or the introverted, are largely ignored and in many cases conflicts can evolve from the process of governing in this way and the hard feelings are never resolved. Whereas within the Dakelh style leadership, I have seen a naturally very shy man behave as very strong leader and bring peace amongst his people. Introverts can be easily represented by the speaker, and any hurt feelings that evolve from the process are dealt with immediately through a ceremony called "wiping away of the tears".

Indigenous leadership is stated to work towards "transforming competition into cooperation, promoting group harmony, facilitating unity, understanding and working with group and individual talents to sustain community within a social, cultural, and spiritual framework of practices were the foundation of historic Indigenous community leadership" (Cajete, 2016, para 1) whereas transformational leadership has seven dimensions at schools. These seven dimensions are: building school vision and establishing school goals, providing intellectual stimulation, individualized support, modeling best practices and organizational values, setting high academic standard expectations, creating a productive school culture, and fostering participation in decisions.

When thinking about the above situation the first camp that I worked at tried to support a transformational approach. Upon a search of their website, I noticed that they indeed had a vision statement. Transformational Leadership expresses the importance of developing a collective vision for the future of the organization. It focuses on serving others, which I feel is culturally relevant to Indigenous peoples. In reflecting upon the vision that was developed for this organization, I feel that it is just some fancy words on a website but is not followed by the staff or leadership. The leadership in this organization did not provide individualized support, nor did they model best practices. The organizational values were not expressed to the staff. This became apparent when I was on my way to the camp on bus where I expressed my happiness for working for and Indigenous community, I was told by a staffer that I was confused, that her position within the organization was very complex, probably beyond my comprehension and that this staffer did not, in fact, work for the community but rather stated that they work for the province. I was very shocked by this comment as I recognized the leadership within the highest level of this organization to be, not the province, but rather Indigenous communities who were represented on the board. As a new employee I had to correct this staffer and explain to her that, I am not confused, nor misinformed and that her position within the organization was not confusing to me. She worked for the communities. The communications that I had with the manager did not demonstrate the value of setting high expectations. In fact, during the conversation I had with the manager seemed to diminish the communities' ability to care for the children. The organizational culture that allowed for myself, and evidently others who had my job before, to be bullied did not work towards a productive culture that fostered participation in decisions. This negative experience for me presents challenges that exist in my community with regards to working in a positive working environment. I strongly believe that the leadership in this office tried unsuccessfully to replicate a transformational leadership style. Perhaps the best alternative to replacing staff would be to teach cultural humility as well as implement Dakelh conflict resolution styles into the leadership processes. This might bring the organization towards a more meaningful and culturally informed and community accountable leadership style.

## Connections between Theory and Practice

When considering a Two-eyed Seeing

approach for future camp leadership I must think critically about the goals and vision of the communities for which we will be interacting with. I must also ensure the leadership approach does not only simply have a vision but also follows the great aspects of transformational leadership, which allow for positive working environments that grows, not only the leader's skills, but also the subordinates. When considering implementing the Two-Eyed Seeing approach for leading change Indigenous communities, I take in to account that "Two-Eyed Seeing provides a means to share perspectives and to identify the most workable solutions, bringing out the best of both Western and Indigenous knowledge." (Hovey et al., 2017). The Two-eyed Seeing approach to understanding leadership and utilizing the skills of both Western and Dakelh ways of knowing benefits both the communities and children we will be interacting with. Additionally, I find that many of the aspects of Transformational Leadership style will help our endeavor to empower young Indigenous children to take on health careers. When working towards community development in youth programming and my own style of leadership, I think that developing a vision, and staying true to that vision would be helpful and implementation of that would go a long way for the success of future community development endeavors.

## Lessons Learned

When I think about conflicts, and how they have formed me I recognize that the way that conflict is navigated is culturally informed. Our past conflicts shape us as leaders. The conflict that I described occurred early in my career. Taking time to reflect upon these conflicts and share an understanding of how to navigate conflicts is important for those who are learning to lead. Upon beginning work, I evaluated the vision articulated by the organization and believed Storytelling fit well within the vision of the organization. I recognize that the girl I supported had many feelings that she wished to express and did not have the words to say them before the camp. Due to the Dakelh stories I told, she learned to advocate for herself and was able to share her feelings, speak her truth and tell her story. She is just learning to be a storyteller and so her story hurt the person she was telling it to. When consulting with the resources provided, one sentence stood out to me "one had to be very careful of one's words" (Hall, 1992). I do not expect a young teenager to know this lesson just yet. It would be preferable to allow her space to express her emotions, acknowledge what she is saying and then offer her ways in which she could improve her communication so that it would serve her and her family going forward. As for my own story, I make no apologies for radicalizing a group of girls who were experiencing being youth in care, as a former youth in care myself, I was being who I needed when I was in a similar situation.

## References

Archibald, J. (2008). Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit. UBC Press.

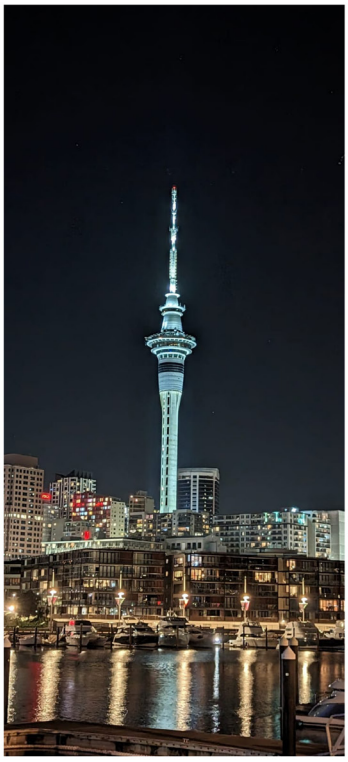
Cajete, G. A. (2016). Indigenous education and the development of indigenous community leaders. Leadership (London, England), 12(3), 364-376. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715015610412

Hovey, R. B., Delormier, T., McComber, A. M., Lévesque, L., & Martin, D. (2017). Enhancing Indigenous health promotion research through two-eyed seeing: A hermeneutic relational process. Qualitative Health Research, 27(9), 1278-1287. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317697948

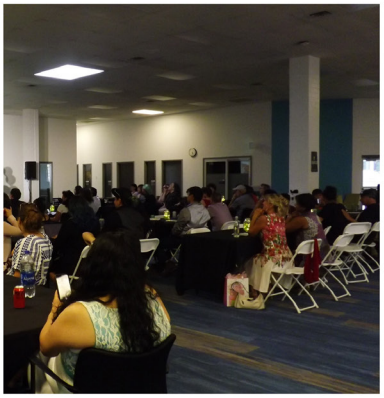
Marshall, M., Marshall, A., & Bartlett, C. (2015). Two-eyed seeing in medicine. In M. Greenwood, S de Leeuw & N.M. Lindsay (Eds.), Determinants of Indigenous Peoples health in Canada: Beyond the Social (2nd ed., pp. 16-24). Canadian Scholars' Press.

Ts'ohdai, (2021). Pathways forward community engagement series. Education. [Virtual Community Forum for the Pathways Forward Agreement] Nak'azdli Whut'en. Peter Erickson is a Hereditary Chief of the Dakelh Nation.

Balyer, A. (2012). Transformational leadership behaviors of school principals: A qualitative research based on teachers' perceptions. International Online Journal of Educational Sciences, 4(3), 581-591).




All My
Relations



Kirsten Alfred
Dakelh
Bachelor of Arts
Thompson Rivers University

# TRIP TO AOTEAROA

The trip to Aotearoa-New Zealand was a truly uplifting experience for me. After years of schooling and going through the normal and abnormal stressors of life, I seemed to have been sensitized to the urban lifestyle.

**Picture 1.**

I, like most people, leave the reserve to find more opportunities and to sometimes escape from a poor lifestyle. I grew up on the reserve and have good memories, but the negative experiences cloud even the best of times. I'd rather not dwell on this because there is so much good happening in my community and this place is part of me. I'm learning how to situate myself as someone reconnecting to my culture and I can see how fortunate I am to grasp the knowledge I do have. Growing up and taking part in the balhats system (potlach system), learning how to harvest fish and berries, picking up on Wetsuweten Hinic (language), and getting to know the yintah (land), are pieces I have accumulated despite circumstances and barriers of access to my culture. I didn't realize how much I grieved the absence of my culture until we were introduced to the Māori world. I still cannot get over the feeling I had on landing back in Tk'emlúps (Kamloops) and during the drive back to my apartment because it was such a strange and disorienting feeling of displacement but also an urge to act on what had been idle for some time. In other words, I saw my life and patterns of going through the motions from a different perspective and knew that I wanted change. Exploring and travelling can be an altering experience because it takes us out of the mundane, but at the same time this visit was comforting and reminded me of home. I want to hold onto this feeling moving forward and remember how important it is to connect with history, culture, and people from home but also where I currently reside, the Secwepemc'ulecw.

**Picture 2.**

Personally, I loved the planned activities and communal style accommodations.

Because I grew up with a large family I am accustomed to similar social gatherings with lots of food and storytelling and having fun. The immediate introduction to Waikato University with a pōwhiri was energizing as we weren't sure what to expect after a long flight and jumping of time zones. The pōwhiri is a traditional welcoming ceremony and is situated at a marae where the host sets the ground of relations with the guests. We were briefed on what to do as per protocol and entered the marae after a karanga, a call from a female representative of the hosts.

Picture 3.

The marae reminds me of a longhouse because it serves the same function of holding social gatherings and is usually significantly placed—ancestrally and/or near landmarks. This holds true to longhouses in my culture as well. For example, there were a number of longhouses near the Widzen Kwa' Canyon (Witset, BC) as well as on distant territories for nomadic purposes. Longhouses held the balhats and also served as a meeting place, including food and gifts, as well as important

Picture 4.

decision-making. This comparison is not to reduce the impact of each traditional ceremony as there are certainly differences.

The pōwhiri also contains an exchange of speeches and songs which indicate respect and gratitude between both parties. The guests gift the hosts and it closes with a hongi, a pressing of foreheads and noses together. Kai (food) is then served and then the space is open for visiting. This cultural practice is pretty amazing to experience and helped

"I want to hold onto this feeling moving forward and remember how important it is to connect with history, culture, and people from home but also where I currently reside

It is a gift to have shared knowledge with the Māori and I'm so grateful to have been a part of this program."

- Kirsten Alfred

us build connections fairly quickly. Near the end of the week, our hosts informed us that the scheduled planning was structured like a pōwhiri with the activities corresponding to this cultural practice.

We were first introduced with lectures of theology and lessons on Te Reo Māori. Although a lot us were still adjusting to the time zone, it was engaging and noteworthy to have history and language specific courses at a university level. This is something that is progressing for my culture but is different for nations across Turtle Island. Just this year I was able to attend a graduation ceremony for one of the largest groups of language fluency diplomas and certificates at Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. My hometowns of Burns Lake and Witset filled the room with love and fierce pride for each graduate; it was especially moving to witness our elders receive recognition for their life work in language and culture.

Some of the biggest motivations are in these moments of cultural significance and in taking part in events that highlight the power of language revitalization. This makes space

**Picture 5.**

for me and others to learn and speak our native languages.

In Aotearoa, our activities consisted of additional pōwhiri introductions as each host shared knowledge pertaining to history, land, ecology, and important sovereignty initiatives. Language was interwoven in each Tikanga (practices and protocols) and is wonderfully integrated into younger generations. One of

**Picture 6.**

the visits was to Pureora which consisted of forest activities, traditional medicine making, and learning of songs led by the Tamaraki (children). It was beyond cool to listen to them readily speak Te Reo Māori and to share pieces of their culture with us. This education piece sits with me from time to time because of how Indigenous people in Canada were similarly indoctrinated through oppression and colonial policies. The legacy of Residential Schools continues to unearth the historical and intergenerational trauma of Indigenous people. This importance of ancestral, historical, and familial lineage is similar to what I know of my culture. Māori refers to this as Whakapapa—genealogy, Tūpuna—ancestors, and i ngā rā o mua—the days before us/ the days in front of us. These are important amalgamations for Māori and within my culture as a Wet'suwet'en. Matrilineal lineage is recognized in the balhats system, with the five clans: Gilseyhu (Big Frog), Laksilyu (Small Frog), Gitdumden (Wolf/Bear), Laksamshu (Fireweed) and Tsayu (Beaver). Simply put, this governance system outlines responsibilities of hereditary chiefs and the clan members to adhere to strict protocols the ancestors set before us. So, despite the differences in culture there are similarities, and with these vital pieces of history and culture, this trip has driven me to continuously practice and integrate these values.

I often wish that I had more guidance in these realms and especially during my time away from home. Throughout this visit, I was

Picture 7.

prompted to reflect on my own culture and what opportunities are available through language, medicine, cultural activities, and connection with community. It is a gift to have shared knowledge with the Māori and I'm so grateful to have been a part of this program.

When leaving Te Kokanganui-a-Noho in TeKuiti, one of the elders advised me to follow my own accord and not what anyone else wants of me, because people will always try to influence me when it comes to culture and anything else. I was taken aback by this message, as I did not previously speak with the elder but the message deeply resonated. Cultural revitalization is expanding on all fronts for Indigenous communities as sovereign practices lead the way, for and by Indigenous people. The relationships and connections with everyone involved in Knowledge Makers has been remarkable and I'm glad to be a part of this program. The cultural influence of this visit to Aotearoa-New Zealand will remain with me as I continue in my personal and educational pursuits.

Awitzah.

tabï misiyh
kukwstsétsemc
tēnā koutou

Ellis Rondquist
Métis
Bachelor of Social Work
Thompson Rivers University

# RECLAIMING SEX AND PLEASURE

To start this project, I wanted to state my current social location and speak to my identity to assist readers in understanding my positionality and why I am writing a paper on reclaiming Indigeneity, sex, and pleasure. I wanted to situate my Métis heritage in its current stage of reclamation, allowing potential readers to better comprehend how Indigenous sex and pleasure are viewed and explored through scholarship and stories. However, I found myself stuck on the question I wanted to ask, how I wanted to pose that question, and how to even begin discussing my location. So, I began exploring the ideas around reclamation, including the reclamation of heritage, the body, and sexual pleasure. In my readings on Indigenous methodologies, I came across Absolon and Willett (2005) who asserted that "neutrality and objectivity do not exist in research since all research is conducted and observed through human epistemological lenses" (p. 97). They further suggested that writing to position ourselves at the beginning of our work is necessary since "the only thing we can write about with authority is ourselves" (p. 97). As such, this paper is now an autoethnographic exploration of reclaiming my self—heritage, the body, pleasure—and why these acts of reclaiming are a rebellion against colonial structures of power and domination. To resist western European academic systems of writing, and to work toward embodying some aspects of storytelling traditions within a written framework, I am also using a form of textual resistance. We are having a conversation, this is a story, and there is communication between you the reader and myself the writer.

## My Heritage

Understanding and connecting to my Métis heritage is an ongoing process. At times it feels as if it is an intangible and nebulous entity that I will never understand, while at others it feels like it's always been there. For me, my connections exist within memories and stories. It is in my grandfather's smile as he fiddled, or how he hummed while he tuned his guitar. It is in the recordings of him singing songs he wrote himself to a room full of family. It is in the warmth of curling up on his lap and listening to him tell stories while he shared the bag of his favourite salty Hawkins Cheezies. It was in the house where my family gathered and the massive yard my cousins and I would explore for fallen acorns and the shallow little ponds that sometimes filled with minnows after it rained. It is in the article I read by a Christine Welsh—"Voices of the Grandmothers: Reclaiming a Metis Heritage" (1991)—as I had just begun to write this paper. The article talks about a single personal struggle for Métis reconnection and speaks specifically about the author's ancestor Margaret Taylor. The article was written two years before I was born, and it speaks of her search for and discovery of a history of what she called the "silence of assimilation" (p. 23). Her search had yielded so much denial and betrayal and had culminated in what she had perceived as the severing of her ancestors' past as well as their peoples as a mechanism of survival. I was taken aback

because Margaret Taylor is also one of my ancestors and I was not expecting to find her referenced in a piece of literature I was looking to for insight, guidance, and direction. The ideas that Welsh brings up around the silence of assimilation, and mechanisms of survival are tied to reclamation.

Indigenous kinship as defined by Eva Marie Garroutte in her 2003 book Real Indian is "an ongoing practice or skill, an active relationship that must be maintained and that is not invariably tied to one's genealogical connections" (p. 107). She went on to speak of how this definition encourages communities to see

> even those who are on the margins of other definitions of identity—the non-enrolled, those of low blood quantum, the culturally dispossessed, and even the 'new Indians'—as individuals who carry in their very bodies a powerful and important connection to the ancestors, and thus as potential relatives who possess personal worth and unique talents. (p. 112)

My ancestors were forced to assimilate to survive in a world that did not want them to, and they still found ways to resist and pass along their knowledge. I clung to that knowledge and sought it wherever and whenever I could.

## My Body

I have spent so much time hating my body, so many years disconnected from it and not nearly enough time toward curiosity, discovery, and exploration. Today, I have words written on my mirror that remind me that, "my body does not determine my worth" and a sticker that reminds me I am "fat and happy." It has taken so much effort and time to free myself from the misguided notion that my flesh is a prison—one I have been sentenced to death in—or feel like it is no longer the scene of a crime. It has taken me a long time to move forward from ideas that others hold surrounding my body, how they choose to measure what my body is worth, whom my body is intended to please and be used by, and why I should change who I am to fit into their desires. I am using this piece to talk about how reclaiming my body and pleasure has brought me to understand my personhood more fully and allowed me to move towards my own bodily sovereignty (Barker, 2017; Bear, 2016), as a connection to pleasure, and towards the sovereign erotic (Driskill, 2004; Driskill et al., 2011).

The first time I remember wanting a flat chest was when I was around 11 years old. I had sneakily thumbed through a tossed-out Cosmo magazine from the gas station that my mom managed and inside the glossy pages, I saw these long, amorphic androgynous models who were portrayed as white and "genderless." I don't remember the article's name or its title, but I remember the way the author discussed the notion of androgyny and how this model booked jobs as either "male" or "female," moving between and around gender depending on the day and the job. I remember staring in the mirror at the growing lumps on my chest and stomach and thinking about how I wished I looked like that, desperately hoping I would one day look down and magically see a flat chest. Previously, when I'd looked at my body, I'd wished it would be small; any amalgamation of small would do—height, weight, volume—it didn't matter, as long as I took up less space. I had found while growing up that the more space I occupied, the more I was told to shrink.

I learned quickly that if people thought I was quiet, polite, feminine—anything that made it easier for them to understand or categorize me—the better they would treat me. Confusion apparently makes people very disgruntled. I walked through life and tried to navigate into spaces where I could feel comfortable enough to be difficult, to be some version of myself that was not as easy to discern, no longer something that wasn't digestible enough, something not easy. Looking back, I see myself sitting, twisting, desperately growing, and frantically trying to cover and hide the things that make me who I am, as silently and as stealthily as I could. It felt like assimilation, hiding, and carefully curating or removing parts of myself as a mechanism of survival. Audre Lorde (1984) defined this sort of othering—or what I thought was assimilation—as the mythical norm. She goes on to explain that this norm is "usually defined as white, thin, male,

young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society" (p. 118). As I—and more visibly Indigenous people—were seen as different from that mythical norm, we were told we do not hold power or privilege in the same way and are made to feel "surplus, to occupy the place of the dehumanized inferior" (Lorde, 1984, p. 117).

These notions of the mythical norm and the dehumanized inferior can—in large part—be traced back to colonialism. Walter Mignolo (2000) describes "colonial difference" as the ways that colonizers conceived of themselves and their spaces as "fundamentally different from Indigenous people and spaces, measured in everything from relationships to history as a concept… to the occupation of particular kinds of environments" (p. 3). When settler-colonialists landed and began to impose their own governance and systems, they viewed the Indigenous governance, systems, and their lives as fundamentally wrong and uncivilized and pushed Indigenous bodies (both bodies in the physical and spiritual sense, and bodies of governance) to change and bend or disappear to adhere to European standards. They viewed Indigenous bodies as things that are not to exist, enjoy, or experience, but instead as objects and obstacles. They saw them as things that are meant to be used, viewed, and devalued or discarded if they become inconvenient. This can be seen in the writing of policies, with special attention to the Indian Act of 1876 as the "original" means that settler-colonialists sought to define, control, and assimilate the Indigenous people of Turtle Island.

According to Barker (2021)—a settler and professor who works with the Indigenous and Canadian Studies Program at Carleton University—colonization is a process, one that is actively designed to dominate by creating imbalances of power (p. 34). The colonial system—using the Indian Act and other methods of control—demands that Indigenous people be dominated, made to bend, and adjust to settler-specific power structures—structures that meet the needs and wants of colonialism—while also refusing to acknowledge the historic and ongoing needs and wants of Indigenous people. This domination occurs at every level, beginning with and including the body and the self of Indigenous people. Indigenous people were—and still are—told to assimilate, bend, adjust, twist our bodies, genders, and our words until we eventually take the same shape as colonizers, until we sound and think like colonizers. Even though many people, and studies have shown that prior to colonization, "…concepts of gender identity in Native communities were diverse and the acceptance of gender diversity was high" (Jacobs et al., 1997, p.367). We are told to relinquish and forget the origins and differences of our heritage, our bodies, and our culture, until there is nothing left. And if we do not—or more accurately can not—adhere to the mythical norm, we are told it's our fault for not fitting, that we have become "too difficult," not digestible enough.

## My Pleasure

To ignore sex and embodied pleasure is to ignore one of our greatest resources. It is to deny us one of our most precious gifts. Every orgasm can be an act of decolonization. - Daniel Heath Justice in Me Sexy (Taylor, 2008, p. 106)

The first time someone touched me, it was not for me; I was inconsequential, an object. I was too young and naïve to understand what had happened, or even know how I'd drowned out every single warning bell and alarm screaming inside my head telling me that this was wrong. I remember feeling disconnected from my body for many years after, and sometimes still do. The person was a man, white and cis-gender, more than significantly older than me, and in a position of power. This is a somewhat fitting example of the concepts I mentioned earlier, and how colonization and systemic inequality can make those who do not fit into one correct category an Other, something able to be used, dominated, and made a subject to abuse without penalty or remorse. My trauma surrounding pleasure is entangled with the history of colonization; Jordan (2021) encapsulates it well when she says, "colonial sexual violence continues today through a series of

physical, metaphorical, and psychological acts that devalue and dehumanize" (p.276). These systems of power and control meant that this man felt some kind of ownership, an innate ability to dominate and enact violence on me, my person. I still sometimes struggle to feel like my body is my own, despite years upon years of learning and unlearning. This experience confused me, it gave me anger, distrust, suspicion, disgust. But in the process, it made me more comfortable with the things people didn't want to discuss. How does a mind of someone so young deal with sexual assault? Apparently, mine chose to learn everything I could about sex. It felt like medicine, a salve, something beautiful and powerful and healing. I devoured anything I could—books and media, gossip, erotica, and so many stories—they all felt like knowledge to me. It wasn't to seek pleasure or gratification; I was looking for understanding. Not only why this thing had happened to me, but why this ever happened in the first place.

I say these things, not for pity or to elicit shock. If anything, this kind of story is disturbingly and upsettingly common. According to a study done by Statistics Canada in 2018, those who are a sexual minority—for example, their sexual orientation is gay, lesbian, bisexual or any sexual orientation that is not heterosexual—are more likely to have experienced sexual assault at an age as young as 15. Those belonging to a sexual minority who self-identified as Indigenous also experienced higher incidences of violent victimization since age 15—65% of Indigenous sexual minorities had been sexually assaulted, compared to the 37% of non-Indigenous sexual minorities. I state that this is common because it is, and it allows a better understanding of how I—and other people like me—come to understand pleasure. I had learned that the act of pleasure was something that was supposed to be taken from me, removed, or extracted from my body without any thought for how I felt. From there, I refused to let anyone touch me without my consent, I refused to allow anyone else to extract pleasure from me. I had to re-learn how to experience pleasure, that I am not obligated to give it to someone else. As with my body, I was taught that pleasure was something I was supposed to provide, it was supposed to be extracted from me, I was an object intended to provide pleasure to others. According to porn, magazines, the internet, and the gossip and stories of my peers—there was a shortage, a deficit of pleasure going around for people who were deemed to be too much, too fat, too loud, or too anything, like me. People like me were supposed to accept any of the crumbs that anyone else was willing to give, be it scraps of attention or affection, or be it orgasms and pleasure. This is a concept that is addressed by many scholars and activists, people like Adam Davies and Ruth Neustifter (2023) who state that "through the regulation of both femininity and fatness, dominant norms in queer communities construct fatness and femininity as excessive, desexualised/hypersexualised, and undeserving of sexual desire,

"Reclaiming my body and pleasure has brought me to understand my personhood more fully and allowed me to move towards my own bodily sovereignty

To reclaim bodily sovereignty, and sexual pleasure is to take back the first site of exploitation."

- Ellis Rondquist

pleasure, and care" (p. 294).

## Reclamation as Resistance

Reclamation exists as a tool against colonial structure and rule, and bodily sovereignty lies within the act of pleasure and the erotic. The act of reclaiming the body (especially as a site of pleasure and enjoyment) is an act of defiance, self-determination, restoration, and sovereignty. My family and our collective heritage spoke of assimilation and survival, and the relationship I have with my body was similar. Reclaiming these things feels important, feels connected and I have been exploring why they are connected in this article. I find myself often thinking of and using the words of Daniel Heath Justice from the anthology Me Sexy (Taylor, 2008) as they stick out in my mind in many quiet moments of reflection. He speaks of how "just as indigenousness itself has long been a colonialist target, so too has our joy, our desire, our sense of ourselves as being able to give and receive pleasure" (p. 108). The language of historical accounts of white settlers suggests the demonization and othering of Indigenous sexualities and genders. The freedoms or diversities of Indigenous sexuality and gender were silenced with colonial language, steeped in sexual sin, shame, and perversion. But bodily pleasure is connected to many Indigenous ways of being.

To reclaim bodily sovereignty, and sexual pleasure is to take back the first site of exploitation. Driskill (2004) says that this is the journey of many: "My own journey back to my body, and the journeys of other First Nations people back to their bodies, necessarily engage historical trauma" (p. 1). Moving toward and reclaiming the sovereign erotic relates our bodies to our nations, traditions, and histories. This idea surrounds our erotic pleasure, our sexual lives, and our fulfillment, into what it is at its core. Connection. Relation. To participate and practice the sovereign erotic is to participate in radical, holistic, decolonization. To take joy in our bodies—and those bodies in relation to each other—is to strike out against five-hundred–plus years of disregard, disrespect, and dismissal. The act of joy, of sensuality, and of pleasure is an act of rebellion and resistance. To acknowledge our joy, our physical expressions of erotic and sensual pleasure, is to acknowledge our power. Bear (2016) tells us that "We are not the vulnerable and the weak" (p. 18); through our resistance, we have power, we define ourselves. We are actively decolonizing our bodies and resisting the continued exploitation of colonization. We are finding our way to understanding our bodies as our first and most cherished home. We are resisting and reclaiming our bodies as our original homes with every act of embodied joy and pleasure.

## References


Abolson, K., & Willet, C. (2005). Putting ourselves forward: Location in Aboriginal research. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches (pp. 97–126). Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, Inc.Barker, A. J. (2021). Making and breaking settler space: Five centuries of colonization in North America. UBC Press.

Barker, J. (ed.) (2017). Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smggj

Bear, T. L. (2016) Power in my blood: Corporeal sovereignty through the praxis of an Indigenous eroticanalysis. ERA: Education & Research Archive. https://doi.org/10.7939/R3348GS66.

Davies, A., & Neustifter, R. (2023). Fat fuckers and fat fucking: A feminine ethic of care in sex therapy. Psychology & Sexuality, 14(1), 294–305. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2022.2109988.

Driskill, Qwo-Li, Daniel Heath Justice, Deborah Miranda, and Lisa Tatonetti. (2011) Sovereign erotics: A collection of two-spirit literature. University of Arizona Press.

Garroutte, E. M. (2003). Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America (1st ed.). University of California Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppp03

Jacobs, S., Thomas, W., & Lang, S. (1997). Two-spirit people: Native American gender identity, sexuality, and

spirituality. University of Illinois Press.
Lorien S. Jordan (2021) Belonging and Otherness: The Violability and Complicity of Settler Colonial Sexual Violence, Women & Therapy, 44:3-4, 271-291, DOI: 10.1080/02703149.2021.1961434
Lorde, A. (1984). Sister outsider: Essays and speeches. Crossing Press.
Mignolo, W. D. (2000). Introduction: On gnosis and the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system. In W. D. Mignolo. Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking (pp. 3–46). Princeton University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.cttq94t0.5.
Statistics Canada. (2020, September 9). Experiences of violent victimization and unwanted sexual behaviours among gay, lesbian, bisexual and other sexual minority people, and the transgender population, in Canada, 2018. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00009-eng.htm
Strega, S., & Brown, L. A. (2015). Research as resistance: Revisiting critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches (Second edition.). Canadian Scholars' Press.
Taylor, D. H. (2008). Me sexy: An exploration of Native sex and sexuality. Douglas & McIntyre.
Welsh, Christine. "Voices of the grandmothers: Reclaiming a Metis heritage." Canadian Literature, Discourse in Early Canada, 131(Winter 1991): 15–24. https://www.canlit.ca.

Quintin Courtoreille
Cree
Bachelor of Fine Arts
Thompson Rivers University

# IMPLICIT RACISM AND HOW IT AFFECTS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN OUR CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IN CANADA

## Abstract

In this research article I discuss how racial minorities, specifically Indigenous people, are still experiencing discrimination in universities with a focus on Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in British Columbia, Canada. Even with policies in place to prevent discrimination, there is evidence that staff and administration at TRU still show bias against Indigenous faculty and students and choose to ignore problems until they become too big to ignore. The article argues that discrimination is so deeply ingrained in institutions that it becomes a natural response people are unaware of, which continues to perpetuate this behaviour. It's important for fair and sufficient funding to be made available to teach about Indigenous peoples' history and culture as this can allow the healing process to begin and ensure actual equality. Those in positions of power have a responsibility to make changes to the way they address racism, and the institutions need to start addressing the underlying implicit racism.

**Keywords:** Secwépemc people, Indigenous, white people, racism, discrimination, Thompson Rivers University, harassment, education, Person of Colour (POC), implicit racism, decolonization, EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion).

## Introduction

Our environments will affect us. This can be both positive and negative depending on the situation. Within this article I discuss the way that existing as a racialized person in an academic space can and does result in unfair bias, discrimination, and explicit racism. For Indigenous people, these experiences are lifelong and do not end once a person enters academia or the workforce. So, what happens to an Indigenous person growing up in a continuously hostile environment? Almost all of them struggle—some fight and some give up. In this article, I enlighten you to the realities of being an Indigenous person in this environment, the struggles we face, and how we can start to solve these problems to reduce or, possibly in the future, obliterate the barriers we face. I insert my own personal reflections based on my experiences

> "7. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians."
>
> - (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015)

alongside research. I do this to show that our voices and stories mean just as much and that they are just as legitimate as formal research.

## The Past Repeats Itself Yet Again

I care about implicit racism and how it affects Indigenous people because I have experienced its negative effects throughout my education journey, from my first day of school to the present. I decided to work toward preventing this issue from harming any other Indigenous people's confidence and stop perpetuating the false notion that Indigenous peoples are uneducated. A history of Residential Schools shows that "some thought it was a risky matter to give the students too much education…In the case of the Indian 'a little learning is a dangerous thing'" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). I believe that with the proper evidence collected showing how Indigenous people's education is mishandled, there will be a way forward where Indigenous people can take the matter into their own hands and be in charge of their own education.

**See What I See**

If you wanted to be noticed
by teachers as an Indigenous
kid and not easily overlooked.
you had to work harder than anyone
else did. I learnt this all throughout
my younger years in school and when
I graduated from it, I believed things
could be different when I moved.
Holding high hopes for a university that
claimed to respect and hold its Indig-
enous students in high regard. I could not
see myself in better hands. I was proven very
wrong through poor guidance and no direc-
tions for how to navigate the university and
its barriers. To me it was a disappointment to
see more white people not following through
with their words and commitments, and so I
decided I would do it by myself once again.
Through the injustice and unfairness, I have
experienced in my education journey I have
learnt that the only way it will change is if
we make them prove it through actions and
so I will challenge this university and per-
haps others to start following through with
their promises to us Indigenous people.

## Rating Our "Privilege"

Ignorance is bliss, but only to people who never have to face the consequences. Racism is not only ingrained in our institutions but normalised within them as well. It becomes much more common for people who are white-passing to not notice or to feign ignorance when it is happening. Martín (2021) states that "it is not just that people do not recognize that there is a problem—and therefore do nothing to change it—but they refuse to recognize that there is a problem, and therefore implicitly refuse to do anything about it" (p. 870).

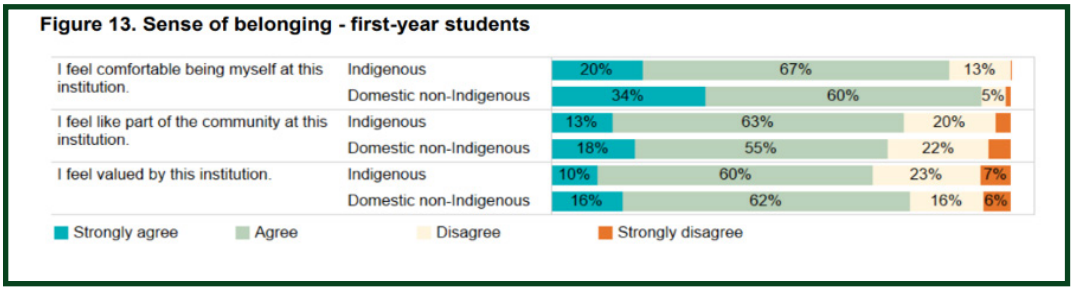
In Thompson Rivers University (TRU), the lack of evidence of white students negatively rating staff just shows that TRU faculty rarely, if ever, encounter prejudged biases surrounding their racial identity. To illustrate the breakdown of professors by gender and race, I randomly selected one facility among the multiple available resources. The website called Rate My Professor (n.d.) is an online platform where students can determine how they view professors. There are 949 professors listed on this website who have either worked at or are currently employed by TRU. For illustration purposes, I will use the Psychology department as an example.

Table 1.

| Total Men | Total women | POC Men | POC Women |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | 15 | 2 | 3 |

In the Psychology department, there is a total of 32 professors listed on the Rate My Professor website, with only 5 of them being Persons of Colour (POC). Out of 3 POC women, only one of them is rated higher than the rest. 9 out of 12 non-POC women are rated above 3 (out of 5), and both POC men have ratings below 3.1, while 6 of the non-POC men have ratings above 3.1 (Rate My Professor, n.d.). On average, not only are the non-POC professors rated higher but there are far more hired. When you take a glance at most people of colour or women on the site they will have a very low rating, and the complaints are not always accurate. Why are women, especially the POC faculty, rated so low no matter what? Mistry & Latoo (2009) show that "bias against racialized minorities may persist because discrimination is so deeply entrenched within institutions

Picture 1.




**Source:** TRU: TRU Indigenous Student Engagement (2020 Survey of First and Fourth-Year Baccalaureate Students).

(institutionalised) that it becomes an automatic response even without conscious awareness or explicit intent" (p. 20).

The demographic breakdown of faculty represented by the Rate My Professor analysis is also reflected in the data for TRU students. In 2018, TRU's Integrated Planning and Effectiveness (IPE) Committee reported that the Indigenous student population was 2,963 and that there was a 57% retention rate after the first year as of 2019 (Thompson Rivers University, 2018). That means about 1,275 Indigenous students did not continue into their second year (Thompson Rivers University, 2018). Within first year students' experiences alone, the following graphs determined that only 20% of Indigenous students felt comfortable being themselves at TRU, and a negligible 10% of Indigenous students felt valued by this institution (Thompson Rivers University, 2020).

These two snapshots focusing on the experiences of two small student and faculty populations reflect the larger culture of racism within TRU. This environment can be seen publicly in recent news articles discussing bullying, racism, and harassment of staff by two senior faculty (Chrumka & Lindsay, 2021; Kondrashov, 2021). Overall, the data show that TRU can be a challenging environment for Indigenous faculty and students.

## Promise is another word for liar

The screenshot included here shows values listed on TRU's website (Thompson Rivers University, retrieved from TRU website, 2020). The values include the ethical standards this institution claims to follow. In a university that is built on the unceded lands of the Secwépemc people, it is meant to be an institution that raises up and protects Indigenous people. However, the evidence of bias among faculty despite the policies in place speaks volumes to how little the TRU staff and upper-level management truly care about Indigenous faculty and students. They often speak about doing great things, but the evidence shows that they ignore or do not take policy violations seriously until they are reported 55 times (Chrumka & Lindsay, 2021) when it should have been dealt with immediately the first

Picture 2.

time it was brought forward.

In August 2021, Thompson Rivers University start an investigation under two executive members in TRU after several former and current staff and faculty member report of their anti-Indigenous racism and bullying behaviour in the workplace (Thompson Rivers University, 2023, Chrumka et al, 2021). The investigation process is about one year long, 22 allegations made against Matt Milovick who is a VP Finance & Administration, and in total of 55 allegation against his subordinate Larry Phillips, the assistant vice-president of people and culture, who was also found to be guilty of sexual harassment (Thompson Rivers University, 2023, Chrumka et al, 2021). The full investigation report was released to the public on March 25, 2024, one year after the anonymous complaints were made against Philipps and Milovick. In the investigation report 10 of the 55 allegations substantiated against Phillips has been confirmed, while Phillips left the university shortly after the investigation began (Reeve, 2023). On the other hand, the investigation has fully exonerated Milovick and absolved his misconduct complaints under the whistle-blower policy, He was still working at TRU throughout the entire investigation and up until now when I wrote this article (March 2024) (Schulze, 2024; Klassen, 2023). Milovick is suing eight individuals who filed the complaints with alleging malicious defamation in February 2023 based on the TRU's investigation (Petruk ,2023). Milovick declared that he has no issue with the complaint itself or the investigation into the allegations, but he also claims that that the accusers and their supporters chose to publicize the allegations which, in the document, he and his lawyer describe this event as:

"The defamatory expression complained of in this notice of civil claim is calculated to expose the plaintiff to hatred, ridicule and/or contempt, and/or to lower him in the estimation of right-thinking people generally, and/or to cause him to be shunned or avoided, all of which has occurred (Petruk, 2023, para 13)"

However, none of the allegations in the claim have been proven in court (Petruk, 2023).

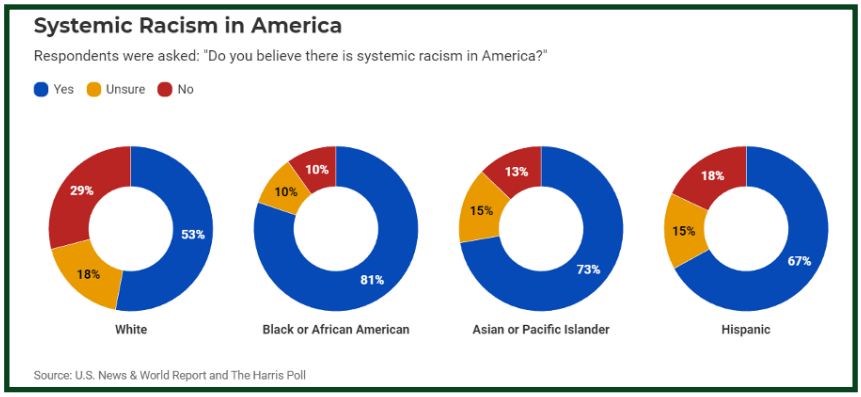
TRU claims to highly value the confidentiality of its students, professors, and administration, yet its whistle-blower policy does not protect those who use it. This leaves anyone who uses the policy vulnerable to potential trouble and retaliation. TRU takes quick action on a public relations level to try to cover this scandal, yet relationships within the university have been forever altered and there is a lack of trust that permeates. Additionally, the university has not compensated or taken any action to protect the eight individuals who filed complaints, at least as far as public knowledge goes. Meanwhile, the man accused of anti-Indigenous and bullying actions continues to work at TRU. There have been few actions taken to prevent workplace harassment among employees, all of which are quite vague, such as posting some workplace safety articles on TRU Connect and workplace surveys. There have been no policy-level actions taken to protect students and employees regarding incidents like those mentioned above. How are any victims of racism at TRU supposed to feel safe reporting incidents to the school when they have no support from the institution when speaking up? TRU's promises and propaganda don't align with the statistics that support the existence of both implicit and explicit racism. This is exactly the reason why I want to write this article, to make the university face what happened and honour the promises that they made to the entire community.

In my own experience as a student in this Institution, I came to know that students with white skin were favoured above students who are POC. The expectations for Indigenous students are reflective of a larger social narrative that paints them as becoming addicts, having kids, and using the government because we are not seen as capable people. The expectations for Indigenous female presenting students were even lower. This drove me to prove I was not just another statistic and it led me down a harder road, one of working to overcome the obstacles set down by white people, and then ignored by them because they choose to not face their own implicit racism. They

always act so surprised when we tell them it is not as easy as they think, and they choose to repeatedly invalidate us. There are almost no studies on the belief of non-Indigenous people as to the reality of racism against Indigenous peoples in Canada. Currently there are a handful of written news articles and think pieces discussing Canadians' belief in racism. Bricker and Chhim (2020), for example show that 40% of people in Canada see racism as an American problem, yet 60% of Canadians acknowledge racism is a serious problem today. An American study provides further context.

As shown in the chart above, we can see that racism has been a serious problem in the United States as well, and most people (53% white, 81% black, 73% Asian, and 67% Hispanic) believe that racism is prevalent and active (Bricker & Chhim, 2020). However, there is no data on Native American or Indigenous people included. I firmly believe that this issue is not confined to just one nation; rather, it is a problem that affects the entire North American region and the globe. Canada needs to foster greater awareness and understanding of racism against Indigenous peoples and conduct further research that gives a voice to Indigenous people's experiences.

Picture 3.




## Legalised Assimilation

Residential Schools were institutions created to strip Indigenous people of their language and culture, and though they have now closed, academic institutions such as universities and colleges have taken over this task. Colonial education was born out of Eurocentrism and this way of learning was considered superior over all other types (Dei et al., 2022). It denied, invalidated, and pushed away Indigenous knowledge until the modern day. This Eurocentric education has continued to be considered our formal education in Canada (Dei et al., 2022). Fleras (2014) states that "In other words, institutions serve as a site where race and racism are constructed and maintained yet simultaneously obscured and normalised" (p. 146). The foundation of school structures in Canada are based on racism, and it is ignored because of the discomfort it causes the descendants of our colonisers. They ignore the blatant racism because Indigenous people are still not seen as equal to themselves, which perpetuates racism throughout Canada.

As racism is so normalised, it makes it very difficult for international students as well as all other students to believe Indigenous people when we talk about the horrifying events that happened and how those views still exist today. The current university structure is not created with Indigenous students or faculty in mind and operates to serve colonialism. This structure often leaves Indigenous students out and leads to a higher dropout rate as is shown in TRU's institutional data reflecting 49 to 65% drop outs each year (Integrated Planning and Effectiveness: Fall 2018, 2020.). As Fleras (2014) explains "...treating everyone the same when people's need-based differences must be taken into account may well have the unintended effect of inadvertently excluding those with different experiences, realities, and aspirations" (p.150). The TRC (2015) states that

to close the education and income gaps, there needs to be stable and adequate funding of Aboriginal education that takes into account the challenges of the legacy of residential schools as well as other challenges faced by Aboriginal people. In addition to fair and adequate funding, there is also a need to maximise Aboriginal control over Aboriginal education, and to facilitate instruction in Aboriginal cultures and languages. These educational measures will offer a realistic prospect of reconciliation on the basis of equality and respect. (p. 153)

The only way that Canadians and institutions, especially Canadian universities like Thompson Rivers University, can begin to make reparations and change the way the world views Indigenous peoples is to acknowledge the barriers, traumas, and funding difficulties they face, and to assist them in their education. They need to keep their eyes and ears open to prevent further harm.

History is alive and resonates with the present because of racist consequences on both Residential School children and their descendants (Fleras, 2014). Even in the current education system, white people continue to dismiss Indigenous peoples' experience and trauma when it comes to Residential Schools. Most are avoiding the discomfort of facing the mistakes their ancestors made and leaving all the healing up to Indigenous people so they can continue to blame the mistakes on their ancestors instead of taking accountability for the way they continue to benefit from this system. As Rene Magritte's artwork that brings George Santayana's (1905) words to life reminds us that "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

There was an official apology by the Harper Government in 2008 (Government of Canada, 2010) that recognized the Canadian Government's role in the Residential School system. For white people, this apology was a conclusion to the past harms done. For Indigenous peoples, it is one step in an ongoing healing process. For white people, there is an overwhelming sense in social consciousness that it is time to stop dwelling in the past (Fleras, 2014). The assumption is that these past events have no bearing on the present while complicating any effort to move forward. Such a historical response reflects a Canadian-style polite racism that justifies racial inequality, avoids responsibilities, and defends dominant interests without sounding racist. Reconciliation with Indigenous people means nothing when our colonisers' descendants only continue to take from us. Land is being stripped of its trees, oil pipelines are being put on our lands by force, and now there are efforts to take our right to protect and place our Indigenous children in homes where they can continue to learn their culture and way of life (McKenzie et al., 2023; Unite for Change, 2022). For Indigenous peoples, however, to borrow a phrase from William Faulkner (1961): the past (history) is not dead, it is not even the past.

## Conclusion: How to Clean a Mess

Indigenous people are often expected to do better than everyone else, and their differences and needs are ignored instead of their experience of racism being validated and supported through the university. This occurs due to their less privileged position within the system.

In the Thompson Rivers University

> "Residential Schools were institutions created to strip Indigenous people of their language and culture, and though they have now closed, academic institutions such as universities and colleges have taken over this task."
>
> - Quintin Courtoreille

(2019–2022) Collective Agreement, between Thompson Rivers University and the Thompson Rivers University Association (pp. 67–68) it is stated that harassment is to be dealt with seriously and that the school would offer educational and training programs to educate and prevent harassment. If the policy were being taken as seriously as TRU claims, then there would be no tolerance for racism. Thompson Rivers University Learning Design and Innovation: Promotion and Tenure Standards (2021) stated that "In this light, candidates are encouraged to highlight throughout their portfolio how they have embraced the principles of diversity, inclusion (EDI), decolonization, and Indigenization" (pp.1-2). I question why it's only important for faculty to highlight things they've done for marginalized people when considering attaining a promotion rather than making it mandatory for faculty to be actively supporting and fighting against racism in these institutions. There should be no space in educational institutions for those who do not fight for Indigenous people and support them fully. If we are going to start changing things in the university, we best start with what we promise and commit to. All faculty should not only be passively supportive but commit to standing with Indigenous people in the university itself even when it gets uncomfortable.

TRU has officially hired an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion officer as of January 2023 whose main goal is to advise TRU in their ongoing EDI Action Plan (TRU Research & Graduate Studies, 2019). This Action plan consists of a talking circle, an environmental scan, a comparative review process, a diversity and inclusion survey in addition to a gender audit (TRU Research & Graduate Studies, 2019). It is not unreasonable to state that this work should have been done prior to its origin in 2018, and the fact that it has taken so long is concerning. This education and training should have been made mandatory long ago, as there should be absolutely no space for racism to run free on lands and in a school where they claim to be inclusive to all. Since there hasn't been a process in maintaining faculty to this point, this should be the first immediate step taken by the university. If TRU wants to prove that they are real allies, then they would support and ensure Indigenous people are not continuing to be the primary target of racist administration in this university. TRU operates like multiple universities in Canada—there are accessible anti-racism toolkits through EDI available on TRU website, but they are not a mandatory requirement for employment. The only university to have mandated anti-racism education tied to employment is Western Universities training, although there is no focus on anti-Indigenous racism within this program (Western University EDI Action Plan, 2019). TRU could be nationwide leaders by stepping up to be the first institution that mandates a comprehensive anti-racism training model.

The statistics make it appear as if Indigenous people in this university are content with the way things currently are. What this doesn't reflect is the fact that marginalised people do not have the safety or ability to speak out in most circumstances. If we want accurate stats on Indigenous people's thoughts and experiences, then a safety net needs to be built that encourages people to speak up without the threat of repercussions be they large or small—legal or workplace microaggressions.

## References

Bricker, D., & Chhim, C. (2020, June 24). Majority (60%) see racism as a serious problem in Canada today, up 13 points since last year. IPSOS. https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/majority-60-see-racism-serious-problem-canada-today-13-points-last-year

Chrumka, J., & Lindsay, B. (2021, January 19). Harassment, bullying, racism allegations against 2 senior leaders at B.C. university under investigation. CBC News. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/harassment-bullying-and-racism-allegations-against-2-senior-tru-leaders-under-investigation-1.6260105.

Dei, G. J., Karanja, W., & Erger, G. (2022). Colonial education in the Canadian context. Critical Studies of Education, 16, 51–77. https://doi.

org/10.1007/978-3-030-84201-7_3.

Faulkner, W. (1961). Sanctuary and requiem for a nun. The New American Library.

Fleras, A. (2014). Racisms in a multicultural Canada: Paradoxes, politics, and resistance. Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Foulds, C. (2023, April 26). Fired TRU administrator files lawsuit against university president Brett Fairbairn. Kamloops This Week. https://www.kamloopsthisweek.com/local-news/fired-tru-administrator-files-lawsuit-against-university-president-brett-fairbairn-6914398.

Government of Canada. (2010, September 15). Statement of apology to former students at Indian Residential Schools. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1571589171655.

Klassen, C. (2023, January 20). Senior administrator Milovick says Tru Investigation cleared him. CFJC Today Kamloops. https://cfjctoday.com/2023/01/19/senior-administrator-milovick-says-tru-investigation-cleared-him/

Kondrashov, O. (2021, November 28). TRU investigation: What do we know, and what actions are needed? https://krasun.ca/2021/11/28/tru-investigation-what-do-we-know-and-what-actions-are-needed/.

Rate My Professors. (n.d.). Find and rate your professor or school. http://www.ratemyprofessors.com/

Red River College PolyTech Library and Academic Services. (n.d.). Anti-racism learning toolkit: Getting started. https://library.rrc.ca/Anti-Racism/getting_started

Reeve, M. (2023, January 18). Investigation finds 10 allegations of harassment substantiated against one of two tru administrators. CFJC Today Kamloops. https://cfjctoday.com/2023/01/17/investigation-finds-10-allegations-of-harassment-substantiated-against-one-of-two-tru-administrators/

Martín, A. (2020). What is white ignorance? The Philosophical Quarterly, 71(4). https://doi.org/10.1093/pq/pqaa073.

Magritte, R. (n.d.). "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."—George Santayana, The life of reason, 1905. From the series Great ideas of western man. Smithsonian American Art Museum. https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/those-who-cannot-remember-past-are-condemned-repeat-it-george-santayana-life-reason-1905

McKenzie, A., McKenna, C., & Morgan, B. (2023, May 11). Why all eyes should be on the Supreme Court of Canada: Families await key child welfare decision. IndigiNews. https://indiginews.com/news/families-await-key-scc-child-welfare-decision.

Mistry, M., & Latoo, J. (2009). Bullying: A growing workplace menace. British Journal of Medical Practitioners, 2, 23–26.

Petruk, T. (2023, January 17). TRU investigation substantiates some complaints of harassment. Castanet Kamloops. https://www.castanetkamloops.net/news/Kamloops/406610/TRU-investigation-substantiates-some-complaints-of-harassment.

Schulze, A. (2024, March 26). One Year Later, Tru releases full report of investigation into harassment allegations against two senior administrators. CFJC Today Kamloops. https://cfjctoday.com/2024/03/25/one-year-later-tru-releases-full-report-of-investigation-into-harassment-allegations-against-two-senior-administrators/

Thompson Rivers University. (2018). (rep.). Integrated planning and effectiveness. https://www.tru.ca/ipe.html.

Thompson Rivers University (2020). (rep.). TRU Indigenous Student Engagement (pp. 1–23). https://onetru.sharepoint.com/sites/IPE/Master%20Library/Forms/By%20Category.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FIPE%2FMaster%20Library%2FNSSE%202020%20%2D%20TRU%20Indigenous%20Students%20Report%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FIPE%2FMaster%20

Library
Thompson Rivers University Research & Graduate Studies. (2019). Equity, diversity, and inclusion for faculty recruitment. https://www.tru.ca/__shared/assets/EDI_Action_Plan49174.pdf.
Thompson Rivers University. (2021, April 2). Promotion and tenure standards. https://www.tru.ca/__shared/assets/LDI_T_and_P_Standards53626.pdf.
Thompson Rivers University. (2023). Board of Governors Investigation. Board of Governors Investigation: Thompson Rivers University. https://www.tru.ca/board/board-of-governors-investigation.html

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Calls to Action. McGill-Queen's University Press.
Unite for Change. (2022, June 5). Deforestation in Canada: Its effects, causes and possible actions in 2022. https://uniteforchange.com/en/blog/environment/deforestation-canada/
Western University. (2019). Western University EDI Action Plan. https://www.edi.uwo.ca/events-and-trainings/trainings/.

If we want accurate stats on Indigenous people's thoughts and experiences, then a safety net needs to be built that encourages people to speak up without the threat of repercussions be they large or small—legal or workplace microaggressions.

~ *Quintin Courtoreille*

Jeneen Herns-Jensen
Algonquin, Shoshone, Norwegian, British
Associate Director, All My Relations
Thompson Rivers University

# INDIGENOUS EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS: WHO DEFINES SUCCESS, AND WHO DETERMINES WHEN IT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

When a discussion arises around Indigenous students being successful in their educational pursuits, there is rarely an acknowledgement that success from an institutional standpoint may look different than that of the students and their communities. This comes back to the fact that Indigenous communities and their members may be prioritizing outcomes different from the western worldview, which has been deeply ingrained into academic institutions and is considered the norm. The worldview of a group of people underlies every aspect of their lives, from language to social systems (Hewitt, 2000) and it is impossible to discuss the concept of success without first recognizing that our current educational systems are situated within a western worldview that carries with it a very specific set of expectations. What happens when we don't first recognize the unspoken worldview that all our experiences are filtered through is that we are not able to critically engage with it, or even worse, we set students up to feel defeated by assuming they have failed if they didn't meet western educational goals.

Measurements of success within academic spaces primarily use outcome-based metrics such as graduation rates and program completion to determine whether student success has been achieved. The purpose of academic success within this context is with the end goal of obtaining a degree and moving into the workforce. Working within a western academic model, we're often tempted to focus on completion and retention rates as the sole determinator of whether programs and students are successful. Looking at completion rates only shows us half of the picture; they are only valued due to their links to proximal outcomes such as college career readiness, civic life participation, and post-graduation employment opportunities (Evans, 2020). Retention rates give a slightly wider view by taking into account student satisfaction and belonging, but what they cannot measure is where or not a student's learning was successful to that student. What these measures fail to consider are the individual, communal and collective needs. They also do not consider systemic difficulties faces within education such as how socioeconomic status and minority status are tied to probability of completion. Many students who would be deemed unsuccessful by retention rates alone may have taken a break before continuing studies or intend on returning. Research done by Deer et al., (2016) showcases the importance of centering Indigenous intellectual traditions within learning, and within their work have found that success in most schooling institutions within North America privilege Eurocentric views, while also excluding Indigenous students' personal views of success.

There is no definitive measure of success for all Indigenous peoples, and to imply so would be reductionist, there are however multiple shared commonalities found across nations. The Canadian Council of Learning released a report in 2009 that outlined a comprehensive framework to measure Indigenous learning success in education based on the cultural learning structures of First Nations, Metis and Inuit lifelong learning models.

This report was a collaboration between the Canadian Council of Learning, The Aboriginal Knowledge Centre, Indigenous learning expert, community practitioners, as well as researchers from more than seventy organizations and government agencies. Within the Indigenous models of success put forward by The Canadian Council of Learning (2009), success was a community endeavor that did not focus on individual material success, but rather community wellbeing and engagement of all aspects of an individual such as: the emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual, cultural, social, economic and political (Deer et al., 2016; Claypool & Preston, 2013). The holistic and cyclical approaches to learning that these models' showcase is a stark contrast to western learning. This concept of success within Indigenous frameworks has an integrative and regenerative nature focused on life-long learning that does not end at the classroom. Therefore, within this vision of learning, success can only be measured by how this learning nurtures relationships between the individual, community, family, and all of creation (Cappon, 2008).

It is important to establish a variety of indicators of success and tools of measurement beyond classroom performance and standard retention rates, as one size does not fit all. Non-Indigenous learners are also being hindered by the focus on course completion and GPA according to Bailey et al., (2005) who discusses how for many students, earning a degree is not the goal of obtaining education. Many students who enter post-secondary education institutions are focused on learning specific skills to be used in daily life, to take back to their community, or to advance their career (Bailey et al., 2005). Unfortunately, within current measurements, unless learning culminates in a graduation it can be seen as a failure by the educational institution.

What is considered success within a learning environment for local Indigenous peoples attending Thompson Rivers University? We currently don't know, as this question is not being asked. What could Thompson Rivers University and all other universities within so-called Canada learn from simply asking the Indigenous students attending their facilities what would be considered a success for you within this program? I'm hoping we can shift the conversation to finally answer this question. Recognizing that the term success is often used as an abstract placeholder to mean multiple outcomes, it becomes very important to understand how worldview influences whether success has been achieved. This is especially pertinent when looking at Indigenous educational success, as each community holds unique epistemological and ontological frameworks through which they filter knowledge and learning successes through. There is great discussion as to what success means within Western academic contexts, and although the Canadian Council of Learning (2009) brings forward a discussion of commonalities amongst Indigenous communities, there remains too many unique contextual differences between communities to assure each nations needs are represented by this report. Individual nations must be central to discussions as to what constitutes educational success and how that can be achieved within the institutions still inhabiting their unceded lands. As these universities are directly profiting off the continued displacement of Indigenous peoples, specifically the local nations whose lands they continue to inhabit, the most critical and fundamental step towards reconciliation they can take is to assure Indigenous students' success is valued.

## References

Bailey, T., Calcagno, J., Jenkins, D., Kienzl, G., & Leinbach, T. (2005). The effects of institutional factors on the success of community college students (thesis). Community College Research Center, New York.

Canadian Council of Learning. (2009). The state of aboriginal learning in Canada: A holistic approach to measuring success. In Assembly of First Nations. https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education2/state_of_aboriginal_learning_in_canada-final_report,_ccl,_2009.pdf

Cappon, P. (2008). Measuring success in first nations, inuit and metis Learning. Institute for Research on Public Policy.

Claypool, T. R., & Preston, J. P. (2013). Redefining learning and assessment practices

impacting Aboriginal students: Considering aboriginal priorities via aboriginal and western worldviews. In Education, 17(3). https://doi.org/10.37119/ojs2011.v17i3.74

Deer, F., Falkenberg, T., Bouvier, R., Battiste, M., & Laughlin, J. (2016). Centering indigenous intellectual traditions on holistic lifelong learning. Indigenous perspectives on education for well-being in Canada (pp. 21–40). essay, Education for Sustainable Well-Being Press.

Evans, C. (2020). Measuring student success skills: A review of the literature on collaboration. 21st century success skills. National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED607774.

Hewitt, D. (2000). A clash of worldviews: Experiences from teaching aboriginal students. Theory into Practice, 39(2), 111–117. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3902_8

The values that my grandfather displayed in his writings reflect the spiritual beliefs he and the Métis people held. Beliefs are an important part of identity and are a critical and essential element to help shape one's values. Beliefs reflect who one is. My grandfather believed he should be obedient to his Creator by replenishing the earth and providing for his family.

~ *Victoria Besse*

# Rylee Bull

St'at'imc Nation
Bachelor of Sciences
Thompson Rivers University


## THE ST'AT'IMC SEVEN LAWS OF LIFE AS RYLEE BULL

Ḱalhwá7acw Nsnúḱwa7. Rylee Bull nskwátsitsa. Tsalálhmeckan.St'atímckan. La7ta tkemlups lhanwa7. Nilh sRoxane Letterlough ta nskĺcez7a. Nilhs SPatricia Terry Nkúkw7a. NilhsLarry Johnston nspápez7a. Nilh sZion nqéqtseka. Nilhs Micah nkéckeca.

Hello, my name is Rylee Bull. My mom is Roxane Letterlough. My grandma is Patricia Terry and my papa is Larry Johnston. I have two younger siblings, Micah and Zion. My grama is from Shalalth and I have ancestry in the Secwepemc Nation. I am 22 years old. I am currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Natural Resource Science Program at Thompson Rivers University. The St'at'imc and Secwepemc are neighbouring Nations but have vast territories extending into the interior of British Columbia.

Much of Indigenous knowledge is rarely written or recorded in an academic setting. Indigenous knowledge is an oral tradition and is passed on from knowledge keeper to knowledge maker. Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) is a prominent academic who spearheaded Indigenous oral traditions and advocated for its validity in academia. Her book, Storywork (2008) emphasizes the importance of incorporating Indigenous perspectives, values, and knowledge into formal and informal education settings, and encourages researchers to explore their own understanding of and relationship with Indigenous cultures. Dr. Archibald (2008) introduces the concept of "storywork" as a way of learning through storytelling that is grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

I was fortunate enough to listen to my aunty Laura Grizzlypaws discuss the St'at'imc Seven Laws of Life with a small group of students in my First Nations Studies Oral Traditions class at Thompson Rivers University. It intrigued me to hear how our people once followed these laws and to see how St'at'imc people valued life and their perspective of how an individual should behave. The following laws are my perspective of what I heard that day and I continue to reflect on how these laws can be a part of my everyday life.

The St'at'imc Seven Laws of Life are about harmony. No one law is more important than another, for without one the others come crashing down; You can't have happiness without a healthy mind and spirit. There is no power without our ancestors and their teachings and no better use for power than to look after our future generations to come. To have a good mind we must have compassion and generosity for all creatures who cross our path. These are the Seven Laws of Life.

Áma swa7s—Health. Of the mind, body, spirit, and outlook.

T'aks ta ámha nt'ákmen—Happiness. As individuals, families, and communities.

I Kelkla7lhkálha múta7 I cúzá áw'ta—Generations. Looking after those to come and the ancestors who gave us everything.

I slilqkálha—Generosity. Sharing not only resources but skills and knowledge.

Múzmitan—Pity. Have compassion not only for all animals and people, but with yourself as well.

S7á7xa sgélgel—Power. Strength of body, mind, and spirit.

áma sptínusmen—Good mind. Quietness. Knowing to always listen.

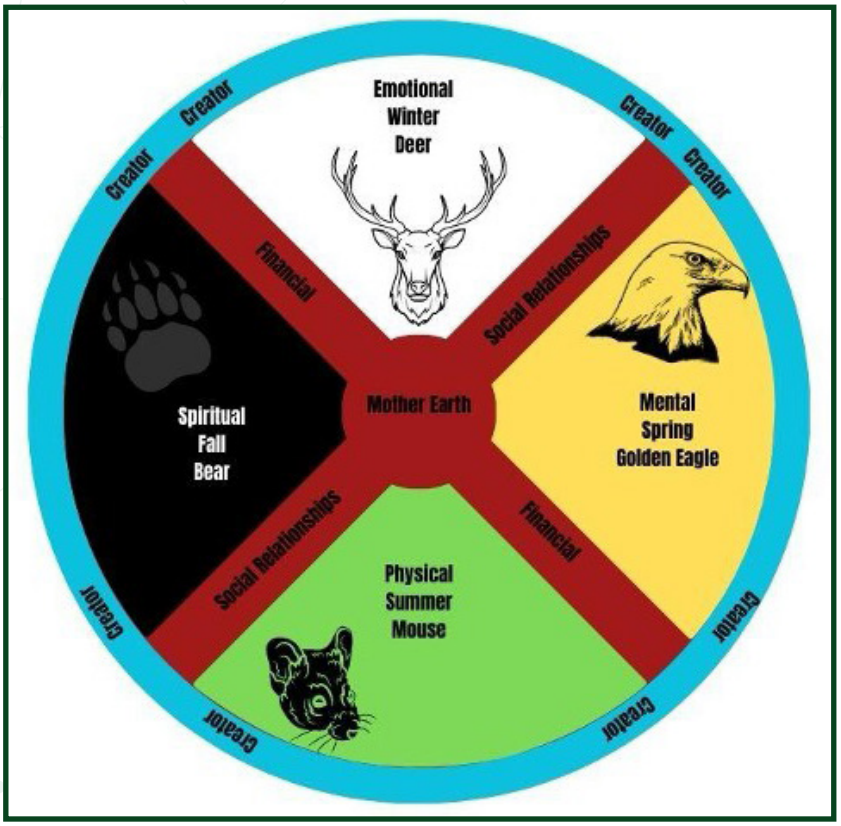
A vital part of and the first Law of Life is health. It's a holistic view of health, in that it encompasses not only the importance of a healthy body, mind, and spirit, but a healthy world as well. They are all intimately interconnected just as the Seven Laws are. Keeping the land healthy is necessary to maintain harmony between body, mind, and spirit. A healthy land gives us the food and exercise necessary for a healthy body, just as a healthy body gives us the tools we need to maintain a healthy mind. A healthy mind can acknowledge emotions and feelings, give them the attention they deserve, and know that as humans we have the gift to experience these emotions to the extent that we do. A healthy mind knows to ground itself in traditions, to learn how to care for the dead, infirm, and young. Religion is not necessary for a healthy spirit. A healthy spirit is spending time with your loved ones, attending ceremonies/gatherings, meditating, even a solitary walk on the land promotes a healthy spirit. Smudging, sweats, following your traditions and teachings are what a healthy spirit is. Mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual: These are all quadrants of the medicine wheel. Health is working to have all four quadrants aligned in harmony. Acknowledging that some are lacking and having the mindset to work on them is also *health*.

Through the teachings of health, there is also the St'at'imc medicine wheel. It shares the basic model of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical. The image of the medicine wheel included here was created by my younger sister Micah. Again, this medicine wheel is not documented and is passed on through oral teachings.

To ensure my spiritual quadrant is balanced I attend gatherings with my family and pick medicines with my grandma. Often these gatherings can be socially draining, but I am aware of the importance of witnessing and participating in these cultural settings.

My emotional quadrant is the one I must prioritize and ensure is always balanced. There are instances where I set boundaries because I know it will cause my spirit emotional distress that demonstrates itself as anxiety. In today's contemporary world balancing my mental quadrant is the easiest as I am consistently challenging my brain through audio books, real-time strategy games, and schooling. My physical quadrant has recently been improving since I have been

Picture 1.



attending the gym more regularly. It has become an important part of my routines. Actively ensuring my quadrants are balanced has been inspired and demonstrated through the matriarchs in my family: my grandma and my mom.

**Picture 2.**

**Caption:** My mom and I drumming at the 2023 St'at'imc Gathering.

There is no key to *happiness*; there isn't even a lockpick to happiness. That's because happiness isn't as simple as a locking mechanism, where the only two options are open or closed. Happiness is a puzzle to be solved, made up of hundreds of pieces of all different shapes and colours, and no clear image of the final product. And while it is certainly possible to finish a puzzle on your own, it's much easier when you have other people to lend their support when your eyes get strained. It's daunting, having to start a puzzle when all the pieces are strewn about, and you have no idea what to expect the finished product to look like. Similarly, with happiness, you must look through the chaos and find your corner pieces, those things that you can use to make everything else fit. The corner pieces are the four quadrants of the medicine wheel. Your mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health. You can't find happiness without the first Law of Life, just as you can't start your puzzle without those four corner pieces. This doesn't just refer to individual happiness, but also as a family and, further, as a community. You must make the decision to be happy, just as you must make the decision to finally take the puzzle out of the box and start it. You must ask yourself what drives you to finish the puzzle. What makes you happy when you wake up? Those things are your edge pieces. They are your framework that you use to support you as you work on finishing your puzzle. With this foundation the next path to attaining happiness is training. Training of the body, mind, spirit, and emotions. You must always be working to be a better you. Embrace life with its ups and downs and enjoy the ride.

My edge pieces that make me happy when I wake up are my sqáxay, Sage and my maw, Chungee. These two "pets" provide me with unconditional love (and snuggles). They also provide me with a responsibility to care for them and bring me daily joy. Having Sage and Chungee provides me with opportunities to be a better úcwalmicw (human), they allow me to embrace the ups and downs and remind me daily of the importance of looking after myself.

**Picture 3.**

The law of **generations** is the responsibility to honour the seven generations before and the seven generations to come. Every individual has a role and a responsibility to our seven generations. Our Elders train upcoming generations and our youth begin to be aware of their choices. Every decision we as St'at'imc make will

impact the past/present/future generations. The decisions of today impact and honour all generations. How can we honour our past generations? By taking care of the land, learning our language, immersing ourselves in our culture. How do we honour our future generations? By making choices that impact our land, language, and culture.

The St'at'imc Declaration signed on May 11, 1911, reflects this principle in its commitment to sustainable use of resources and protection of the land and the environment for future generations. The declaration also acknowledges the responsibility of present-day St'at'imc people to honour the seven generations who have come before them and the teachings and wisdom that have been passed down to them. By affirming the rights and inherent sovereignty of the St'at'imc people and recognizing their ongoing relationship with their ancestral lands and territories, the declaration also reinforces the importance of intergenerational continuity and connection. It recognizes that the actions taken today by governments and individuals have long-lasting consequences for future generations and encourages a more holistic and long-term approach to decision-making. Overall, the St'at'imc Declaration (n.d.) is both an affirmation of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination and a reminder that we all have a responsibility to honour the teachings and wisdom of our ancestors while also protecting the land and resources for future generations. Every year a different Nation in the St'at'imc territory honours this declaration and celebrates by continuing our tradition of gathering, singing, and drumming.

> "There is no power without our ancestors and their teachings and no better use for power than to look after our future generations to come."
>
> - Rylee Bull

> We the underwritten chiefs of the Lillooet tribe (being all the chiefs of said tribe) declare as follows:
> We speak the truth, and we speak for our whole tribe, numbering about 1400 people at the present time.
> We claim that we are the rightful owners of our tribal territory, and everything pertaining thereto.
> We have always lived in our country; at no time have we ever deserted it, or left it to others.
> We have retained it from the invasion of other tribes at the cost of our blood.
> Our ancestors were in possession of our country centuries before the whites ever came.
> It is the same as yesterday when the latter came, and like the day before when the first fur trader came.
> We are aware the B.C. government claims our country, like all other Indian territories in B.C.; but we deny their right to it.
> We never gave it nor sold it to them. (St'at'imc Nation, n.d.)

The law of Generosity is the responsibility to share resources. Resources that are renewable, non-renewable, and mental. It is the sharing of knowledge, language, culture, protocols as they are not ours to hold onto and keep to ourselves. We must share as much or as little as we know or have. Indigenous knowledge and their systems cannot succeed if we do not pass it on. My mom is currently in her second year of her Master-Apprentice Language learning; this is an active form of sharing knowledge. What she learns, she shares with me, my brother and sister. My mom's act of generosity in sharing knowledge has impacted me by inspiring me to learn more about who the St'at'imc are, who I am.

The Law of Pity and Compassion is to have the utmost compassion for oneself and for others. Compassion means to honour one another, to help, serve or learn more. This law requires one not to expect anything in return. It is a responsibility to look after the four-legged, the two-legged, the winged ones, the ones with fins in the water and the ones that grow from the land. I demonstrate this law through my relationship with my furry four-legged friends. My care and love for them is not reliant on what they can give me in return, but the act of caring for them and considering their needs makes me feel happy. Pity and compassion are supporting one another so much so that you trust another to look after or care for us. Our newborn babies are born with utmost pity and compassion and

**Picture 4.**


are full circle with looking after our Elders. When I was growing up, my grama was a big part of my childhood, she took care of me while my mom attended postsecondary school to become a teacher. Now that she is becoming an Elder—in-training (as she says)—it is my turn to look after her.

The Law of Power is the responsibility and the accountability of our actions. It encompasses discipline and training. When the Elders, Mentors or Spiritual members have passed on their knowledge and their guidance, then the responsibility of power is to share and serve the people. These gifts and resources are not ones to own but are to disseminate to our youth and keep the traditions and protocols alive. This Law of Power encompasses the humility of teaching and of leadership. The accumulated wealth, knowledge and resources acquired over time is demonstrated and the ability to share the teachings is demonstrated. The transfer of that power is to become wisdom, and it benefits both the self and those receiving it. I envision myself becoming someone that can fulfill this Law of Power. For now, I am learning.

The last Law of Quietness is the responsibility to maintain moments of quietness. It's about going back to mind, body, and spirit and listening to the old teaching. Quietness means to always listen and be aware of any dangers that may happen. Quietness goes back to spirituality, to taking time to be alone. Quietness is being able to sit by yourself in meditation, ceremony. This allows you to be one with yourself, provide reflection and personal growth. Quietness is often the most challenging law for many, the ability to be quiet, reflect, and be alone. For me, though, it is as easy and natural as breathing. It would take conscious effort to cease—and why would you?

Imagine a world that followed these laws.

## References

Archibald, J. A. (2008). Storywork: Indigenous knowledge, and the teacher education experience. UBC Press.

Grizzlypaws, L. (2022). Medicine Wheel Teachings [FNST 2200]. Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops[JHJ12].

St'at'imc Nation. (n.d.). Lillooet Declaration. https://statimc.ca/about/lillooet-declaration/.

Individual nations must be central to discussions as to what constitutes educational success and how that can be achieved within the institutions still inhabiting their unceded lands.

~ *Jeneen Herns-Jensen*

TRU Open Press

# Sierra William

Tsilhqot'in (Nemiah Valley)
Human Services Diploma
Thompson Rivers University

## KNOWLEDGE MAKERS

Sid suzi Sierra William hant'ih. Xeni Gwet'in neskl'in, se? inkwel Shannon Stump, Se? aba Roger William. Hello, my name is Sierra William. I am from Nemiah Valley; my mom is Shannon Stump, and my dad is Roger William. My mom was born in Anaham. She lived out of Anaham for a while. She attended Day School. My dad Roger William went to a Residential School in Williams Lake, then went to Kamloops Indian Residential School. I have four older siblings: Colten Wycotte is the oldest, then Linden William, Liam William, and Shania Stump. I am the youngest. My siblings and I are the first generations of our family not to go to a Residential School.

I grew up in Anaham and Nemiah Valley, two communities that are smaller in comparison to the cities around them. I went from playing in the dirt to running around with my cousins playing games. Then, I moved to Kamloops for university. I chose to go to university in Kamloops because it is close to my hometown, I have family in Kamloops, and it wouldn't be quite as big of a change for me. I went to university right after high school because I wanted new experiences away from home that encouraged me to get out of my comfort zone. I am very thankful to have both parents in my life. I am grateful to have considerable knowledge of my culture back home. During the summers growing up I went to all the community gatherings, and during these gatherings I learned the songs, language, and different stories about my community and territory. In my culture, our learning happens through various levels and it is critical you learn one before moving on to the next. When a youth gets in trouble, they bring all the kids and tell a story based on the incident that happened. Our doing this does not single out one youth in the group, but rather provides a teaching for all who listen. They would also have a talent show, and my childhood best friends and I would always sing and drum songs. I learned a lot about my culture by being out on the land, camping, horseback riding, and hiking.

I am in my third year of studies at university and my first year in human services. My goal in the next five years is to obtain my social work degree and work for my Nation. In my Nation, we need Indigenous social workers. Unfortunately, few Indigenous people are in the social work field in my community and hometown. With the knowledge I have the one I gain; I want to give back to my community by creating a program for Indigenous youth. Sechanaʔin gulin in Tsilhqot'in

**Picture 1.**

**Source:** Photo retrieved from https://denisiqi.org/about-us/

means "Thank you from the bottom of my heart." I choose this Tsilhqot'in saying because I want to thank everyone who has supported me to get this far in life. This program I intend on creating will include resources around Xeni Gwet'in, like Denisiqi and First Nations Health Authority (FNHA). I also want to ensure they include ways to help people with self-care, and resources for how to use storytelling for mental health and cultural health. In the next few paragraphs, I outline current programs that exist within my community to assist readers in understanding what's currently available in this region. I also discuss how I hope to bring them together so more people are aware of how to access them, and reflect on my personal experiences with these services.

Denisiqi in Chilcotin means "The people's children" (Denisiqi Services Society, n.d.). Denisiqi is a family service located in Williams Lake, British Columbia. They deliver community-based, culturally appropriate child and family programs to the ʔEsdilagh, Xeni Gwet'in, Tsideldel, Yunesit'in, Tl'esqox and Ulkatchot'en (Denisiqi Services Society, n.d.). The programs they currently have include Aboriginal Supported Child Development & Aboriginal Infant Development, Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Outreach Program, Family Care & Family Support Workers Program, Delegated Services & Voluntary Services, Aboriginal Family Group Conferencing, Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health Program (ACYMH), Youth Services, Cultural Learning Centre, and Jordan's Principle (Denisiqi Services Society, n.d.). Denisiqi has a fantastic team, which is unique because they have a diverse group with different cultures and backgrounds. I have had a counsellor from Denisiqi, and my experience with her was excellent. She is Caucasian but very self-aware and respectful of our culture. Her counselling helped me become more self-aware of other people's actions and provided me with healthy coping methods for when I overthink a situation. The counsellors from Denisiqi (Denisiqi Services Society, n.d.) go into communities and provide support where it is needed. For example, during the summer, they have many events planned for the youth, like going out on the land, learning drum songs, and learning what medicines to pick during a particular time. They are culturally based in the communities surrounding them,

**Picture 2.**

**Source:** Photo retrieved from https://nstq.ca/

which allows them to create a safe entry point to healing in a culturally appropriate manner (Denisiqi Services Society, n.d.).

Northern Secwepemc te Qelmucw (NStQ) is a service in Williams Lake for Secwepemc people. On the website NStQ states that their main goal is "reclaiming jurisdiction for children and families by revitalizing traditional laws and customs through exploration of programs and services that support communities" (Northern Secwepemc te Qelmucw, 2023). This organization works with four surrounding Bands: Tsq'escen', Williams Lake First Nations Band, Canim Lake Band, and Stswecem'c. They also have Aboriginal Victim services based on traditional knowledge from elders, and provide justice-related services to Indigenous victims of all types of crime (Northern Secwepemc te Qelmucw, 2023). This includes victims of crime who would rather not be involved in the criminal justice system and providing them with an alternative based on traditional ways of knowledge. This service provides support to Indigenous people living in both rural and urban centres, and features multiple resources.

Within the program that I plan on developing within my community, there are two main elements I want to highlight as they are important to not only myself but the community overall for our personal healing journeys. The first component is self-care. What is self-care?

Self-care is when you take the time to do the activities/hobbies you like. According to the Wisconsin Lawyers Assistance Program (2021) "Self-care refers to the steps you can take to create a life for yourself that you don't need to escape from" (para. 9). The article goes on to ask What brings you joy? then refers to the steps you can take to create a life for yourself that you don't need to escape from" (Wisconsin Lawyers Assistance Program, 2021). Self-care is not just taking a bath, doing skincare, or working out. It is also taking the time to check in with yourself. In the process of colonization, many Indigenous people were banned from practicing any sort of traditional forms of self-care or seeking mental health supports, but it's evident within communities that engaging in traditional practices can be deeply healing (WeRNative.org, 2021).

My go-to inspiration is the understanding that to care for your family, friends, or community, you first need to take care of yourself. Some Indigenous studies that focused on self-care such as that completed by Barwin et al. (2013) found that self-care practices contribute to both individual and community health. This is because self-care promotes a sense of autonomy, self-determination and cultural resurgence that promotes overall better mental health (Barwin et al., 2013). Some traditional healing practices that can be considered self-care are the act of harvesting and creating traditional medicines, spending time in water to ease stress, performing traditional dance, and spending time with elders (WeRNative.org, 2021). What kinds of things can you do for self-care? Riding horses, hiking, swimming, journal writing, sewing, dancing, drawing, painting, making things, and hanging out with family and friends. Self-care does not have to make sense to people as long as it brings you joy and does not harm you or others. Within the program that I intend to create, I want to showcase the fact that all of us are capable of practicing self-care to increase our sense of mental and community well-being.

The secondary element that I want to showcase in the program I plan on creating with my community is how to utilize storytelling. Storytelling is and has been one of the most foundational forms of communicating for millennia, transmitting large ideals, culture, identity, and ethics (Palacios et al., 2014). By incorporating storytelling into my program, I want to create a space for the youth to be self-aware of their actions and other people's actions. I will be sharing stories from my culture that I know personally, as well as requesting an elder to come in to talk about the story. After telling the story, I will ask the youth to analyze the story and ask questions such as: is the character in the story a good or bad person? Why are they good people, or what makes them wrong in the story? We encourage youth to analyze and think critically when asking these questions. We can incorporate these teachings into real-life situations with strangers, friends, partners, or family. Being self-aware helps people on their healing journey. Utilizing storytelling to assist people in sharpening this tool in a culturally safe way will provide resources for those experiencing negative mental health.

"In the process of colonization, many Indigenous people were banned from practicing any sort of traditional forms of self-care or seeking mental health supports, but it's evident within communities that engaging in traditional practices can be deeply healing."

- Sierra William

When this program is created, we will make the agenda of topics we want to discuss. We will have services available for youth to check out, as well as ongoing workshops on self-care and the types of activities or actions considered self-care. Having the storytelling piece involved is essential. It makes the workshop more interesting by using different characters for different reasons, for example. One character may have bad intentions for their friend, but her other friend may have good intentions. When doing the storytelling, it will not just be sitting in a circle discussing it but being out on the land, being at a gathering, on a camping trip, a horseback ride, or hiking. That engaging piece about stories is essential so that youth grasp what we teach them in the program. Storytelling is a powerful tool for identity formation and understanding the world around us. It is also used to teach ethics and values and allows us to connect and reflect on the strength of our

ancestors (Friskie, 2020). Stories also reflect the unique context that we live in and allow us to make sense of the things happening around us by examining the events up close, and choosing which components we wish to incorporate into our own life narrative (Friskie, 2020).

My main goal in creating this program is to share resources and information with the youth because growing up, I was very fortunate to learn a lot about my culture, but not all Indigenous youth are. Actively learning about my culture has made me who I am today. Since I am still at Thompson Rivers University for my practicum, I have learned about most of the services for Indigenous youth that are accessible. I want to give back to my community and Indigenous youth in the surrounding area. I grew up in a small community, but with the knowledge I have gained and the support I have gotten, I want to show Indigenous youth that it does not matter where you come from—what matters is what you make of your life situation now and your impact on others today. If you believe in yourself, you will make it far in life. I want to make a difference not only for myself but for Indigenous youth. For me, making a difference means first taking care of myself before I take care of anyone else. If I am not undertaking self-care, I lack the support to help others get to where they want to be.

## References


Barwin, L., Shawande, M., Crighton, E., & Veronis, L. (2013). Teachings around self-care and medicine gathering in Manitoulin Island, Ontario: Rebuilding capacity begins with youth. Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, 11(3).

Denisiqi Services Society. (n.d.) Home. https://denisiqi.org/

Friskie, S. M. (2020). The healing power of storytelling: Finding identity through narrative. The Arbutus Review, 11(1), 19–27. https://doi.org/10.18357/tar111202019324.

Northern Secwepemc te Qelmucw. (2023, April 14). Northern Shuswap Tribal Council. https://nstq.ca/

Palacios, J. F., Salem, B., Hodge, F. S., Albarrán, C. R., Anaebere, A., & Hayes-Bautista, T. M. (2014). Storytelling: A qualitative tool to promote health among vulnerable populations. Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 26(4), 346–353. https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659614524253.

WeRNative.org. (2021). Indigenizing your self-care. We R Native. https://www.wernative.org/articles/indigenizing-your-self-care.

Wisconsin Lawyers Assistance Program (2021, May 14). What brings you joy? Taking time for self-care. State Bar of Wisconsin. https://www.wisbar.org/NewsPublications/WisconsinLawyer/Pages/Article.aspx?Volume=94&Issue=5&ArticleID=28389.

Olivia Lane
Métis
BA Psychology
Thompson Rivers University

# INCARCERATED INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: WHO DOES RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ACTUALLY BENEFIT?

Tanashi, Olivia dishinihkaashoon. Sechelt, Shíshálh Nation d'ooschchiin. Nikish-chiitayeemoon aen li Michif wiiyaan. My name is Olivia Lane, and I am a proud Métis woman who grew up on the unceded ancestral territories of the Shíshálh Nation on the Sunshine Coast in British Columbia. I am now a graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and a minor in sociology. At the beginning of my degree, I learned about my Indigenous heritage. Just like many other Indigenous people, my grandfather was shamed into hiding who he was having attended an Industrial School, robbing not only himself but our family of our culture. After learning about the trauma my grandfather experienced, my mother pushed us to reclaim our Indigeneity. Because of this, throughout my degree, I have sought out many ways to not only reconnect to my culture but to also decolonize my academic pursuits.

As an Indigenous student in academia, particularly within the field of psychology, you never really feel like you belong. There is only one Indigenous professor in the Faculty of Arts at Thompson Rivers University and not very many Indigenous students choose to study this program. Additionally, throughout course content, Indigenous Peoples are frequently represented through negative stereotypes of criminality, often as an example of an overrepresented population in the justice system. Having been exposed to these negative stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples and being driven by my aspiration to advance my education within a forensic context, I delved into the subject of Restorative Justice.

In the context of Restorative Justice, the question arises as to whether justice and forgiveness can coexist. In a society governed by methodical procedures, the role of forgiveness, especially in cases involving the violation of the law, is often disregarded. In Canada, our criminal justice system focuses on three things: the law that was broken, the one who broke the law by committing the crime(s), and a suitable punishment (Elliott, 2011). Forgiveness has not been adequately considered in our current criminal justice system. In a society grappling with issues of recidivism, overpopulation in prisons, and marginalized communities being disproportionately affected by the criminal justice system, the relevance of Restorative Justice becomes apparent. Restorative Justice is a movement toward a more community- and victim-based system of justice and has grown in popularity since the late 1980s, drawing inspiration from Indigenous traditions of community-based restitution (Barmaki, 2022). Beyond its Indigenous roots, Restorative Justice has garnered attention from policymakers, scholars, and community leaders alike, all of whom recognize its potential to shift the focus from punishment to prevention, from isolation to integration. This shift has led to a national conversation about the broader implications of Restorative Justice on redefining the very meaning of justice itself. However, despite the surface-level promises made by restorative practices and the intention for this method to assist the Indigenous population in the criminal justice system, it is not yielding the intended benefits among Indigenous Peoples.

To comprehend the lack of benefit that

Restorative Justice brings to Indigenous Peoples, it is important to delve into how Restorative Justice has evolved into a process that has co-opted Indigenous systems and implemented them within the western criminal justice system. This can be achieved by examining the historical context of colonial overpolicing of Indigenous Peoples and their disproportionate representation in the prison system, which perpetuates a cycle of appropriation and oppression. This cycle underscores the fact that Restorative Justice does not yield advantageous outcomes for Indigenous communities.

## The Northwest Mounted Police

The development of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is rooted in colonialist ideologies of control and assimilation. Originally referred to as the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP), it was created in 1873 by the Canadian Parliament due to the Cypress Hills massacre and the increasing number of conflicts on the US border caused by alcohol smuggling that required a military-style police force response (University of Saskatchewan, 2019). However, most historians agree that the primary reason for establishing the NWMP was to control Indigenous Peoples as the federal government attempted to establish sovereignty during their westward expansion in the Prairie West (Ayala & Carrington, 2016). Officers were entrusted with magisterial powers, which meant that they possessed the ability to enforce Canadian law at their own discretion and were viewed "as a self-contained instrument of colonial-law" (Nettelbeck & Smandych, 2010). This meant officers "acted as Justices of the Peace and were able to apprehend and sentence offenders" (University of Saskatchewan, 2019).

Additionally, officers could impose the Indian Act and assisted Indian Agents with the ration system, enforced laws requiring Indigenous students to attend Residential Schools and administered the Pass System on reserves (University of Saskatchewan, 2019). Due to this, historians have suggested that the NWMP was virtually a separate tool of the larger governmental entity (Nettelbeck & Smandych, 2010). Thus, the NWMP was deployed to suppress Indigenous populations' sovereignty to ensure the effective occupation of the colonial state by bringing them within the reach of colonial authority. Current police-Indigenous relations are a byproduct of the historical reality in which NWMP, now RCMP, acted as an active arm of colonialism for the Canadian government. This historical context fuels a sense of mistrust, suspicion, and resentment many Indigenous people feel toward law enforcement officers. This can be seen clearly within Statistics Canada (2020) data that states 22% of Indigenous people actively distrust police, which is double the proportion of those who are not a visible minority.

## Overrepresentation in the Justice System

Due to colonial ideologies of systemic racism influencing policing today, Indigenous Peoples are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. While Indigenous Peoples only make up 4.6% of the Canadian population (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2024), Indigenous Peoples make up 32% of incarcerated individuals within our criminal justice system (Blackburn, et al., 2022). Indigenous Peoples are also six to seven times more likely to be incarcerated compared with their non-Indigenous counterparts who have committed similar offenses (Tubex et al., 2021). When compared across provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba hold the highest rates of incarcerated Indigenous Peoples at 76.2% and 73.7% of their prison population respectively (Trotchie, 2022). These numbers are alarming because they indicate that the prairies are incarcerating Indigenous Peoples at a much higher percentage than other provinces and are experiencing "what one would call an over incarceration epidemic of Indigenous people" (Trotchie, 2022).

A 2019 report from Stewart et al. found that recidivism rates for the Canadian general population over a two-year release period were 24% for men and 12% for women; for Indigenous Peoples, this increased to 38% for men and 20% for women. When examined over an extended 5-year period, recidivism rates for non-Indigenous men increased to 38%, while rates for Indigenous men increased to 60% (Stewart et al., 2019). Additionally, after release from incarceration, Indigenous offenders face a risk factor for death that is six times the national average, which is largely attributed to drug overdose and suicide (Singh et al., 2019). This risk

of death further increases the longer the individual is incarcerated (Singh et al., 2019). One leading explanation for this increase is the lack of cultural connection Indigenous offenders experience when in prison (Tubex et al., 2021).

*Cultural Disconnect Experienced During Incarceration*

A strong cultural identity, while important for all populations and ethnic groups, has special and significantly increased importance for Indigenous Peoples (Shepherd et al., 2017). A strong connection to cultural identity has been shown to provide individuals with an enduring sense of "belonging, purpose, social support and self-worth" (Shepherd et al., 2018). As seen in an Australian study comprising both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, a strong cultural identity was found "to promote resilience, enhance self-esteem, engender pro-social coping styles and has served as a protective mechanism against mental health symptoms" (Shepherd et al., 2018, p.1). Shepherd et al. (2018) also found that when released from incarceration, recidivism rates decreased at a significant rate when offenders were reconnected with a strong sense of cultural engagement in their respective communities.

This supports one of Tubex et al.'s (2021) findings, that removal of Indigenous members from their community poses a two-fold problem. First, when youth are incarcerated, they risk losing their sense of cultural identity which also puts the community at risk by significantly reducing the chance that valuable traditional knowledge will be passed down from their elders (Tubex et al., 2021). Second, when adults, including Elders, are removed from their communities, younger community members risk losing the traditional knowledge that could be passed down from the incarcerated individual (Tubex et al., 2021). This predicament has the potential to cause harm for both the offender and the offender's larger community—a problem not seen to nearly the same extent in non-Indigenous communities, making it an important issue to address.

## Restorative Justice

There are a variety of understandings regarding what Restorative Justice practices entail. Restorative Justice requires the assumption that crimes or violations are committed against real individuals, rather than against the state. Restorative Justice, therefore, advocates restitution to the victim by the offender rather than retribution by the state against the offender (Elliott, 2011). Instead of continuing or escalating the cycle of violence, it tries to restore relationships and stop the violence. Due to this, as stated by Vieille (2013) Restorative Justice is frequently described as a more humane and inclusive response to crime. Additionally, Restorative Justice is often depicted as a process where the victim and offender come together to resolve and collectively decide how to deal with the aftermath of the offense (Vieille, 2013). These ideologies composing Restorative Justice can be broken down into four elements as follows: (a) active participation and engagement, (b) community involvement and ownership, (c) informality and flexibility, and (d) restoration (Vieille, 2013).

*Active Participation and Engagement*

Restorative processes encourage the voluntary attendance and participation of both the victim and offender (Vielle, 2012). By having both parties participate, Restorative Justice provides a space where victims and their offender(s) can discuss a crime and explore how it has affected each of them (Vielle, 2012). According to Vielle (2012) this provides "victims and offenders an opportunity to participate in and interact with the process, in a respectful and less antagonistic manner" (p. 175) and in turn allowing for a more conducive expression of grievances and reconciliation between both parties. In other words, Restorative Justice centers on acknowledging the harm and needs experienced by those affected by a crime, while also addressing the obligations that emerge from the process of restitution (Zehr, 2002). It can empower both victims and offenders, offering them the opportunity to select their desired outcomes from the justice process. In addition, Restorative Justice often encourages a face-to-face encounter between both parties in an attempt to encourage truth-telling and foster reconciliation (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999).

*Community Involvement and Ownership*

A unique aspect of restorative practices is how the participation of the community is central

to the effectiveness of Restorative Justice. As Zellerer (1999) stated, "The problems that are happening in the communities can only be fixed by the people in the community" (p. 348). This existence of profound familial connections and a robust sense of communal cooperation can be regarded among the strengths inherent in Indigenous communities (Zellerer, 1999). From many Indigenous Nations' perspectives, criminal justice is about relationships involving reciprocity, solidarity, and process. It's important to grasp how one's actions affected others (Mallon, 2013). Due to this, Restorative Justice is a holistic approach that focuses not only on the victim, but also on the offender and the community (Bazemore, 1999). It introduces a perspective wherein processes not only acknowledge the societal ramifications of a crime but also underscore the significance of perceiving the offense as a shared predicament that necessitates the collective involvement of the community for its resolution (Vielle, 2012). The presence and support provided by the community both destigmatizes the process for all involved, and allows the offender to be held accountable by others around them (Vielle, 2012). In other words, the offender's community "should actively participate in the decision-making process with regard to the measures to be taken for redress and restoration" (Vielle, 2012, p. 176) due to crime affecting more than just the offender.

An example of community involvement through restorative practices is Family Group Conferencing (FGC). This method draws parallels with Indigenous customary community traditions, resembling the role of a familial clan assembly set up in the structure of a talking circle. In this setting, the victim, perpetrator, relatives, friends, colleagues, educators, and Elders convene to collectively assume accountability for both the victim and the wrongdoer. The FGC methodology emerged as a contemporary approach in New Zealand in 1989, drawing on the traditional practices of the Māori (Moyle et al., 2016). It has now been widely used in Indigenous child welfare practice in Canada (Brown et al., 2001), and it is currently being used for most juvenile offenses within the Youth Criminal Justice Act (Mallon, 2013). In other words, FGC provides a chance to involve the community of people who are affected by the crime the most, such as the victims, offenders, family, and friends. FGC usually starts with the offender describing the incident, followed by each participant outlining the incident's impact on their lives. This process lets the victim be directly involved in talking about the offense and deciding what consequences the person who did wrong should face. It also makes the person who did wrong realize how their actions impacted others and lets them take responsibility for it. Additionally, FGC helps both offenders and victims reconnect with the community's support systems (Elliott, 2011).

*Informality and Flexibility*

Restorative approaches can also be more adaptable within a state's legal framework, compared to retributive methods. This adaptability is accompanied by a relatively informal nature. Unlike the formal court system, restorative practices incorporate victims' personal experiences and respond to their needs. This means Restorative Justice addresses "whatever dimensions of restoration matter to the victims, offenders and communities affected by the crime" (Vieille, 2012). Regarding flexibility, restorative processes can be reorganized in a manner that suits both the type of offense and the needs of the victims in dealing with harm. This allows the examination of incidents that might not be directly connected to the investigated crime but are linked to its root causes (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2006). For example, an offender's socioeconomic status can be examined to understand why they chose to commit theft. This flexibility and informality of restorative practices allow outcomes that can satisfy and correspond to the needs of all those affected.

*Restoration*

A fundamental aspect of Restorative Justice involves rehabilitating and reconciling those who are primarily impacted by harm. Restorative processes require the offender to face not only the legal, but also the emotional and physical impact a crime has on those affected by their actions (Vieille, 2012). As mentioned earlier, the flexibility inherent in the restorative process is a significant advantage, enabling customization to suit the participants' needs. This adaptability empowers participants to create strategies that resonate with their understanding and choices.

The dialogues among offenders, victims, and their communities are recognized for their therapeutic impact on everyone involved. The sharing of experiences directly contributes to the restoration of dignity for the victims (Villa-Vicencio & Du Toit, 2007). At the same time, acknowledging the experiences of the wrongdoers is a "crucial step towards their taking responsibility and being accountable for their actions" (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999, p. 51). In practice this can look like a variety of things, for example, repairing broken items, volunteering time, receiving education, or working to address wrongs done for many years afterward depending on the severity of the crime (Elliott, 2011).

## Restorative Justice

The Restorative Justice model garners increasing attention as it holds the possibility to be an all-encompassing community substitute for the criminal court system, yet questions have arisen about how accurately restorative methods can truly reflect Indigenous justice practices and philosophies (Daly, 2009; Vieille, 2013). For example, the restorative approach to justice is said to have its roots in customary practices such as healing circles (Vieille, 2012). Although restorative principles are rooted in Indigenous cultures and traditions, the realm of Restorative Justice has significantly broadened to encompass various non-Indigenous alternative dispute resolution processes. As argued by Roche (2004) within the article written by Vieille (2013), this has led to Restorative Justice becoming a "unifying banner sweeping up a number of informal traditions of justice and capturing the imagination of many of those interested in reforming the criminal justice system" (p. 175). In other words, this allows a wide range of judicial practices to be absorbed into restorative practices. The question then becomes: are these processes being co-opted into the dominant framework of criminal justice without creating actual structural change?

While some initiatives under the banner of Restorative Justice have been developed in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, a large majority have not, and this has resulted in a one-size-fits-all approach to Restorative Justice being taught and implemented. Littlewolf et al. (2020) frame the current implementation of Restorative Justice as colonial given how it does not honor its Indigenous roots, as "it remains situated and acted out within a western, white supremist, cisgender, male dominated system" (p. 87). For example, Restorative Justice practices are often described and sold to the public as attempts to "reinstate old ways of addressing current problems" or as a reclamation of traditional Indigenous practices that can better address harms than the colonial legal system, which is in operation today (Linklater, p. 99, 2014). However, Indigenous led empirical studies have collected evidence revealing that Restorative Justice as it is currently used is both harmful and disempowering for both Indigenous Peoples and communities (Linklater, 2016). Settlers have benefited disproportionately by what Tauri (2022) calls the Restorative Justice industry, where non-Indigenous companies and individuals have created for-profit businesses that claim to provide a more culturally responsive approach to justice. Indigenous counter-narratives instead assert that Indigenous ways of knowing have been stolen, co-opted, and colonized to be sold back to Indigenous Peoples as a way of glossing over and repackaging criminal justice frameworks to be more appealing (Tauri, 2008). These claims that Restorative Justice has undergone an image overhaul as a public relations response rather than a structural framework overhaul can be supported by the fact that Restorative Justice has not halted mass incarceration of Indigenous Peoples to this day.

There is no evidence to suggest that incarceration rates of Indigenous people have decreased in prison populations (Wood, 2015). In fact, in Canada, MacIntosh and Angrove (2012) found that non-Indigenous offenders benefit more frequently from these sentencing reforms than Indigenous offenders, and over incarceration has worsened since the Gladue principles were enacted in 1996 (Department of Justice, 2016). Despite restorative practices and Indigenous justice programs being available since the 1990s, the crisis of overrepresentation of both Indigenous adults and youth as both victims and offenders at every stage of the justice system continues to worsen each year" (Malakieh, p. 8, 2019). Much of this can be attributed to the fact that despite the restorative practices outlined in this approach, state actors still work as gatekeepers to decide which cases are considered appropriate for

> "While some initiatives under the banner of Restorative Justice have been developed in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, a large majority have not, and this has resulted in a one-size-fits-all approach to Restorative Justice being taught and implemented."
>
> - Olivia Lane

Indigenous justice initiatives (Abramson & Asadullah, 2023). Policies and funding also limit the impact that Indigenous justice programs can have, and this work is further complicated by artificial timelines and lack of resources to manage Restorative Justice cases (Abramson & Asadullah, 2023). Regardless of the intention of Restorative Justice practitioners, continuing to utilize Restorative Justice practices embedded within dominant systems rather than as a separate entity works to replicate "the same power dynamics and oppression that has shaped the criminal justice system and broader society" (Dashmen et al, p. 23, 2021).

## Moving Forward

How do we move forward in a system where Restorative Justice is being used as a colonial band aid for unresolved structural issues? I do not have the answers but ideally discussing how this tool for community wellness has been used in such a performative nature can open the door for alternatives. The largest barrier is the fact that there is very little information and evidence collected to analyze how Restorative Justice works in a Canadian context. Without first identifying the problem in its implementation and being able to determine what that is, it becomes incredibly difficult to propose effective solutions.

One important way forward would be to first speak to the Nations whose land the correctional facilities and criminal justice systems are on and determine how their leadership would like to handle Restorative Justice reform. Although there are similarities among Indigenous Nations, each Nation and community has different beliefs and practices that can be integrated into reforming this system. Viewing Restorative Justice as it exists with its large umbrella of practices is clearly not working, and it would be beneficial to view each structure within the context it currently sits to determine how best to begin to make impactful changes.

In addition, implementing culturally safe restitutional alternatives and creating more opportunities for cultural engagement can benefit incarcerated Indigenous Peoples. For example, Healing Lodges that are designed as culturally appropriate services that offer reform through Indigenous values, traditions, and beliefs could be an alternative way to assist Indigenous Peoples' healing (Correctional Service Canada, 2021). Currently only 10 Healing Lodges exist Canada-wide. This number is not high enough for large-scale change, but offers promising results in an authentic and respectful environment. Furthermore, creating the opportunity for incarcerated individuals to engage with their culture such as through drum circles can provide a strong cultural identity to prevent recidivism. As stated by Shepherd et al. (2018) a strong cultural tie lowers recidivism rates. Since Indigenous Peoples are still overrepresented in the carceral justice system, it's evident that interventions tried up to this point are not working as designed and that Restorative Justice needs to be systematically reformed.

## References

Abramson, A., & Asadullah, M. (2023). Decolonizing restorative justice . In The Routledge International Handbook on Decolonizing Justice (1st ed., pp.

367–379). essay, Routledge.

Ayala, A., & Carrington, P. J. (2016). Interdependence and colonization: Metis auxiliaries and the north-west mounted police, 1874–1895. Great Plains Quarterly, 36(2), 101–130. https://doi.org/10.1353/gpq.2016.0030.

Barmaki, R. (2022). On the incompatibility of 'Western' and Aboriginal views of Restorative Justice in Canada: a claim based on an understanding of the Cree justice. Contemporary Justice Review, 25(1), 24–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2021.2018654

Bazemore, G. (1999). Crime victims, restorative justice and the juvenile court: Exploring victim needs and involvement in the response to youth crime. International Review of Victimology, 6, 295–320.

Blackburn, M., Needham, F., & Needham, M. B. F. (2022, November 1). Prison system in Canada has changed little in past decade: Report. APTN News. https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/canadas-prison-system-has-changed-little-for-indigenous-peoples-report/#:~:text=The%20report%20shows%2032%20per,made%20up%20of%20Indigenous%20peoples.

Brown, I., Chaze. F., Fuchs, D., Lafrance, J., McKay, S., & Thomas Prokop, S. (Eds.). Putting a human face on child welfare: Voices from the Prairie. Prairie Child Welfare Consortium / Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare.

Correctional Services Canada. (2021, March 22). Indigenous healing lodges. Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/correctional-service/programs/offenders/indigenous-corrections/healing-lodges.html

Dashman, M., Culberg, K., Dean, D., Lemler, A., Luinamsky, M., & Shackfood-Bradley, J. (2021). Bringing a racial justice consciousness to the restorative justice movement: A call to white practition-ers. In T. Lewis & C. Stauffer (Eds.), Listening to the movement: Essays on new growth and new challenges in restorative justice (pp. 21–35). Cascade Books.

Department of Justice. (2016). Youth criminal justice in Canada: A compendium of statistics.

Elliott, E. M. (2011). Security, with care: Restorative justice and Healthy Societies. Fernwood Publications.

Linklater, R. (2014). Decolonizing trauma work: Indigenous stories & strategies. Fernwood.

Littlewolf, W., Armster, M. P., & Paras, C. (2020). Burn the bridge. In E. Valandra & W. Hoksila (Eds.), Colorizing restorative justice: Voicing our realities (pp. 87–100). Living Justice Press.

MacIntosh, C., & Angrove, G. (2012). Developments in Aboriginal law: The 2011-2012 term – charter

rights, constitutional rights, taxation and sentencing. The Supreme Court Law Review, 59(2), 1–50.

Malakieh, J. (2019). Adult correctional statistics in Canada, 2017/2018. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00016-eng.htm

Mallon, D. (2013, September 10). Restorative Justice practices in tribal courts. Pine Tree Legal Assistance. https://ptla.org/wabanaki/restorative-justice-practices-tribal-courts.

Moyle, P., & Tauri, J. M. (2016). Māori, family group conferencing and the mystifications of restorative justice. Victims & Offenders, 11(1), 87–106. https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2015.1135496.

Nettelbeck, A., & Smandych, R. (2010). Policing Indigenous peoples on two colonial frontiers: Australia's Mounted Police and Canada's north-west mounted police. Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 43(2), 356–375. https://doi.org/10.1375/acri.43.2.356.

Shepherd, S. M., Delgado, R. H., Sherwood, J., & Paradies, Y. (2017). The impact of indigenous cultural identity and cultural engagement on violent offending. BMC Public Health, 18(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-017-4603-2

Singh, D., Prowse, S., & Anderson, M. (2019). Overincarceration of Indigenous people: A health crisis. Canadian

Medical Association Journal, 191(18). https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.181437.

Stewart, L., Wilton, G., & Miller, R. (2019). A Comprehensive study of recidivism rates among Canadian federal offenders. Correctional Service of Canada. https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/research/005008-r426-en.shtml.

Tauri, J. M. (2022). What exactly are you restoring us to? A critical examination of Indigenous experiences of state-centred restorative justice. The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice, 61(1), 53–67. https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12459.

Trotchie, L (2020). The Prairie province epidemic: A cry for the meaningful inclusion of the Indigenous perspective into the sentencing of Indigenous People and Gladue [Master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan]. HARVEST. https://hdl.handle.net/10388/13938.

Tubex, H., Rynne, J., & Blagg, H. (2021). Throughcare for Indigenous Peoples leaving prison: Practices in two settler colonial states. European Journal of Probation, 13(3), 282–300. https://doi.org/10.1177/20662203211044956.

University of Saskatchewan. (2019). Creation of the north-west mounted police. https://gladue.usask.ca/index.php/node/2853#:~:text=The%20NWMP%20was%20successful%20in,benefit%20settler%20farmers%20and%20ranchers.

Vieille, S. (2013). Frenemies: restorative justice and customary mechanisms of justice. Contemporary Justice Review, 16(2), 174–192. https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2012.734570

Villa-Vicencio, C., & du Toit, F. (2007). Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Ten Years On. David Philip.

Wood, W. (2015). Why restorative justice will not reduce incarceration. British Journal of Criminology, 55, 883–900.

Zehr, H. (2002). The Little Book of Restorative Justice. Good Books.

Zellerer, E. (1999). Restorative Justice in Indigenous communities: Critical issues in confronting violence against women. International Review of Victimology, 6(4), 345–358. https://doi.org/10.1177/026975809900600406.

# Peyton Anderson

Nuxalk
Research Assistant, All My Relations
Thompson Rivers University


## LAND RIGHTS IN A THEORETICAL SENSE

As opposed to viewing land rights and title and the systemic issues surrounding its cases, in the more literal sense, this narrative piece will delve into the theoretical incompatibilities between Indigenous nations and the Canadian colonial legal system. Encapsulated within the "theoretical" is the ideological, for the purposes of this examination, because for Indigenous peoples in Canada, they are often interconnected. The relationship that Indigenous peoples have to the land is something inconceivable in the Western framework. The relationship is reciprocal, interrelated, and is the foundation and base of everything on Earth. It is not merely a material object, to be used for its resources in an extractive sense. Indigenous peoples have, in some respects, a spiritual relationship to land– and it motivates all aspects of their lives.

As an Indigenous person, I have grown up around the various traditional teachings from my mother. We are Nuxalk from Bella Coola– our territory is on the west coast of British Columbia, about six hours west of Williams Lake (which is seven hours north of Vancouver). Despite being a Sixties Scoop survivor, my mother was able to re-learn many of the historical and traditional understandings and teachings from our community, and accumulate new perspectives from various post-secondary degrees focused on Indigenous studies. She has taught me the various understanding of land as a piece of our individual and communal being, as well as the more academic perspective of Indigenous legal (or for our community's understanding, punitive) measures. While our teachings are not universal to all nations in British Columbia, or Canada, they are a useful perspective to understanding the difference between an Indigenous perspective and the Western colonial perspective.

The Indigenous understanding is founded on holism and balance. Everything on Earth is interconnected, as in, they have a bilateral relationship between each other. The soil is connected to the grass– the grass feeds the animals– the animals feed the people– and so on, until an individual life ends, and is returned to the Earth and begins again. On top of that, the differing aspects of land, culture, and language cannot be separated from each other– they are all integral to the existence of the other. This is why the idea of "place" is so important– the elements cannot be separated from each other, as they are considered their relations. In regards to land itself, Indigenous peoples did not have a conception of "land," they had a conception of "place" that reflected their understanding of the interconnectivity of all things. In a Western sense, this would translate closely to the idea that land and territory are fluid.

This fluidity transferred into the ideas of territories and boundaries. While various nations did fight and feud over territorial boundaries, the vast majority of the time,

nations' territorial boundaries, which were never permanently set, often overlapped into neighbouring nations' territories. There was little worry or grievance over the extraction of resources, because over-extraction did not exist. The principles of Indigenous relations to land and the creatures that lived on it were bilateral– only what was needed from the land was taken, so that it could continue to thrive and supply resources for generations to come. This is why there are, in the 21st century, such charged disputes regarding hard boundaries– the BC and Canadian governments require steady, enduring, hard-line boundaries to be outlined as a specific nations' territory. Historically, these boundaries did not exist– but as a result of colonialism in its many facets, the traditional understandings of territory as holistic are being challenged to fit into the Western construct. At this point in time, the acquisition of more territory is equal to the acquisition of financial compensation and power, in how it is used to bargain with the provincial government.

In regards to laws and punishment, the Indigenous perspective is also fundamentally different from the Western. In Indigenous understandings, punishment does not exist. All measures of repercussions are founded on the idea of restorative justice, a process of restitutional practice. The overarching idea is that when harm is done by an individual, or a collective, that harm must be addressed– but not through punishment– through a restoration of the individual(s) to a person that can be reintegrated into community and forgiven for the harm they have done. For the Nuxalk, this often manifested in sincere apologies, and teachings from the elders on how to better themselves. For much larger offenses, it often meant being sent on your own to a secluded island off the BC coast for an undetermined length of time. At various points, an elder would be sent to the island to talk with the individual, help them understand the harm they have done, and redirect their perspectives and values to align with those that the community holds as the most important. When the elder deemed they were ready, they would be brought back to community, and given another chance to succeed, with no lasting penalties. While this idea largely applies to individual wrongs (in the Western legal sense, individual legal offenses), the underlying perspective and understanding reflects how Indigenous peoples traditionally approach all things considered, in colonial terms, to be within the legal framework. It is for this reason that, fundamentally, forcing Indigenous peoples to fight for the sovereignty and integrity of their nations' territory within a Western legal framework, is incompatible.

The various landmark cases of Indigenous title and rights in BC have set important precedent for Indigenous nations both across BC and across the country more widely. However, the process for each individual case towards a fair ruling, that identified the inherent Indigenous entitlement to their own traditional lands, has been hard fought and largely undermined by the incompatibility of Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, and philosophies, and the Canadian (Western) legal framework. There have been recent strides towards rectifying the relationship between the two, but the advancements are a mute point if Nations continue to be forced into that framework without due regard and respect for their own understandings. The idea of land and place for Indigenous peoples is fundamentally linked to all aspects of life– it is an integral part of their understanding of the world. How it has been suppressed through colonial practices is an enduring crisis that each Nation in Canada must still grapple with, and hopefully, fight for.

Melissa M. Kelm
Metis
Bachelor of Social Work
Thompson Rivers University

# TAKING THE DELEGATED MASK OFF MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

As a child, I was told my grandma was "a little bit Cree." I never heard the term Métis until I was an adult, and I never knew, was never told, nor did I understand, what my family had gone through. I was blissfully unaware. My family tried to protect me from the hurt and pain that we had gone through, never realizing that trauma is intergenerational. I carry the trauma of my ancestors. My grandma was visibly Indigenous and went to an all-girls Catholic convent, which is not considered a Residential School. My mom and her siblings were taken from their homes and placed in foster care. Research has shown that in British Columbia alone, the number of Indigenous children in the child protection system went from almost none to one-third in only a 10-year span because of the closures of Residential Schools and the expansion of child protection (Vowel, 2017). There is evidence that at least 11,000 Status-Indian children were removed from their homes and placed in non-Indigenous homes between 1960 and 1990. It is obvious that this number is actually much higher than reported because birth records were often closed and status was not marked on foster placements. Some estimate the number to be close to 20,000 children across the country, which would include Métis and non-Status children. This equals 70 to 90% of Indigenous children being placed in non-Indigenous homes (Vowel, 2017). My mom spent just over a year in foster care, endured much abuse, and was told she had to attend Catholic school. In the eyes of the government, this is not a 60s scoop case—I beg to differ.

As I learned more about my family's history with the child protection system, I wanted to work from the inside to help Métis and other Indigenous communities have a voice for themselves and their children. In my third year of university, I attended my first Family/Child Welfare Practice course where I came to the stark realization that the system is far from improving. My instructor was a white, male, middle-class settler who often boasted about how well the ministry was doing in the context of family preservation. He did not like when he was challenged on how the system is still inherently racist and oppressive. A Métis agency came to our classroom to talk about being culturally safe within a Métis delegated agency. The team lead of this agency was not an Indigenous person, nor did they find it necessary to invite a Métis person with them to the classroom. My professor and our interim program coordinator did not see the discrepancy this created and deemed having a non-Indigenous person speaking on behalf of Indigenous people justified. I staunchly disagreed, which led to me having to teach cultural competence to my classmates and how it is imperative to show respect for any culture that is not the Eurocentric "norm." I kept asking myself: How can settlers teach me about cultural safety when it is not their culture? What kind of example is this for our future social workers? How can these "educated" people not see the harm they are inflicting? It was apparent that these individuals were enfranchising a common "Us-Them" ideology that made it acceptable for Eurocentric methods of teaching and learning to upstage the credibility of Indigenous Knowledge. This deficit ideology has continued to permeate

policy and process and has contributed to the longstanding oppressive history of Indigenous people within the government's child protection system.

Under Article 2(e) of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), "Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group" (p. 1) was the dominant culture's way of imposing oppressive control over a nondominant group and disguising their assimilationist practices with policy. This clearly demonstrates policymakers' attitudes toward Indigenous communities who they believed were primitive and unable to govern themselves independently. The Residential School system started being disassembled after an amendment in 1951, which enabled the province to provide child protection and removal services to Aboriginal people where none previously existed federally. Between 1995 and 1998, the last seven Residential Schools were closed. The last federally funded Residential School was in Saskatchewan and closed in 1996 (Vowel, 2017). The last Band-run Residential School in Alert Bay, BC closed in 1998 (Restoule, 2013). In 1951, 29 Indigenous children were in provincial care, and by 1964 that number had grown to 1,467 (Hanson, 2001). Residential Schools were rebranded into Day Schools, with the only difference being Day Schools allowed the children to return to their homes at night if they lived close enough. Day Schools were not included in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, nor were they included in the Indian Residential School Settlement of 2006. However, over 200,000 Indigenous children attended Day Schools between 1870 and 2000 and experienced physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse (Pind et al., 2020). The rebranding of Residential Schools by policymakers allowed them to seamlessly integrate Day Schools into the child protection system, which is still systemically used to oppress Indigenous people and children.

The Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) claims to be leaning more toward the family preservation model regarding the child protection strategy, especially when it comes to our Indigenous children. Unfortunately, the numbers of Indigenous children in care do not reflect this claim. According to Statistics Canada (2021), while only 7.7% of children under the age of 14 are Indigenous, they account for 53.8% of children in foster care. 5,259 children were in care, and of that number, 3,548 were Indigenous. This equates to 67% of the children in care being Indigenous. Ten years ago, it was just over 50% (Stats Canada, 2021). I do not see where family preservation is being implemented for our Indigenous population. The above data indicates that although the total number of all children in care is decreasing, the percentage of Indigenous children is increasing, which supports the aforementioned statement about policymakers deeming the Indigenous community incapable of caring for our own children and that we are not able to reunite our Indigenous children with their families and their culture. I look at these numbers and I question where delegated agencies step up and rectify this injustice done to our people.

I am in the Bachelor of Social Work program and am passionate about helping my Métis community. I wanted to specialize in child protection, but that has quickly changed. As I navigate through my program, I am quickly becoming discouraged as to the level of power and control a delegated agency truly has over Indigenous people. When starting to write this article, I first stopped at the BC government webpage to see what it takes to create a delegated agency. What resonated with me was that the ultimate signing power is still MCFD, and most of the funding is MCFD sanctioned. My understanding of this is that any decisions on how money is spent within the agency must be approved by MCFD. So, why would delegate agencies be any different from MCFD? There is more of a cultural aspect to delegated agencies allowing the children and youth to reconnect to their culture; however, in terms of social work conduct, the rules on how a social worker is to conduct themselves are the same beyond the cultural activities. According to the BC government, the provincial government gives authority to Indigenous Child and Family Services (ICFS; Government of Canada, n.d. a). This implies that Indigenous communities are not allowed to decide their own best practices for caring for their own children because they must first have permission from the provincial and federal governments. According to the same website, the provincial government has the power to audit these agencies at any time to make sure they

are following the same guidelines that are set by the provincial government. The protection standards must be the same across the board for both MCFD and ICFS. The problem is in how these standards do not take into account poverty, intergenerational trauma, and race. The system is embedded in Eurocentric ideologies of individualism instead of in the betterment of the greater community (Carrière and Strega, 2015). Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAA) go through the same audits as MCFD. This further perpetuates colonial values and practices, which enables the colonial government to determine if the agency is doing something "correctly" or not.

Splatsin Stsmamlt Services is a Band just outside of Enderby, BC that has total autonomy over their children. The legislation they operate under is Bylaw #3-1980, which is a bylaw for the Care of Our Indian Children (Splatsin, 2024). This bylaw allows the Splatsin Band to have complete independence and autonomy over their children anywhere in the world. The Splatsin Band is proud of their ability to respond to crises quickly, keep a connection to the community, always be available, and adapt to the family's needs. They are a small team who can work collaboratively with simple processes that are prevention focused.

The original proposal to Bylaw #3-1980 has language that could have benefitted most Indigenous bands in the surrounding area. Once the provincial government realized the complete autonomy this legislation gave Indigenous people, the legislation was amended so no other Band could be granted the same autonomy. Bylaw #3-1980 outlines who is protected under it and how the Splatsin people will uphold this bylaw for their people. It is truly an amazing piece of legislation that should be offered to all Indigenous communities. The Canadian government has continuously imposed legislation with assimilationist overtones without any consultation from the Indigenous people. This continues to heighten and add to harm and trauma. The Canadian government continues the Residential School culture, but just puts a different name on it. It is time that the Indigenous people of our country stand up and take our children back. Children are the heart of our communities, and until we have full autonomy, we will continue to be oppressed and victimized by the colonial government.

Starting in the early 1980s, many Indigenous communities in Canada, including in BC, have been trying to take back the responsibility for their children after the government wrongfully took away their autonomy for self-governance. There are tiers of delegation with varying services. In BC, there are 24 ICFS agencies with different levels of delegation: 3 provide voluntary services and recruitment and approve foster homes; 7 have the additional delegation necessary to provide guardianship; 14 are delegated to provide full child protection, along with being able to investigate reports and remove children. Only 2 agencies out of the 24 have the delegation for adoption (Government of British Columbia, n.d. b). Full delegation allows DAAs to assess and investigate child safety situations for abuse and neglect, which further perpetuates their authority to remove a child from their home. A DAA must negotiate with MCFD for the different levels of authority over their children (Bennett, 2021), which to me, does not allow genuine autonomy. To delegate means one is acting for another, which means the second party must follow the guidelines and rules of the person ultimately in charge.

Bennett (2021) talks about how Indigenous children who grow up outside the culture and communities suffer from a lifetime of identity crisis, which includes a longing to know who they are and where they come from. Growing up outside their culture would lead to constant feelings of separation and loss due to their lack of meaningful connection. Practicing traditional medicines, dances, and other cultural activities helps combat colonialist ideals. It helps Indigenous people reconnect to their ancestors and past that was so wrongfully taken away. Gone (2013) argues that participation in traditional practices can be a significant part of a healing journey, and is associated with positive shifts in First Nations' cultural identity, belonging, and purpose. Although I never grew up in care, I grew up in a non-Indigenous home, and I felt that sense of longing, loss, and separation. This still affects my family today; my brother worries about how he is supposed to teach his children how to be proud of their Métis culture because he did not grow up with an understanding of it. As middle-aged parents, how can we provide our children with Métis knowledge when we ourselves do not fully understand all there is to

know about Métis culture and traditions? It is a desperate feeling that can lead an individual to doubt themselves, reinforcing the colonialist ideology that Indigenous people have something inherently wrong with them, especially regarding child development and protection. Western perspectives on a child's development concentrate on an attachment to one single, primary caregiver, whereas an Indigenous approach is nurturing a strong, interconnected bond with the whole family, extended family, and community as a collective (Carrière & Strega, 2015).

Métis children are at a very high risk of being disconnected from their culture and heritage. After the 1885 resistance in Saskatchewan, many Métis went underground to avoid persecution. Many Métis no longer identified as being Métis and stated that they were French or Scottish—my family did the same thing. Not only did Métis have to hide their identity, but they also had to assimilate into the dominant and oppressive colonialist culture to avoid persecution and continued deficit ideology (Richardson & Carrière, 2017). With this being so prevalent, the numbers reported by Statistics Canada are not a true representation of the number of Indigenous children in care. There are families and children who do not know they are Métis because the Métis had to go into hiding, which created multiple generations of a lost culture. I think more research desperately needs to be done by Métis communities on Métis rights, what it means to be Métis, and being recognized as an Indigenous Nation. In 2021, Métis people voted to declare self-governance and to take responsibility for our people, culture, and children. Although we are self-governing, the colonial government is not mandated to find Métis children and bring them to the Métis people for reunification. Aboriginal children are supposed to be found, identified, and reunified with their respected Nation and/or Band, and this is the very first Call-to-Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015): "We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care" (p. 1). Our Métis children do not hold that same right. Métis are recognized under Section 35, which recognizes and affirms the existing Aboriginal and Treaty Rights of the Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Hanson, 2009).

Based on this information, how do we change this narrative? How do we bring our children home and keep them at home? Frances Rosner, a Métis child protection lawyer working in Vancouver, proposed using Gladue-like reports in child protection to help achieve that needed reform. A Gladue report is for Indigenous people facing criminal charges. Gladue reports contain recommendations to the courts about what appropriate sentencing might be for the individual, taking into account past experiences, racism, and intergenerational trauma, along with other extenuating circumstances. Gladue reports can only be prepared by Gladue caseworkers at the request of a judge, defense attorney, or crown counsel (Denis-Boileau et al., 2011). If we allowed the same context to families who are facing intrusive child protection, it may allow for more support to the biological family instead of immediate removal. "Expanding the Reach of Gladue: Exploring the Use of Gladue Reports in Child Protection" is the research paper exploring this idea (Laskin, 2021). The idea of our relatives growing up in Residential Schools and being survivors of the 60s scoop leaves our parents unable to parent. So, how are they supposed to know what a healthy and loving home is when their parents are the government? Indigenous children in care today have the government as their parents, and they are not being shown and taught how to love their future children because parental guidance is modeled by a mandated system. Extensive research was done by Matheson et al. (2020) looking into the long-term effects of Indian Residential Schools (IRS) and their offspring. To effectively care for Indigenous children, the current system must be profoundly reformed to account for the legacy of colonialism.

Reconciliation means including Indigenous communities and their cultural practices to "establish, as an important priority, a requirement that placements of Aboriginal children into temporary and permanent care be culturally appropriate" (TRC, 2015, p. 1). Expanding on the Gladue report assists and supports Indigenous families who face intrusive child apprehension. This should, hopefully, begin to heal the wounds of intergeneration trauma that have been caused by the cultural genocide the government has forced on us.

It is painfully evident that British Columbia's child protection system is failing Indigenous children, families, and communities. Indigenous children are overrepresented in the system, the same system that is harming children and that completely ignores the impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities. Alarmingly, the so-called child protection system is often not protecting children nor improving their futures. In fact, it has been shown to frequently cause additional harm. The report Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls noted that children in care are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system than they are to graduate high school. Additionally, the system places Indigenous children at greater risk of violence, which further perpetuates disruption to Indigenous children's cultures, identities, and families.

I look forward to the progression of the Gladue-like reports for MCFD, bringing in trauma-informed practice and considering the trauma that colonial child protection laws have done to our people. I would also like to question why non-Indigenous children receive funding, on average $56,682.49 per year, whereas our Indigenous children are only receiving on average, $40,711.39 per year in funding (Government of British Columbia, n.d. a). The child protection system is trying to claim they are doing family preservation practice and trying to be trauma-informed. Unfortunately, the numbers do not add up.

According to the Government of British Columbia website on Children and Youth in Care (CYIC), all DAAs are under agreement to help provide care for the Indigenous youth in our province. The government has a well-known history of breaking agreements with Indigenous communities across the country—unclean drinking water, lack of education, and land are some examples of broken Treaty promises. The language on the site is also one that needs to change: "Through delegation agreements, the Provincial Director of Child Welfare (the Director) gives authority to ICFS agencies, also known as DAA, and their employees, to undertake the administration of all or parts of the Child, Family, and community service act" (Government of British Columbia, n.d. a). This language speaks to how we are being "allowed" to take care of our own children, but only in an administrative capacity.

> "The system is embedded in Eurocentric ideologies of individualism instead of in the betterment of the greater community
>
> To effectively care for Indigenous children, the current system must be profoundly reformed to account for the legacy of colonialism."
>
> - Melissa M. Kelm

I recognize that the child protection system is trying to make changes to combat systemic racism and colonialism, but I fear that it is not enough and will never be. The system itself is not broken. It is operating exactly as it was intended—to control and oppress. It needs to be demolished and rebuilt with Indigenous autonomy as an intrinsic factor. After doing this research, I have questioned if I am going in the right direction in my studies. Do I want to lend myself to a system that is setup to oppress my community, my culture, my people? When I finish my degree, I will continue my education with a degree in law in hopes of understanding how policies are created and how to change them, so I can better serve my community in the long run.

## References

Bennett, K. (2021). Cultural permanence for Indigenous children and youth:

Reflections from a delegated aboriginal agency in British Columbia. First Peoples Child & Family Review 10(1), 99–115. https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/fpcfr/2015-v10-n1-fpcfr06033/1077185ar/

Carrière, J., & Strega, S. (2015). Walking this Path Together: Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Child Welfare Practices. https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/walking-this-path-together534

Denis-Boileau, M. -A. (2021). The Gladue analysis: Shedding light on appropriate sentencing procedures and sanctions. UBC Law Review 54(3), 537.

Gone, J. (2013). Redressing First Nations historical trauma: Theorizing mechanisms for Indigenous culture as mental health treatment. Transcultural Psychiatry, 50(5), 683–706

Government of British Columbia. (n.d. a). Children and youth in care (CYIC). https://mcfd.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/child-protection/permanency-for-children-and-youth/performance-indicators/children-in-care

Government of British Columbia. (n.d. b). Delegation process. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/reporting-monitoring/accountability/indigenous-child-and-family-service-agencies/dele gation-process

Hanson, E. (2001). Sixties scoop: The sixties scoop and Aboriginal child welfare. Indigenous foundations. https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/sixties_scoop/#:~:text=It%20reference%20to%20 the%20 mass,of%20 their%20 families%20or%20 bands.

Hanson, E. (2009). Constitution Act, 1982 Section 35. Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/constitution_act_1982_section_35/#:~:text=Section%2035%20of%20the%20Constitution%20Act%20states%3A,and%20M%C3%A9tis%20peoples%20of%20Canada.

Indigenous Services Canada. (2023, February 15). Reducing the number of Indigenous children in care. Canada.ca.https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1541187352597/1541187392851

Laskin, R. (2021). Expanding the reach of Gladue: Exploring the use of Gladue reports in child protection. Appeal: Review of Current Law and Law Reform, 26(2021), 25.

Matheson, K., Bombay, A., Dixon, K. & Anison, H. (2020). Intergenerational communication regarding Indian Residential Schools: Implications for cultural identity, perceived discrimination, and depressive symptoms. Transcultural psychiatry 57(2), https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461519832240.

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Reclaiming power and place: The final report of the national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/.

Pind, J., Mason, R., & Christou, T. (2020, October 27). Indian day school survivors are seeking truth and justice. Queen's Gazette. https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/indian-day-school-survivors-are-seeking-truth-and-justice

Restoule, K. (2013). An overview of the Indian Residential School System. https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/An-Overview-of-the-IRS-System-Booklet.pdf.

Richardson, C. L., & Carrière, J. (2017). Calling our families home: Métis peoples' experience with child welfare. J Charlton Publishing Ltd.

Splatsin. (2024). Children & Families. https://splatsin.ca/programs-services/children-families

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). (2015). 94 calls to action. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf.

Vowel, C. (2017). Indigenous writes: A guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues in Canada. Portage & M

We never stop learning as long as we are willing to keep an open mind, be respectful and be kind.

**~ Elder Doe Thomas**

**PHOTO CREDITS**
Luke Redgrove Photography



TRU
Open Press

THOMPSON
RIVERS
UNIVERSITY