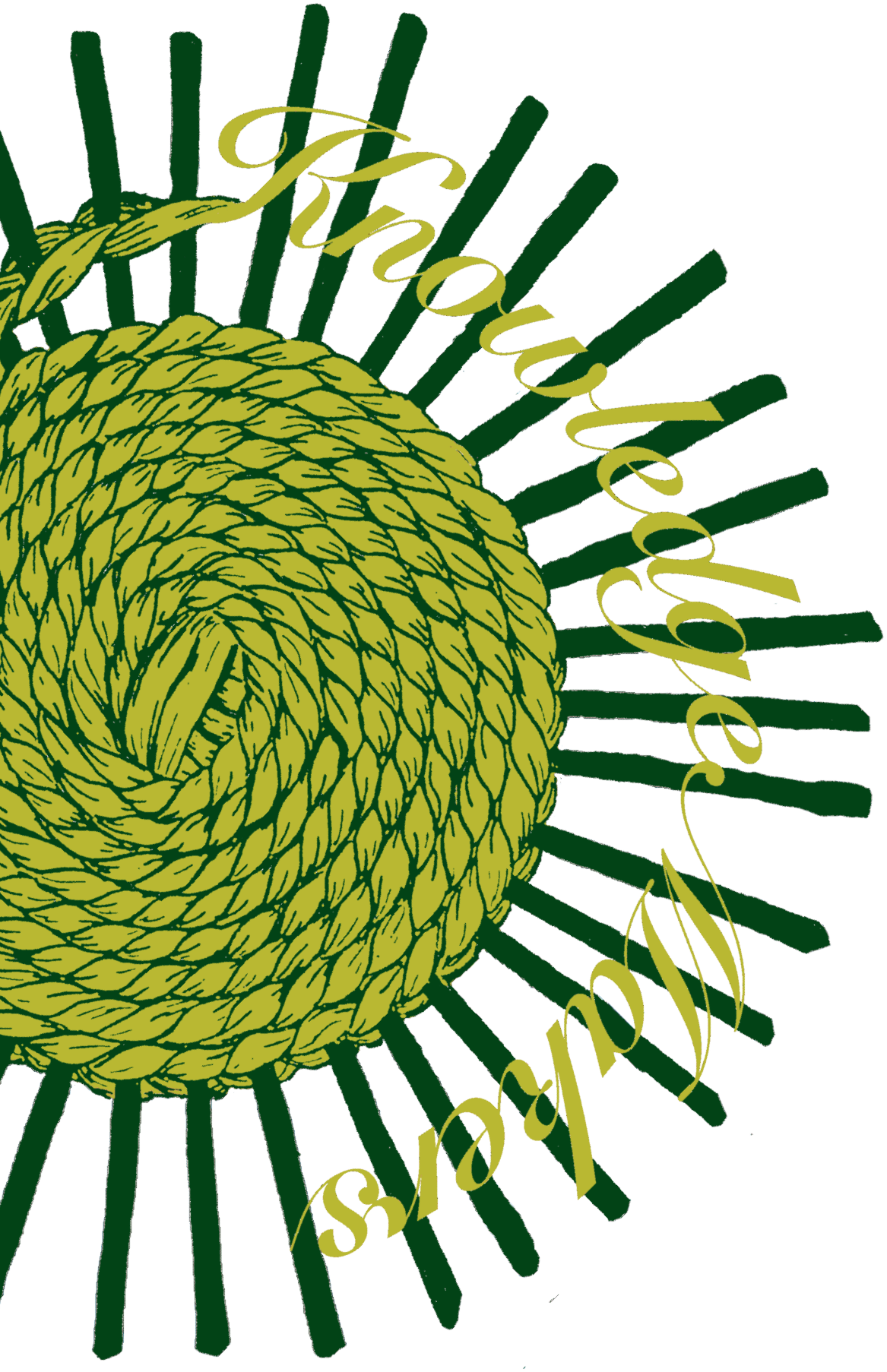

Knowledge Makers
Est. 2016
Vol. 10, 2025

Artist's Statement

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

I was taught to give all life the same respect I would give to my grandmother.

- Jade Victor

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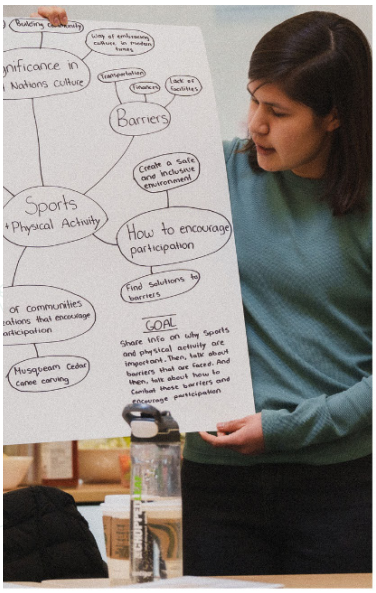
Barriers
Sports
Physical Activity
How to encourage participation
Create a safe and inclusive environment
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GOAL
Share info on why Sports and physical activity are important. Then, talk about barriers that are faced. And then, talk about how to combat these barriers and encourage participation
Musqueam Cedar canoe carving


Vol 10 Workshop

FOREWORD

We are so grateful to have you here with us. The authors within this volume of Knowledge Makers bring together their voices, lived experiences, and generously share their wisdom with us. Taking guidance from our ancestors who showed us originally how to build strength in the collective, this volume of the Knowledge Makers journal emphasizes the process of building relationships and fostering collaborations between Indigenous communities worldwide.

This sacred knowledge is embodied in the Knowledge Makers logo, a representation of pine needle basket weaving, a process that relies on the individual strands being woven together to create one whole. Much like this traditional Indigenous skill, Knowledge Makers embodies the active process of building relationships between individuals and communities that emphasizes the interconnectedness between us, and the importance of bringing together diverse perspectives to achieve the common goal.

In 2024-2025 through the financial support of Universities Canada, we were able to take a total of 21 Indigenous undergraduate students across the globe on experiential learning opportunities. In 2024, a cohort of 16 students, 2 elders, and 2 staff from the Knowledge Makers program spent an incredible 14 days hosted by the Te ao Hurihuri program at the University of Waikato in Kirikiriroa (Hamilton), Aotearoa (New Zealand). Throughout their time in Aotearoa, we were welcomed with open arms and wrapped in the embrace of the rich Māori history of the land. We visited places of creation and sacred importance, learned of language reclamation successes, were taught a traditional artform of weaving, learned how tribal governance works within this nation, and saw multiple places of natural beauty.

The Te ao Hurihuri program reciprocated in August 2024 by sending a small cohort of 6 Maori students and 1 staff member to Thompson Rivers University where the All My Relations & Knowledge Makers team hosted them for 9 days. This visit focused on deepening connections and sharing knowledge across cultures, with a packed schedule including visits to Williams lake campus, Secwepemctsin classes, on the land learning, and adventures to the beautiful landmarks of Secwepemculucw.

In 2025, a smaller cohort of 5 students, 3 staff and one elder visited Sápmi territory (Norway). Sámi allaskuvlla were our warm-hearted hosts who showed us around their beautiful chilly territory in Oslo and Guovdageaidnu. Within these 10 days, students learned of the history and language of Sámi, were shown incredible innovative learning models that prioritized Indigenous hands-on learning, spent time with reindeer-herders out on the land, and shared stories of our communities over warm drinks in the lavvu.

In addition to these purposeful trips with undergraduate learners, Knowledge Makers was also given the opportunity to accompany the first ever cohort of Secwepemc PhD scholars to both Aotearoa and Fiji in late 2024. This cohort aptly called Le7 te Melamen (The Good Medicine) is an initiative led by Dessa Gottfriedson, Dr. Airini, Dr. Rod McCormick and Yasmin Dean that focuses on Indigenous led, culturally safe academic training for Tk'emlups band members with the sole purpose of meeting community needs. This incredible and unique cohort is a first of its kind partnership between TRU, USask and Tk'emlups te Secwépemc. The Le7 te Melamen scholars were accepted at the International Indigenous Research Conference held in Auckland, Aotearoa to showcase the exciting ways that Indigenous led, Indigenous created and Indigenous delivered learning can happen.

After this showcase of knowledge, we were then hosted in Suva, Fiji by the University of the South Pacific and welcomed by the chief of Nakorosule village where Dr. Sereana Naepi's wonderful family welcomed us as family from across the ocean. We shared traditionally prepared Fijian food, danced, rafted on bilibili and were shown the overwhelming beauty of both the Fijian landscapes and people.

These incredible experiences over two years connecting with Indigenous community from around the globe resonated especially strong with students and staff and is the showcase of this years journal. We are living in a global political climate that is increasingly trying to claw back Indigenous human rights, extract even more resources from our sacred lands, and continues to fuel the climate crisis we are all experiencing. In this time, it is painfully important to foster Indigenous community across the world to harness our collaborative power. Indigenous peoples across this vast world have lived in harmony with the earth for millennia, and we understand better than most the necessity of innovative and effective solutions to challenges facing us all today.

Nurturing our community bonds across the world and embracing our interconnectedness contributes to our collective strength in the face of uncertainty. We have the tools to build a future for the generations to come, and that world will be built with strong networks that share knowledge, resources, celebrate our mutual successes. The authors within this volume are important community weavers: facilitating connections amongst a vast community, nurturing a sense of belonging, and working to weave together creative solutions for a better future. The research papers within this volume are the tangible pieces of this community weaving.

While the articles within this volume stand as lasting contributions to Indigenous scholarship, they represent only the visible strands of a much deeper weaving. What is not always captured on the printed page are the relationships nurtured in quiet conversations, the laughter echoing across shared meals, the courage it takes to write from the heart, and the responsibility carried by each Knowledge Maker in telling stories rooted in community. Behind each paper lies a process of transformation, of being witnessed, held, and uplifted by others walking a similar path.
This work is relational, ceremonial, and intergenerational. It is informed by teachings passed down through aunties and elders, by land-based wisdom that cannot be footnoted, and by moments of vulnerability and strength exchanged across cultures and continents. The Knowledge Makers program does not simply produce research; it nourishes a space where Indigenous youth and mentors from across the world braid together knowledge systems, life experiences, and collective aspirations.

The contributions in this volume are the tangible outcomes, but the real power lies in the invisible threads: the moments of reciprocity, the growth of kinship networks, the honoring of protocol, and the mutual commitment to a shared future grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. This is where transformation takes root. It is our hope that as you read these pieces, you are reminded that knowledge is not only found in text, but in relationship. What we build together, through trust, humility, and shared responsibility is what truly endures across generations.

Jeneen Herns-Jensen
Chuying Jiao
Olubukola Osuntade
Dr. Rod McCormick

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.

We are incredibly thankful to our global Indigenous community members who hosted us within your homes and embraced us as family. Thank you to Luke Moss, Tahliah Temepara, and Kaneihana Dewes from the Tea o Hurihuri program in Kirikiriroa. Thank you to Rector Liv Inger-Somby, Deputy rector Samuel Valkeapää, Adviser Lisa Baal and Adviser Risten Márjá Ánne Gaup and the entire team at Sami Allaskuvla. A huge thank you to Dr. Sereana Naepi and her mom Alumita Patterson and the entire community that welcomed us in Nakorosule village.

Thank you to all the knowledge holders and community weavers that were there to share your insights with the Knowledge Makers in both the workshop held in 2024, as well as during the visit of our relations from Aotearoa. Knowledge Makers would not exist without a strong and extraordinary team that is committed to creating a student-centered experience from inception to publication. Thank you to Dr. Rod McCormick, Chuying Jiao, Jeneen Herns-Jensen, Peyton Anderson, Ellis Rondquist, Brian Burciaga, Olivia Lane, Bukky Osuntade, Sandra Bandura, Dr. Shannon Wagner, Dr. Mukwa Musayett, Kirsten Glass, Shriya Chandna, Sukh Heer-Matonovich, Carolyn Anderson, Vernie Clement and Jessica Obando Almache from TRU Open Press. Some members of our team are moving on this year to new opportunities where we have no doubt they will shine, and make invaluable contributions. We are so thankful to have had Peyton Anderson, Ellis Rondquist and Kirsten Glass with us to shape this beautiful volume, and for the endless hours of behind the scenes work that goes into assuring Indigenous students are supported.

We would be nothing without the guidance of elders who tirelessly support Indigenous learners within and outside this institution, especially Colleen Seymour, Doe Thomas, Mike Arnouse, Joanne Brown. We acknowledge the support and supplemental funding provided by the faculty of Education and Social work as well as the Office of Research, and are grateful to members of faculty across campus who consistently support both this program and our students. 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 Dr. 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.

If I put that chair there and ask you what you see, each one of you has a different perspective and will describe it differently. That's why we've got to come together and each one has knowledge to add to the whole so we can see the whole picture.

~ Uncle Mike Arnouse

Mia Smith
Simpcw
Bachelor of Environment and Ecology Sciences

WALKING IN TWO WORLDS: INCORPORATING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE WITH WESTERN SCIENCE

Introduction

Indigenous people are scientists who learned from the natural world around them. From horses who use plants to combat parasites, to studying how polar bears can traverse the deep snow and cross thin ice, Indigenous people learned medicinal effects of plants and how to spread their weight across snowshoes to better travel through the Arctic tundra. However, traditional knowledge is still something that isn't considered to be an acceptable way of knowing in the western science community. It's so unaccepted that scientists are still "discovering" what the Indigenous peoples have known all along. One example of this is the recently "discovered" tactics of the predatory birds in Australia, commonly known as firehawks, that carry burning debris from wildfires to unburned areas to flush out prey by spreading the fire (Nicholas, 2018). This information isn't new to the Indigenous population but was treated with skepticism from the science community until it was recorded by someone within western science. Unfortunately, this mindset is all too true for the rest of the world, where knowledge is dismissed because it is backed up by oral traditions and isn't in a peer-reviewed, well-known article upheld by a western institution.

Why It Is Important

Indigenous people all around the world hold knowledge about the natural world around them. From maintaining the health of the land and wildlife, to knowing the medicinal effects of plants, Indigenous people have been scientists from time immemorial. Without this crucial knowledge, we, as a people, would not be here today. One such instance is of the Pitohui, one of the only poisonous birds on the planet, in New Guinea. The Indigenous people knew the bird was not good to consume, but the western scientists ignored the warnings of this bird and suffered the consequences of indigestion (ScienceDaily, 2023). What the people did not know that is was the poisonous oils secreted by the bird that coated their feathers due to the poisonous beetles they eat.

Relying on Indigenous knowledge is important. Building and maintaining trust with a nation could reduce the number of days one spends in the frigid Arctic conditions looking in the wrong place for a specific species. Back in the day, Indigenous peoples were not out there just hoping and praying to their Creator that they would make it to the next year, next season, or even the next day, they were scientists who navigated the stars, studied the movements and habits of their prey, learned from the animals, and took care of their land. Every person born in New Guinea knew that the pitohui was poisonous and to avoid it, just because they didn't know the reasoning doesn't mean they aren't scientists, we don't

know the cause of poison today so does that mean those who have studied this bird species aren't scientists as well?

What Can Be Done

After years of mistrust, building a relationship with a nation, community, or a person could seem like such a daunting task for someone who is a stranger to the people. As stewards of the land, Indigenous peoples hold information about the natural world around them. Learning from past experiences or from the animals around them, Indigenous people need to be treated like the experts that they are. Building relationships is one of the most important steps in building a study. Having the trust of the people could lead to uncovering important information that will be helpful in gaining knowledge. With that being said, scientists need to respect the wishes of the people, and some studies need to remain curiosities as important cultural sites and species should not be unnecessarily put at risk of harm or destruction.

I understand that western science trusts peer-reviewed published findings, but completely disregarding the knowledge of those who live on the land won't help anybody and cause a lot of frustration between all the members involved. It is important that the community is heard by the scientists and that the scientists are transparent with their intentions. Researchers shouldn't release the knowledge they gained to the public without consent because it is not their knowledge to give.

Indigenous researchers need to constantly see the world with two lenses: one that sees in the Indigenous point of view, and the other sees the world as the western institution teaches us- what is often described as "walking in two worlds" or "two-eyed seeing".. Using what was taught in the western world and combining those teachings with what the Indigenous community has shared will not only help the community accomplish what they want from the research, but also could have a greater impact on both the science community and the members of that nation. How this collaboration looks between researchers and the people will be different for every situation. Some cases might involve total redaction of locations, people, and other aspects of the study, or complete freedom for the researchers to do what they wish with the data collected. The situation might differ between studies done within the same territory, but it is important to remember that any data collected belongs to that nation and permission is important to obtain beforehand. These are not an "it's better to ask forgiveness than permission" situations, one slip up and that mistrust sneaks its way back into the community members.

My Experience

At this moment, I am a student in an undergraduate degree program. My classes are entirely western based. Sure, there are some electives that try to look at western science outside of the western lens, but in the end it's still a western institution. I didn't grow up in community, but the traditional knowledge that I've gained, to me at least, seems very logical and almost obvious if you look at it at the right angle. There is a Mi'kmaq saying about two-eyed seeing, one eye sees the western way, and the other sees the traditional way. For me, it's more like walking in two worlds. The western world has all the shiny, fancy equipment, protocols, and potentially ending up with zeros in your data. And then there is the Indigenous world where we know the routes the species take, we know what plants are good to consume and which need to be specially prepared, and we know where or how to find what you're searching for.

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We are not just tuition payers or labor market supplements. We are caregivers, scholars, parents, and community members whose well-being is intertwined with the vitality of Canada's educational institutions and broader society. Policies built on care do not weaken systems, they rather strengthen them.

~ *Olubukola Osuntade*

Jade Victor

Skowkale and Cheam
Master of Education

Ewe chexw qelqelit te mekw' stam loy qw' esli hokwex yexw lamexw ku:t
(Don't ruin waste, destroy everything; just take what you need)

A CASE STUDY ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PIL'ALT PEOPLE, SOCKEYE SALMON, AND SOVEREIGNTY

Positionality

I begin this study by locating myself through my familial ties. This is not only for my living relatives but my relatives that are no longer with us. By introducing myself and my family I am connecting myself to the land, and to my communities. My mother, Ts'qwelemót (Wenona Hall), is from Sq'ewqéyl (Skowkale First Nation), a Ts'elxwéyeqw community. Her Xwélmexw name, Ts'qwelemót, comes from her paternal side of the family and means "to stand on your own two feet and speak your truth". Her community, Sq'ewqéyl, is a part of the Ts'elxwéyeqw tribe and means "going around a turn." My father, Tsimalanoxw (Ernie Victor), is from Xwchí:yóm (Cheam First Nation), a Pil'alt community. His Xwélmexw name, Tsimalanoxw, comes from our relatives from Musqeaum and was given to him by Walker Stogan's brother Vincent. His name carries a deep history and has great importance to our people. His community, Xwchí:yóm, is a part of the Pil'alt tribe and means "always wild strawberries." My maternal grandparents are Rebecca Hall (formerly Leon) from Sts'ailes and the late Robert Hall from Sq'ewqéyl. My paternal grandparents are the late Sandra Victor (formerly Edwards) from Xwchí:yóm and the late Michael Victor from Xwchí:yóm. All my familial ties are located within Stó:lō territory (See appendix A).

My Ancestral Name is Témqethelmot, which translates to "Precious" in English. This name was given to me and my family by Th'athelexwot (Elizabeth Herrling) and Yamalot (Rosaleen George), with help translating from Christine Seymour. I am a First-Generation name carrier and will hopefully pass on my name to a great grandchild or even a great-great grandchild. Being from two Stó:lō tribes has taught me a great deal about the uniqueness of each. Each tribe and each community within that tribe has its own protocols, teachings, and ways of being. But one thing that remains the same throughout Stó:lō territory is our respect for all life. All life including but not limited to our four-legged relatives, our flying relatives, our human relatives, our environmental relatives, and especially our aquatic relatives. Both of my parents worked in prominent areas of taking care of our relatives. My mother working in Indigenous governance, taking care of our living relatives. My father working in fisheries, taking care of our aquatic relatives. Both guiding and nurturing my learning through equally important lenses. I introduce myself in this way to show the connections I have and the importance of this work to me.

This study is not just research, but a personal journey of discovery and knowledge sharing. I take in the knowledge shared with me by other educators, my family, and those who led this work before me. This study is a case

study that mirrors that of Dr. Zoe Todd and her work on the relationship between Indigenous sovereignty and freshwater fish futures in Canada (2018). This study focuses specifically in on the Pil'alt tribe and our relationship with sockeye salmon. Through this study, I aim to discover the connections between Pil'alt sovereignty and the state of freshwater fish, such as the Sockeye salmon. This study begins with the origin story of the sockeye salmon, followed by a brief description of the first salmon ceremony. This is followed by a description of the Pila'lt tribe and our connection to the sockeye salmon, leading into the differences between Indigenous and Western worldviews on aquatic management and how these relate to contrasting governance approaches.

Much of this section is guided by the work of Dr. Zoe Todd, a Metis Scholar. Dr. Todd has created a beautiful connection between Indigenous governance and as she calls it "fishy relations" (Todd, 2018, p. 60). Finally, this paper looks at the possibilities to improve our relationship with Salmon within Pil'alt territory.

Origin of the Salmon

The origin story of Salmon, as told by the late Siyémches, Chief Frank Malloway, from Yeqwyeqwi:ws. While there are different variations of the origin story, this is the one I chose to use for this study.

"When the creator created Mother Earth, he put people on all the land he created. On S'ólh Téméxw, he placed the rooted, the four legged, the winged, and the finned. The xwelmexw people on this new land had a lot of animals to choose from for meat. There were bears, elk, deer, moose, and rabbits. Ducks and geese were the birds that they ate. Some hunters began talking about all the meat that they were eating "if I eat too much meat, I get this heavy feeling in my stomach. I have a hard time getting myself to move after a good meal. Maybe we can ask our Creator for something different to eat" so they started praying. "O chichelh siyam, please have pity on us, send us something lighter to eat, something that doesn't way us down when we eat too much." Every morning when the hunters went for their swim they would say this prayer. Finally, one morning after a deep sleep one of the hunters called his brothers and told them, "Our creator came to me in my sleep and gave me these instructions". You make a net out of twine, a small bag like that and put it on the end of a pole. You go down to the river and scoop up what is swimming in the water. These are salmon. You roast it in fire and share the flesh with your sisters and brothers. Then you gather all the bones and put them back in the river so they can drift back to the ocean. The ocean is where the salmon people live. They have sent their children upriver for you. You must treat the salmon with respect, or they will not come back next season. The hunters quickly followed the instructions that were given to the brother. They went down to the river with their completed dip net. The river was full of swimmers in the first dip they caught a salmon. They followed all the other instructions that were given to their brother. They roasted and shared the salmon, gathered the bones and sent them back to the ocean. After the meal one of the hunters said, "wow what a meal I feel great." This is how the salmon and other fish came into the rivers and streams, to feed the humans. You have to treat them with respect as we would all the other animals and birds" (Malloway, 2020).

First Salmon Ceremony

The first salmon ceremony is a gathering to honor our first catch of the season and to honor salmon. This ceremony is an opportunity to thank our relatives, the salmon, for the gifts that are to come for the season. The ceremony can be held with just one community or with multiple communities. There are many teachings and stories that follow the first salmon story that can only be learnt through attending a ceremony. Even if I took my best attempt at writing down the ins and outs, teachings, values, and reasoning behind why we do the first salmon ceremony, it would not reflect the feeling and true nature of the ceremony. There are also many teachings and practices that are not to be written down. Instead, what I can highlight is what the ceremony has taught me and how it impacts my view of governance and "fishy relations."

From a young age, I started attending the first salmon ceremonies that were held in

my community. My parents would bring my brothers and me to the longhouse or the hall or the river or wherever the ceremony was being held. We would sit through the speakers, the drummers, the sharing of the fish, and the returning of the bones. Each time listening a little bit more and a little bit longer. Each time, learning a little more about why the salmon are so important and why this reciprocal relationship is so important to our people. This ceremony is important to my family and community.

Pil'alt Tribe

The Pil'alt people are a First Nations tribe located within Stó:lō territory. Since colonization and the establishment of reserve land, there have been some shifts in where Indigenous communities are located. Due to this, I am still unsure of which communities belong to the Pil'alt tribe, although there have been multiple interviews as to who is considered a community. Based on my research, I have gathered the Pil'alt tribe consists of Cheam (Xwchí:yó:m), Skwah (Sqwá), and Kwawkwawapilt (Qweqwe'ópelhp) (Victor, 2024). But there are some elders that share that prior to colonization Skway (Shxwhá:y) would have also been included as opposed to being included with the Ts'elxwéyeqw tribe (Williams, 2023). For this study I will be referencing Xwchí:yó:m, Sqwá, and Qweqwe'ópelhp as the Pil'alt tribe.

Xwchí:yó:m means "always wild strawberries" and has 565 registered members. Sqwá means "to go through" and has 546 registered members. Qweqwe'ópelhp means "lots of wild crab apples" and has 57 registered members. Within Pil'alt territory there are important place name sites that have sxwōxwiyám that come with them. Sxwōxwiyám are shared from a time when Xexá:ls (the transformers) transformed our ancestors into specific mountains, rocks, birds, land animals, fish, and plants, to teach us how to live right and relate to the living world (Sq'ewlets, 2016). Each of these places teaches us stories and lessons of who we are as Stó:lō people. Sxwōxwiyám are our origin stories. Through sxwōxwiyám, we are all connected.

For example, Lhilheqey (Mt. Cheam), has a sxwōxwiyám that is very important to Pil'alt peoples. This is the story of Lhilheqey, this story was told by Amy Cooper to Oliver Wells:

"Mount Cheam is a lady, and Mount Baker is a man. This is an old legend. So, Mount Baker, he comes over, and he looks for a wife. And he finds a nice-looking girl. So, he takes her over to the state of Washington. They live there, and they have three boys. Mount Hood, Mount Rainier, and I can't tell you what the other one is. And they have three girls, but the boys are the oldest ones. After the boys grew up and she had three little girls, she says, "I had better go back home", she says, "to my people, to the Fraser River". So, she comes back, and she says, "I'll stand guard", she says. "I'll stand and guard the Fraser River that no harm comes to my people". "And no harm comes to the fish that comes up to feed them". That's the legend. And then she takes her three children, and she stands up there and coming down from up the road there's three little points, and those three little points are her children. They say she holds the smallest one in her hand. Behind her, toward this way, is the head of the dog that followed her. And she told the dog to go back home, and it stood there, and stayed there. So, I guess right now there, if the snow isn't all off, you can see that dog head playing" (Sq'ewlets, 2016).

The Pila'lt peoples, like many First Nations peoples, have lived a naturally sustainable life. Living off salmon, wild game, plants, and the other resources nearby. Although colonization has brought significant changes to our way of life, one constant remains: the importance of salmon to Pil'alt people. With such close distance to the Fraser River, the Pil'alt people have always and will always fish from the river. As I mentioned above, the Pil'alt tribe like many others celebrate the gift of salmon. We cherish, honour, and thank our relatives, the salmon, for their gifts every year. Through the first salmon ceremony, how we catch, gut, and share salmon, we honour the salmon with the most respect.

Stó:lō people have a Halq'eméylem word, shxwelí, which is "the life force that exists in all things and which must not be needlessly consumed or destroyed. Wisdom must be used to avoid taking more than is needed thereby turning 'use' into 'waste'" (Stó:lō

Nation Lalems ye Stó:lō Si:ya:m, 2003, p. 1). It is taught that everything has shxwelí. From plants to animals, and to us. Shxwelí exists within everything. I was taught to give all life the same respect I would give to my grandmother. This teaching is common not only in my home but also in many other First Nations homes. It is fairly common practice for First Nations peoples to be raised in a home that values animals and mother earth in the same way we value our siblings or parents. So, when it comes to our relatives, the Salmon, it should be of no surprise that our relationship with them is built on honour, respect, and love.

Governance

This section is heavily influenced by the work of Dr. Zoe Todd and her creation of the term "fishy relations", which incorporates fish sovereignty, fish laws, Indigenous governance, and our relationship with colonial governing structures, bodies, and laws and regulations. While much of Dr. Todd's work is based within the Northwest Territories and Alberta, she mentions "human-fish relations in Canada span across and are woven into lives and livelihoods in every single territory" (Todd, 2018, p. 60). By following the work of Dr. Todd, I hope to draw many comparisons and conclusions on how to help the future of sockeye salmon in Pil'alt territory.

Many studies are highlighting the depletion of sockeye salmon due to human related causes (Werb, 2022)). The causes can range from the state of the ocean to the greed and overuse that came along with colonization. All reasons leading back to human causes. The state of the ocean, which is warming up, becoming more acidic, and it is losing oxygen, which is particularly impactful for sockeye salmon (Werb, 2022). The impacts to sockeye are particularly detrimental to all Coast Salish communities as the salmon are a staple to us. It's no surprise, then, that the disappearance of many wild salmon stocks from "streams and rivers across British Columbia — likely due to human-mediated stressors such as overfishing, climate change and pollution — has entailed a profound loss for many Indigenous communities" (Reid, 2022). It is not only the oceans but the rivers that are suffering. As discussed by Werb (2022): "there are already many studies showings that their performance will be lower in warmer waters. There will be higher mortalities and less reproductive output when they go back to the river to spawn. And in the oceans, their food source is also affected by the warmer oceans". It is imperative that there is a shift to ensure the extinction of our sacred relative is slowed and reversed. We must co-create worlds where fish and humans are interdependent and thriving (Todd, 2024).

To do this, there must be a fundamental shift in how we view what role salmon play in this situation. Instead of viewing salmon as a commodity, resource, or something lesser, we need to adopt a perspective that "to treating fish as kin and more-than-human persons that we have reciprocal duties to [which] is a necessary step in reorienting our relationships to land, water, space, stories and time in light of the ongoing colonial imperatives that shape Canadian cities" (Todd, 2018, p. 74). Furthermore, "not only do fish bear witness to the colonial relations that humans experience and resist, but fish themselves are actively involved – paradoxically – in both fuelling and resisting colonial incursions" (Todd, 2018, p. 61). This is something Indigenous Peoples have been doing prior to and since colonization. Many Indigenous Peoples know that we must care for salmon so that they can continue to take care of us in turn, as they have been doing for thousands of years (Reid, 2022). Indigenous Peoples have and will continue to recognize the importance of the voice of the salmon in governance matters. Dr. Todd relates this issue to western science catching up to Indigenous science in many aspects with western governance needing to catch up to Indigenous governance (Todd, 2024).

Dr. Todd often references Leroy Little Bear's work at the Congress of Humanities where he shared the idea that, "we should ask the fish what they want" (Little Bear, 2016 as cited in Todd, 2017). This is important as many studies say we are possibly in the midst of the sixth mass extinction (Todd, 2017). Little Bear has highlighted that fish have survived many extinctions and many experts argue that fish have existed in one form or another for near 510 million years but fish are not surviving in this current state of affairs (Todd, 2017). Across the world, fish are being impacted by

human activity and as Little Bear mentions, we are not taking care of those that have been here a lot longer than us (Little Bear, 2016 as cited in Todd, 2017). Therefore, we must ask the fish what they want and ask ourselves how we can improve our relations with them as they have survived here for hundreds of millions of years and have barely been able to survive the few hundred years of settler colonialism (Todd, 2017).

By this, I believe Dr. Todd is referring to the fact that Indigenous governing structures, prior to colonization, included the voices and thoughts of those beyond just the head of the table. They included the families, the children, the animals, the earth, the water, and so much more. Specifically in the ways they were structured and how they governed their communities through inclusive methods. Dr. Todd draws connections to pre-colonial governing structures and methods to management of fish by sharing how First Nation people listening to fish, paying attention to fish and working with stories with and about fish can help to build meaningful responses to Canada's failed management of stolen Indigenous lands, waters, atmospheres (Todd, 2022).

Conclusion

From completing this case study, I have been left with three major takeaways. The first is the apparent differences in Western and Indigenous relations with wildlife, specifically sockeye salmon. Western approaches often focus on resource extraction and revenue creation, Indigenous approaches focusing on taking care of everything that was left for us. The second is how that relationship affects the surrounding areas of life, specifically how Western ideology uses, ruins, and creates potential of mass extinctions. In contrast, Indigenous ideology, specifically Pil'alt teachings, highlights sacred teachings that require us to ensure resources for our future generations. One of the teachings being Ewe chexw qelqelit te mekw' stam loy qw' esli hokwex yexw lamexw ku:t, which means "don't ruin waste, destroy everything; just take what you need" (Stó:lō Nation Lalems ye Stó:lō Si:ya:m, 2003). The final one is if there is not a shift in governance soon it, will be too late to undo the effects of colonization. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to integrate Indigenous knowledge and practices into current governing structures.

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As the matriarch fulfills the role as the herd's guardian, the other members such as the adults and their young ones take on the responsibility to not only follow but keep close to each other by not leaving anyone behind. Thus, fostering the value of unity, an essential by-product of matriarchal leadership.

~ Leticia Kanywuiro

Sheila Blackstock
Gitxsan
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A SCOPING REVIEW: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONS OF RACISM, MICROAGGRESSIONS AND INCIVILITY AMONG NEW GRADUATE NURSES IN CANADA

Introduction

Incivility is a widespread problem among nurses in nursing practice settings globally (Blackstock et al., 2022; 2023; Hawkins et al., 2019; House, 2018; Laschinger et al., 2019) and is impacting new graduate nurses (Blackstock et al., 2022: 2023). New graduate nurses begin their career amidst fast-paced, high stress, work environments where racism, microaggressions, and incivility can flourish if left unaddressed. This problem has become more acute since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which intensified a nursing shortage (El Ghaziri et al., 2021). When racialized experiences are combined with incivility experiences of new graduate nurses, then the negative impacts are multiplied (Tran, 2023). Beagan et al (2023), assert racism is a barrier to recruitment into healthcare professions into the structures and everyday interactions in practice and during students' educational experiences, to ultimately effect health care delivery. They contend that racism operation within health care education, practice and delivery operates as a social determinant of health. The work life experiences of Indigenous nurses' ranges from racist microaggressions from coworker (Beagan et al., 2023). This is particularly concerning given Indigenous nurses are significantly underrepresented in the health care professions (Vukis et al., 2012).

New graduate nurses transitioning into practice are considered vulnerable to experiences of incivility and other forms of workplace aggression due to their relative inexperience of working in this type of an environment and unrealistic expectations seasoned nurses may about the capabilities of new graduate nurses to work in this type of environment (Laschinger et al., 2019). Repeated exposure to incivility can impact new graduate nurse transition experiences, with high costs to the new graduate nurse, the nursing profession, and organizations (Hawkins et al., 2019). Studies have shown that many new graduate nurses who start their careers in a hospital setting will leave their position for a different setting or move out of nursing entirely within the first two years (Auerbach et al., 2022; Duchscher & Corneau, 2023a; Hall, 2021; Stevenson et al., 2021). New graduate nurses are leaving the nursing profession despite transition to practice programs (D'Ambra & Andrews, 2014: Evans et al., 2008), educational intervention (Gaffney et al., 2012), leadership (Laschinger & Fida, 2014), and anti-incivility policies (Blackstock et al., 2015; Blackstock et al., 2018). In the context of a global nursing shortage, the issue of new graduate nurse retention has assumed greater attention, highlighting the need for actions to promote respect, inclusivity, and civility in the workplace (Boamah et al., 2021; Duchscher & Corneau, 2023a, 2023b).First Nations leaders

are hopeful there will be more First Nations students graduating from nursing, given it is important to have local First Nations nurses providing care to their community members to avail culturally safe care and to positively impact health outcomes. There is anecdotal evidence that First Nations and Indigenous new graduate nurses experience racism. A recent survey of Indigenous nursing students and faculty (CASN, 2022-2023) found the total number of self-declared Indigenous students admitted to a baccalaureate program in Canada was 291 while the total number of graduates was 217. The findings of this report are preliminary given not all students self-identify as Indigenous, the investigators wonder why Indigenous students are not identifying and fear that students' experiences of racism may increase with identification. Overall, workplace racism, microaggressions, and incivility in nursing is leading to a lack of Indigenous new graduates entering and staying in the profession (Turpel-LaFond, 2020).

There have been a few scoping reviews and systematic reviews conducted by scholars on racism, and incivility in Canada with a focus either on registered nurses newcomers or new graduate nurses and incivility. Mammen et al. (2023) explored the existing knowledge to categorize the characteristics of incivility among new graduate nurses. Alison (2024) and colleagues completed a review to identify individual and environmental factors that influence newcomer to several international countries as registered nurses' and midwives decision to stay or leave their professions within the first 3 years of practice. Although these reviews have been conducted, there is a paucity of knowledge synthesizing this literature to combine undergraduate nurses' experiences of racism, microaggressions and incivility.

The aim of this scooping review protocol is to outline the methodology used to identify knowledge opportunities gaps and new developments in racialism, microaggressions and incivility experiences of new graduate nurses in Canada. This paper provides a summary of the findings emerging from a scoping review of academic literature published over the past five years on racism, microaggressions, and incivility experienced by new graduate nurses in Canada. It begins by describing the methodology used to identify this literature and the scope of the literature on the intersections of racism, microaggressions and incivility.

Methodology

Arksey & O'Malley's (2005) scoping review approach was determined to be the most appropriate for this research. This design enables the examination of both quantitative and qualitative elements of the targeted field of study. It aims to examine the phenomena, with a focus on identifying their related aspects. The following 5 stages were used to approach the phenomenon of racialized incivility experiences of new graduate Indigenous nurses in Canada since 2020 : problem identification, which entails a clear description of identifying the research question and aim; identifying relevant studies: literature search, which encompasses a comprehensive and well-defined search strategy to enhance the rigor of the review; study selection; charting the data, which involved critical appraisal of the methodologies of the studies included, data analysis, which consists of data reduction, display, and comparison; and, finally collating, summarizing and reporting the results which includes synthesizing the findings, drawing implications, and articulating a conclusion.

Stage 1: Identification of the Research Question

The first stage of the framework involves the identification of a broad, clearly articulated research question that serves as the basis for the subsequent stages of the review. In this stage of the scoping inquiry, (the definition of the concept, target population, and outcomes of interest) is determined to provide guidelines in the identification and inclusion of studies in subsequent stages (see Table 1: Key Definitions). The research question guiding the scoping review is: What is known from the existing literature about the factors contributing to racist incivility experiences of new graduate nurses in Canada?

Stage 2: Identification of Relevant Studies

This stage of the framework involves balancing the depth of a scoping review with

Table 1: Key Definitions

New graduate nurse	A nurse who has graduated as a Registered Nurse in the past one to three years (Blackstock et al., 2022).
Lateral/horizontal incivility	Occurs between nurses in equivalent roles and involves psychological harassment, verbal abuse, threat, humiliations, intimidation, criticism, innuendo, denied access to information (Blackstock et al., 2022). This includes name calling, rude comments, eye-rolling, finger-pointing, door slamming, refusal to listen, walking away before a conversation has ended, spreading rumours, negative gossip, belittling, and negative and insulting comments (Blackstock et al., 2022; Beagan et al., 2021). Blackstock et al. (2022a) describe these behaviours as being repeated and reoccurring (Blackstock et al., 2022a).
Racist/discriminatory behaviors	Intolerance, unfair treatment, or ostracization of an individual for reasons of ethnicity, race, nationality, age, gender, sexuality, disability or disparities (Began et al., 2023).
Racism: Structural or systemic forms	Racism and discrimination can present in interpersonal and institutional forms, through direct or indirect experiences of nurses' attitudes and behaviours and organizational policies and practices (Began et al., 2023). Prevalent assumptions of incompetence, which are countered through extra work, invisibility and hyper-visibility, and expectations of assimilation (Eaker, 2021).
Racialized Incivility	Interpersonal racism can take the form of a lack of support, exclusionary practices, heavier workloads, excessive /inappropriate judgement of credibility (Began et al., 2023) Racism and discrimination are not adequately encompassed in current definitions of incivility, bullying, and other negative relational workplace behaviours (Van Bewer et al., 2021).

feasibility. To increase the comprehensiveness of the search, the inclusion of multiple literature sources was expanded. A systematic and comprehensive search of the literature was completed using 7 databases: Academic Search Complete, CINAHL Complete, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, MEDLINE with Full text Can, and Google Scholar. The keywords used were "racism/racialized incivility, / microaggressions" "new graduate Indigenous nurses", "Canada." The operators used were AND, OR, and the truncation tools of each databased. The search was restricted to research paper produced between January 2020 and now. This time was chosen to concentrate on the most recent, relevant, and up-to-date information on the subject. Secondly, I was interested in the impacts of the Canadian Nurses' Association commitment to actively confronting racism and dismantling oppressive systems that have contributed to Indigenous specific racism and inequities (CNA, 2020) along with provincial nursing practice standards on Indigenous cultural safety and cultural humility and antiracist practices (BCCNM, 2021).

Stage 3: Study Selection: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were established using an iterative process (see Table 2). The initial selection criteria were based on the research question, focusing on primary research on racism experiences of newly graduated nurses in North America. During the initial search the author screened titles and reviewed abstracts found in electronic databases, documents from citations,

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Identifying Relevant Studies

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Peer Reviewed English Publications	Published in a language other than English
Full-text Articles	Papers focused on other sources of incivility/ racism in nursing.
Papers related to Canada/North America	Papers outside of North America
Papers published between 2012 and 2023	Papers published before 2018
Papers focused on student sources or experiences of racism/incivility while in education or as new graduates.	Books, conference proceedings, theses, and editorials.

and key journals for relevance according to predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The search was limited to: English, full-text articles, quantitative and qualitative research, published in peer-reviewed journal in English with populations of registered nurses, new graduate nurses or nursing students, claiming to describe or explore factors possibly influencing racialized incivility experiences in nursing practice. Non-English articles, countries of origin outside of North America, dissertations, books and conference papers were excluded. Further this review excluded papers before 2018. Table 2 provides a complete list of inclusion and exclusion criteria. I sought to identify all published articles on new graduate nurses' experiences of racism and or racialized incivility in Canada and then broadened the scope to North America. Once the search was completed (see Figure 1 PRISMA Flow Chart), the publications were screened for eligibility based on relevance by reviewing the title and abstract, followed by full-text analysis, and synthesis process. Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods and literature review articles were included. The review methods were based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic review and Meta-analysis Protocols (PRISMA-P) 2015 criteria for reporting a scoping review protocol (Moher et al., 2015).

Stage 4: Charting (Extracting) the Data

Charting data is also an iterative process in that it involves extracting data from the included studies. Data was extracted from the full-text journal articles by one reviewer and embedded into a table, based on the inclusion criteria. The data directly correspond to the stated research question. An analytic frame was developed to document the selected studies into a table including study characteristics (Author, Country, year of publication, aim, sample, method and theoretical framework, assessment of racism/incivility, organizational factors, reliability/validity, analysis, major findings, (themes, conceptualization of the issues; gaps in the literature) strengths and limitations. The characteristics of the studies are detailed in Table 3.

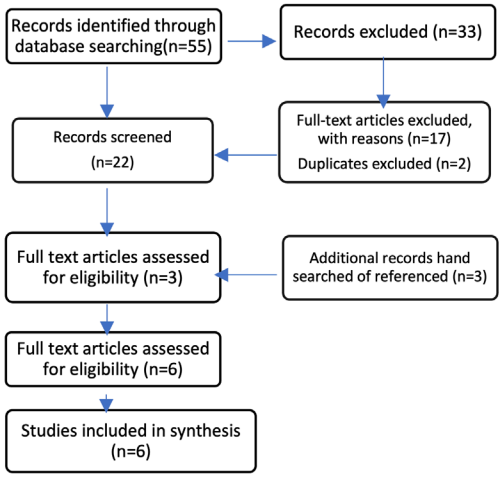

Table 3: Characteristics of the Included Articles

Ref	Author	Year	Study Objective	Study Design	Sample Size	Key Findings
1	Bailey, K.A. (non-indigenous scholar). CANADA	2020	To explore questions of how the history, and present realities, of racism and oppression contribute to the lived experiences of Indigenous post-secondary students in Canada. The role of lateral violence plays for Indigenous students within the university environment and the root of lateral violence itself are examined.	Ground theory. Interview guided by a short list of questions. Additional questions and focus points were determined and chosen by participants. Approximately 80-minute interviews. Pykes (2010) Roots of internalized racism, with the focus on analysis of how it is perpetuated once already internalized. This study applies Pykes'(2010) concept that previous understanding of the origins of internalized colonialism may be "misplaced."	Snowball sampling with an initial convenience sample and then expanding through connections with other contacts. 27 indigenous students, 3 Canadian Universities located in Ontario.	The data demonstrates that lateral violence is a serious concern for Indigenous students and the colonized university environment continues to exacerbate the problem. However, Indigenous students are developing awareness and strategies that enable them to move beyond the lateral violence and find success. Avoidance of non-indigenous people was used as an avoidance tactits to mitigate racism experiences. Themes: resilience and empowerment/ working to create safe/supportive spaces; peer support; and self-awareness.
2	Beagan et al. CANADA	2023	This critical interpretive qualitative study asks how interpersonal, institutional, and structural racisms intersect in the professional experiences of racialized nurses in Canada, and how nurses respond.	The framework of interpersonal, institutional and structural racism delineated by Nazroo et al. (2020). Critical Race Theory to counter-storytelling in order to surface subordinated realities (Crenshaw et al., 1995), we ask, How do institutional, structural and interpersonal racisms intersect in the professional experiences of racialized nurses in Canada, and how do they resist and respond? The study was grounded in critical phenomenology, in the sense that it focused on the taken-for-granted aspects of everyday life, with a critical attention to power relations that structure lived experience (Ahmed, 2006).	Self-identified racialized female nurses (n = 13) from across Canada were recruited primarily through snowball sampling, and each was interviewed by phone or in person. All the 13 participants but one identified as women, and all but two practiced in urban areas, ranging from small to large cities. Participants were primarily African heritage, including both migrants and African Canadians, but also Southeast Asian and South Asian. Nurses with at least five years Canadian practice experience were recruited through team members' professional networks, snowballing, and dissemination of recruitment information through professional newsletters.	Education throughout their career's participants experienced racism from instructors, patients, colleagues and managers. Interpersonal racism included comments and actions from patients, but more significantly lack of support from colleagues and managers, and sometimes overt exclusion. Racialized nurses were left to choose among silence, resisting (often at personal cost), assimilation and/or bolstering their credibility through education or extra work. Building community was a key survival strategy.

3	Blackstock, S., Cummings, G.G., & Glanfield, F. CANADA	2022	To determine what extent are workplace empowerment, New graduate nurses' perceptions of nurse leaders, trust in management and areas of worklife predict coworker incivility experiences?	Descriptive, Web based survey questionnaire, secondary analysis of Starting Out, national survey, Time 1. Multiple linear regression models. Theoretical Framework: Ecological Conceptual Model (Blackstock et al., 2022).	n=3,743 nurses across Canada. Disproportionate Stratified sampling method	First, new graduate nurses' perceptions of workplace empowerment predict coworkers incivility experiences when controlling for authentic leadership and trust in management. Second, new graduate nurses' perceptions of areas of work life predict coworker incivility experiences when controlling for authentic leadership, trust in management, and workplace empowerment. Third, new graduate nurses' perceptions of authentic leadership do not predict coworkers incivility experiences when controlling for workplace empowerment and trust in management. Finally, new graduate nurses' perceptions of authentic leadership do predict co-worker incivility experiences when trust in management and workplace empowerment are not controlled. New graduate nurses' perceptions of authentic leadership would benefit from workplace empowerment of the nurse leader in workplace environments to mitigate coworker incivility experiences.
4	Brathwaite et al., CANADA	2022	Black nurses' experiences of racism and discrimination, the impacts on mental health.	n=205 participants. Recruitment through social media. RNs, NP, Nursing students	Online survey tool consisted of quantitative and qualitative data.	Of the 205 participants, 157 were RNs, 7 NPs, 7RPNs and 34 nursing students. Over 88% of participants experienced discrimination and racism (individual and institutional) and 63% said that racism affected their mental health ranging from moderate to strongly severe. Five themes emerged from the qualitative data: awareness and acknowledgement of systemic racism in nursing; education and training; mentorship and financial support; changes in hiring practices; diversity, equity and inclusion committees. Supporting Information provides the themes with corresponding exemplars.

5	Eaker, M. CANADA	2021	To use the Nehiya (Cree) concept of Wahkotowin as an ethical perspective that can help nurses tackle the problem of anti-indigenous racism.	Through an exploration of the moral implications of the history and foundations of racism in nursing and society, and an analysis of racism with wâhkôtowin, that anti-Indigenous racism is an issue of great ethical importance to nurses in Canada. Anti-Indigenous racism is wrong; it is unjust and harmful, it violates principles of equal dignity, and it precludes the possibility of a good relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Nurses have a moral obligation to counteract the pervasive racism in healthcare, and they can do so by taking personal steps of education and self-reflection to override implicit biases, learning to recognize and identify racism (in one's own behaviours, in others, and systems), speaking up when witnessing racist interactions, and advocating for systemic change to address institutional racism.	Ethical analysis.	By embracing the Cree principle of wâhkôtowin, both to analyze the ethical problem of racism, and to provide potential solutions to address it, a new perspective in nursing ethics, which takes a stance against epistemological racism.
6	Vukis, A., Jesty, C., Mathews, V. Etowa, J. (2012). CANADA	2012	To examine indigenous identity and the quality and nature of nursing experiences.	Community-based participatory research using grounded theory. Unstructured qualitative interviews conducted over a period of six months.	22 Indigenous female nurses working in Atlantic Canada recruited through snowball sampling. The majority worked in a First Nations Community. Participants ranged from new graduate nurses to retirees, young and more senior nurses who held various nursing positions in the hospital, community, university. Education ranging from diploma, BSN, NP and MN.	Six major themes emerged: Cultural context of work-life; Becoming a Nurse; Navigating nursing, Race racism and nursing, socio-political context of Aboriginal nursing; and a way forward. Race and Racism in nursing and related subthemes are the focus of the article. The experiences of Aboriginal nurses as described in this paper illuminate the need to understand the interplay of race and racism in the health care system. Aboriginal nurses express suggestions for systemic change at various levels.

Stage 5: Collating, Summarizing and Reporting the Results

The final stage involved analysis of the charted data, reporting the results, and critically determining the implications of the findings. The results are reported as a narrative summary of the study findings beginning with describing the type of studies included, followed by a thematic analysis, and concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings.

Findings

The author's scoping review summarizes the literature, organized into key themes and subthemes. These include: Racism, microaggressions, and incivility; organizational responsibility (decolonizing structures, empowering nurse leaders to mitigate work stressors leading to incivility and racism, policy; Pathology of racism (personal learning in breaking down biases, professional, mobbing); Coping tactics of victims (silence/assimilation, courageous conversations, bolstering credibility by working harder); Conceptualizing the lived experiences (workplace environmental all at once experience of factors impacting nurses; intersections of race, age and gender). Although the mental impacts of racism, microaggressions and incivility on nurses and ultimately impacts retention and recruitment, they are not the focus of this review.

Study Characteristics

The broader electronic searches yielded a total of 55 potentially relevant citations. After removing duplicates (n=53) another 33 abstracts underwent title review followed by a detailed abstract review, and of which, 22 were selected for a full text review. Another 33 full text, English, Peer Reviewed articles. for this review was identified through two strategies. First, Google Scholar was searched using various combinations of the search terms: "graduate nurses" & "microaggression/(in)civility/racism/lateral violence" & Canada (55 results since 2020 with 33 excluded. 22 full text articles were screened; 17 excluded and 2 duplicates removed=3 retained; 3 additional records were found through a legacy search (see Figure 1). Of the 6 reviewed studies, 3 were qualitative (Bailey et al., 2020: Began et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2020), 1 were quantitative (Blackstock et al., 2022), and 1 mixed method (Brathwaite et al., 2022), and ethical analysis (Eaker, 2021). The included studies varied in terms of sample size and study design. The qualitative studies utilized interviews and used grounded methodologies (Bailey, 2020), Critical Race Theory (Beagan et al., 2023[Crenshaw et al., 1995]); an Ecological Conceptual Model (Blackstock et al, 2022), Jones' Theoretical Theory (Brathwaite, 2022), the Nehiya (Cree) concept of wahkotowin (Eaker, 2021). The sample sizes in the qualitative studies ranged from 13-24 participants-interviews and narrative approaches. The quantitative study was cross-sectional and used a national survey (n=3,743 new graduate nurses) and the remaining studies used a mixed methods n=205 (Brathwaite et al., 2022) and one Indigenous ethical analysis (Easker, 2021). The distribution of year of publication ranged from 2020-2023, but not much variation in terms of the geographic distribution of the studies. Five of the studies were from Canada and one each from the United States and Australia. The most common reasons for the exclusion of the article were the year, or it did not contain information about the factors contributing to racism experiences of nurses.

Quality Assessment

A formal assessment of the study quality is generally not performed in scoping reviews, some claim it should be incorporated in the methodology (Daudt et al, 2013) as assessing study quality will assist in identifying gaps in qualitative and quantitative literature (Levac et al., 2010). Arksey and O'Malley's framework inability to provide for an assessment of the quality of the literature (Daudt et al., 2013), the author is conducting this scoping review as the basis for their next stage of research and will take measures to address this in future studies.

Thematic Analysis

The included studies were grouped into 4 categories by the author, including: Racism, Microaggressions, and Incivility;

Organizational Responsibility (Decolonizing structures, empowering nurse leaders to mitigate work stressors and incivility and policy); Coping tactics of victims (silence/avoidance, assimilation, risking everything, bolstering credibility by working harder); Conceptualizing the lived experiences (workplace environmental ecology- all at once experience of factors impacting nurses in the work environment; intersections of race, age and gender). The next section of this article highlights the findings by themes and subthemes.

Theme 1: Racism, Microaggressions, and Incivility

Lateral interpersonal (microlevel) moments of intolerance, unfair treatment, or ostracization of an individual for reasons of ethnicity, race, nationality, age, gender, sexuality, disability or occurring between a perpetrator are called racial microaggressions (Began et al.2023). Incivility includes name calling, rude comments, eye-rolling, finger-pointing, door slamming, refusal to listen, walking away before a conversation has ended, spreading rumors, negative gossip, belittling, and negative and insulting comments (Blackstock et al., 2022; Beagan et al., 2021). Racial microaggression and incivility seemingly intersect at times occurring all at once through similar behaviors. Bailey (2020) findings noted that one student attended a university where "there was a teepee and a sweat-lodge, however there was not a wigwam-which reflected the local First Nations community/lands that the university resides upon (p. 1041)." Racism can take the form of non-indigenous peers judging the degree to which one appears Indigenous or not based on their skin tone, even though the student comes from a community where there are "more light-skinned" Indigenous people (Baily, 2020). The incidence and prevalence of racism, microaggressions and incivility cited in the included studies range from Bailey's (2020) findings of 65% (n=27) of Indigenous participants to Brathwaite et al. (2022) found over 88% (n=157) of Black nurses. All the studies provide insights and reflections on the role of academic and health care organizations in nurses experiences of racism, microaggressions and incivility.

Theme 2: Organizational Responsibility (Decolonizing structures, empowering nurse leaders, and policy)

Decolonizing Structures. Organizational hierarchies play a role in sustaining oppressive nursing practice environments and normalizing incivility and other forms of workplace aggression (Blackstock et al. 2022). Blackstock et al., (2022) identify several elements of this hierarchy that contribute to the normalization of incivility, including dominant nursing values, oppressive group behaviour, high status male physicians and administrators oppressing nurses, and lack of formal decision-making of nurse leaders. They argue that the incivility experiences of new graduate nurses occur through an interplay of factors in a "nested layer of hierarchical systems", whereby power vested at various levels in this hierarchical reporting and management structure over promotion, assignments, recruitment, dismissal, allocation of equipment, conflict resolution, and decision-making can keep Registered Nurses oppressed and inadvertently protect perpetrators of bullying from being reported (Blackstock et al., 2022, p. 1537). Exposure to incivility and other forms of workplace aggression begins early in student nurses' academic and clinical settings, then continues as new graduate nurses' transition into practice and become conditioned to accept these behaviours from those in a power position such as more senior nurses, superiors, and physicians; then replicate these same types of behaviours as become senior and assume responsibility for training new graduate nurses (Bailey et al., 2022; Blackstock et al., 2022).

Power relations within colonized Canadian universities are contributing to the Indigenous students' experiences of lateral violence (Bailey, 2020). Structural racism and the culture of oppression within institutions intersect with multiple systems of power domination (Baily, 2020). Intergenerational trauma and contemporary forms of racism intersect in forms of lateral microaggressions to violence. Power relations at all levels of health organizations use various forms of indoctrination and coercion to sustain incivility (Hawkins et al., 2019). In the absence of effective anti-bullying policies, consistent procedures to address negative relational workplace behaviours, and conflict management, a culture of incivility may

develop (Beagan et al., 2023; Blackstock et al., 2022; Brathwaite et al, 2022).The influence of oppressive structures is seen in both the academic and nursing environments where new graduate nurses learn and ultimately practice, place a strong emphasis on production and performance (Blackstock et al., 2022). Such environments are more likely to tolerate microaggressions and incivility behaviours (Vukis et al., 2012). When the focus is on worker efficiency and production, individuals considered less efficient or productive are more likely to become marginalized (Blackstock et al., 2022; Vukis et al., 2012). New graduate nurses are considered especially vulnerable to experiences of incivility due to their lack of work experience and subsequent lack of efficacy and productivity as they transition into practice. Registered nurses may have unrealistic expectations of new graduate nurses and their ability to provide good patient care, and when new graduate nurses find themselves unable to perform to expectations, they soon find themselves the target of uncivil behaviours (Blackstock et al., 2022). These effects are multiplied when experiences by a racialized new graduate nurses that may not feel safe to share their identity as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or Black. First Nation elders have noted that their identity is closely linked to the social determinants of health (personal correspondence, nd).

Empowering Nurse Leaders. Oppressive work environments also contribute to incivility and racial microaggressions (Began et al.2023; Blackstock et al., 2022). Blackstock et al. (2022) describe an ecological approach to explain incivility, where the interplay of factors at the micro, meso, and exosystem level, including structural empowerment, authentic leadership, trust, and areas of work life, contribute to workplace dynamics that affect how new graduate nurses perceive incivility. When nurses and nurse leaders lack job control and feel unsupported and unvalued, stressors and tensions in the workplace may increase, leading in turn to increased incivility experiences for new graduate nurses. Studies have found the role of structural empowerment to be the counterpoint to address oppression and ultimately mitigate the prevalence of incivility in nursing practice (Blackstock et al., 2022). Structural empowerment has been described as one where organizational structures, systems and policies support the empowerment of nurse leaders to have formal authority in their job roles to manage material and human resources to mitigate nursing job stressors to prevent and manage incivility in the workplace. In this manner, new graduate nurses learn and understand the role(s) and abilities of a nurse leader to support, new graduate nurses and nurses through access to information, resources, support, and opportunities to for advancement (Blackstock et al., 2022).

Policy. Blackstock et al. (2022) argue that current definitions of incivility do not reflect the realities and environmental stressors that new graduate nurses experience in contemporary nursing practice, thus the problem identification in anti-incivility policy does not adequately capture the problem for identification and application of the policy. In particular, they do not reflect how incivility can be reinforced and entrenched in the workplace at the microsystem level (in interactions between perpetrators and recipient of incivility), at the mesosystem level (in relations with coworkers and nurse leaders, and through work demands, leadership styles, and job control), at the exosystem level (through health care organizational and administrative structures, unions, and organizational policies), and at the macrosystem level (through cultural and societal norms, policies, legislation, and government funding approaches). Vukis et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of nurses understanding the socio-political climate/culture of northern, rural, and remote practice context. They signal the dire lack of nurses in the communities on the one hand and on the other hand a lack of structural supports and policies in supporting nurses to thrive and retain them in communities.

Theme 3: Coping tactics of victims (silence/avoidance, assimilation, risking everything, bolstering credibility by working harder)

Throughout the nurse's experiences in education and practice participants experience racism from instructors, patients, colleagues and managers (Beagan et al., 2023). However, the focus of this review is on the interpersonal experiences between nurses of equal roles,

power and authority which is often underreported and noted as the most difficult form of negative workplace behaviors to deal with when experienced from a perpetrator who is a colleague (Blackstock et al., 2022; Bailey, 2020). The coping tactics of the victims are variant and are weighed on an individual basis with insights into the impact(s) of their decisions on a personal and professional level.

Silence/Avoidance tactics, assimilation and bolstering credibility by working harder. Multiple students interviewed indicated they avoid interacting with non-indigenous students to curtail incidences of racism, incivility and lateral microaggressions (Bailey, 2020). In predominantly white institutions, assimilation is expected of racialized nurses and becomes a survival strategy, noting "some of the participants worked hard to change their accents to reduce [their experiences of] racism" (Beagan et al., 2023, p.201). Some participants noted they were automatically presumed to be unintelligent, less capable of adding meaningful information to discussions, thus they had to work twice as hard as anyone else to bolster their credibility to their peers (Beagan et al. 2023; Brathwaite et al., 2021).

Courageous Conversations. Beagan et al. (2023) study highlighted the participants use of numerous coping strategies, including resistance, noting the costs are too high to speak up against incivility on a personal and professional level. New graduate nurse workloads are often overwhelming, and they may not be fully prepared for the high acuity and complexity of their patient assignments and placement into in-charge roles and yet feel pressured to do so while in their employment probation periods (Blackstock et al. 2022). They may face challenges communicating with colleagues, physicians, and other staff members, and feel unsupported by their colleagues, preceptors, mentors, and superiors. The potential risk of endemic incivility is high in these types of environments as nurses develop feelings of frustration, loss of control, and increased pressure, leading to an increased likelihood of incivility (Blackstock et al. 2022). Nurses who have spoken up shared a sense of risking it all (Beagan et al., 2013).

Theme 4: Conceptualizing the lived experiences ('workplace environment ecology' experience of factors impacting nurses in the work environment; intersections of race, age and gender).

Workplace Environment Ecology. Blackstock et al. (2002) refer to the lived experiences of new graduate nurses as experiencing workplace factors 'workplace environment ecology' happens all at once and is nested in the core of their ecological model extending from the influence of a lack of structural empowerment (exosystem) to nurse leadership (mesosytem) and ultimately the new graduate nurse (microsystem). Vukis et al.(2012) mentions the impact of the lived experiences of nurses in Indigenous communities occurring both within the nursing practice environments and being intimately connected to being a newcomer to a rural, and remote communities.

Intersections of race, age, and gender. New graduate male nurses significantly more frequent workplace bullying than their female peers. Racial differences have also been a contributing factor in the presence of incivility and other forms of workplace aggression in nursing practice in Canada (Eaker, 2021). The nature of racism is fundamentally systemic, as with all other colonized institutions, healthcare and nursing are a site where racism, microaggressions and incivility thrive. The Code of Ethics (CNA, 2017) does not mention racism yet speaks to the social determinants of health, and addressing health inequities (Eaker, 2021). Eaker (2021) asserts the reason the nursing profession has yet to address racism or admit it exists is because "the profession benefits from society's unequal structure and is more interested in maintaining a likable, caring image than working towards achieving equity and justice' (p.33) through changing the systems. Bailey (2020) research findings of a strength and determination of students through their own conceptualizations of the problem [microagressions and incivility] and dealing with it in a positive manner embodies a self-determined approach rather than waiting for decolonized approaches to structural racism.

Discussion

To the best of the author's knowledge, this scoping review is the first review of its

type to explore the intersection of racism, microaggressions and incivility experiences of graduate nurses and factors that focused on a North American context. The findings from this review are reflected in the nursing literature across several foci including organizational culture and working conditions. The findings of this review add clarity to the conceptualization of racism, microaggressions and incivility specific to nursing practice contexts (Beagan et al., 2023; Vukis et al., 2012). It was evident in this scoping review that improving the behaviors may not be enough to mitigate experiences of racism, microaggressions and incivility in nursing. A multifaceted, capacity-building approach is needed to support change, including the provision of ongoing support and empowerment of nurse leaders to ultimately improve working conditions of new graduate nurses. Further, the need for structural empowerment and culture specific insights (Indigenous and Black) into the creation of inclusive working conditions (Eaker, 2021), anti-racist/incivility workplace policies (Beagan et al., 2023), and the role of nurse leaders in mitigating the factors contributing to stressful work environments for new graduate nurses (Blackstock et al., 2022).

Strengths and Limitations

This scoping review uses a comprehensive methodology in accordance with the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework, which is appropriate for a review when the evidence of the intersections of racism, microaggressions and incivility experiences of nurses is scarce in Canada, and North America. Another focus is on the Indigenous nurses and the inclusion of Vukis et al.s' (2012) seminal research study that has not been replicated and presents a risk of bias in this review. Given the intention is to find an intersection of racism, microaggressions and incivility among new graduate nurses in Canada, it was included in this review. A limitation is the inclusion of only English articles which can limit the information available given Canada is a bilingual nation.

Summary and Future Directions

Despite the increasingly vast empirical research on racism, there remains important areas that warrant further investigation. It is important for researchers to consider the origin of where racism starts (racial microaggressions and incivility) before it evolved into racialized violence and into social networks rather than between individuals. Importantly, the use of ecological and intersectoral frameworks to ensure nursing practice contexts reflect the realities of new graduate nurses' work environments through the acknowledgement of levels of influence (micro, meso, macro) and the roles of race, gender, and culture. Qualitative studies and mixed methods research could assist in refining measures of microaggressions and incivility. In terms of the Canadian context, there is a need to expand research populations to learn more from Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit and Métis), immigrant, and Black new graduate nurses' experiences and exploring the factors that contribute to safe environments where they feel safe to identify. The author could not find a recent publication that focused on Indigenous graduate students' experiences. Further there is much to learn from aggregated and disaggregated experiences with diligent guidance and consultation from Indigenous ethics boards and communities.

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The notion that gender identity is something personal, spiritual, and inherently worthy of respect aligns deeply with pre-colonial teachings across many nations. As such, invoking these principles is not about assimilation into Western rights discourse, but rather a strategic act of asserting what many of our nations have known: that we have the right to exist as we are, without justification or alteration. **We need no permission**.

~ Ellis Rondquist

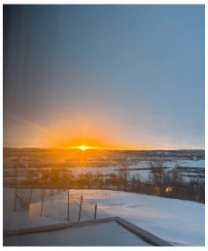
Oneka McCormick

Secwépemc and Mohawk
Bachelor of Arts

ARTWORK

During my trip to Kautokeino, Norway, I had the incredible opportunity to connect deeply with Sámi culture and the surrounding nature. One of my most interesting experiences was learning about the cultural and spiritual significance of reindeer to the Sámi people. Seeing these animals in their natural environment was both moving and inspiring. This artwork depicts a reindeer under the northern lights, surrounded by birch. I created this piece during a lecture on Sámi artistry and its deep-rooted connection to nature and reindeer. Through this piece, I wanted to capture the spirit of the reindeer and its significance in Sámi culture. I hope my artwork honours both the reindeer and its significance in Sámi artwork.


Sokki
Adventure

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Our community's way of life is influenced by our interactions with our environment which then contributes to the cultural diversity of the country.

~ *Milanie June C. Batang-ay*

Milanie June C. Batang-ay

Kankanaey

Master of Environmental Science

"Food sovereignty is not just about sustenance; it embodies our connection with our ancestral domains and the preservation of our Indigenous knowledge systems and practices."

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN THE PHILIPPINES INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

My Indigenous name, Awayen, is derived from my ancestors and was given to me during a naming ritual (similar to a baptism) performed after my umbilical cord fell off my body. The purpose of this ritual was to invoke the protection of the spirits, ensuring that their guidance and blessings would be with me throughout my life journey. Within the community, I am commonly referred to as inan Aclop, which translates to the mother of Aclop.

I was born and raised in barangay Madongo, which we refer to as our ili (village) nestled in the municipality of Sagada, a small town located in the Cordillera region of Northern Philippines. Sagada is home to Kankana-ey Igorot indigenous peoples (referred to as Applai ethnolinguistic group, which means people of the West, by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) of the Philippines). While both of my parents hail from Sagada, their ancestral roots lie in different barangays - my father comes from barangay Antadao and my mother's lineage traces back to barangay Tanulong (pronounced as Tanowong).

Growing up, I learned from the information shared by our elders, who serve as living repositories of our Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs). Our community's way of life is influenced by our interactions with our environment which then contributes to the cultural diversity of the country. The municipality of Sagada is well known for its rich culture and tradition, breathtaking sceneries, and distinctive tourist spots that attract visitors from every corner of the globe. Despite the influx of visitors and modernization, our community remains steadfast in preserving and advancing our time-honored culture and traditions, which includes our practices on resources management, agriculture, health, and sanitation, among others that continue to be passed down through generations.

The concept of food sovereignty and agriculture are interconnected. It ensures people's right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sustainable and socially just means. In recent years, food sovereignty and food systems have emerged as one of the major concerns, gaining recognition and attention from international policies and government programs worldwide. Although the concept of food sovereignty is relatively new in the Philippines, a country where agriculture plays an important role in the economy, the practice holds particular significance for indigenous communities.

Food sovereignty holds significant meaning for indigenous peoples in the Philippines as it encompasses our cultural, spiritual, and social identity. Through generations, these different food sovereignty practices have been sustained through the various indigenous political institutions, the cultural institution for decision-making and participation within an indigenous community. This paper seeks to develop a better understanding of the intricate

nature of food sovereignty in the Philippines, focusing on the longstanding traditions within certain indigenous communities.

Life in the ili

Food sovereignty in the Philippines is a day-to-day practice. In my community we practice food sovereignty for food security. Like many rural communities in the country, agriculture plays a significant role in the local economy and the livelihood of the residents.

Our agricultural practices are primarily based on subsistence, where the primary goal is to ensure that we can provide for our own food needs. Diversified farming practices are at the core of our approach, allowing us to cultivate a variety of staple foods that we can access from our homes even in the face of climatic uncertainties. Beyond meeting the food requirement of our households, the surplus produce from our farming practices is being sold in neighboring barangays.

Aside from crop cultivation, we also raise livestock and poultry, which have cultural significance for us. The rearing of these animals serves multiple purposes, including supplementing our food sources, generating additional income through sales and catering to various cultural needs and rituals.

With the ability to grow and raise our food through our agricultural practices, we are ensured that we have access to a staple food from within our house, we do not need to rely on external providers for sustenance.

In our community, traditional knowledge in agricultural production, including techniques like seed selection, eradicating pests and diseases, ritual practices and agricultural calendars are transmitted through oral tradition and experiential learning, with the experienced elders as our guiding mentors.

Our education about the various agricultural practices in our community was learned by accompanying our grandparents in the field, observing how agricultural activities are conducted and working alongside them while they carry out necessary tasks such as planting and tending crops and harvesting produce. Through these hands-on experiences by watching and imitating our grandparents' actions, we gain practical skills in farming and embrace the essence of intergenerational learning. While doing our tasks, our grandparents would provide valuable guidance and feedback for us to hone our abilities to complete our assigned work and would pass on the crucial knowledge and abilities that are relevant to what we are doing. Intergenerational learning is key to the Philippines' food sovereignty as it ensures intergenerational valuing of the importance of producing our food and safeguarding the Indigenous wisdom associated with it.

Methodology and Limitation of the Study

To better understand Indigenous food sovereignty practices in the Philippines and highlight the significance of integrating these practices into broader discussions on food systems, this paper utilized a qualitative research design. To provide an overview of the Indigenous food sovereignty practices in the Philippines, the relevant literature on the subject was examined. Similarities, discrepancies, and gaps in the existing information were noted. Representatives of Indigenous Political Structures (IPS) and Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) participated in semi-structured telephone interviews to discuss their knowledge and experiences on Indigenous food sovereignty. Online key informant interviews with Indigenous leaders were also undertaken. These interviews captured Indigenous agricultural practices, adaptation strategies and various obstacles to Indigenous food sovereignty. All participants gave their free, prior and informed consent highlighting the voluntary nature of their involvement, and the researcher would adhere to the procedure throughout the production of the publication.

The diversity of Indigenous communities in the Philippines makes it possible that this article may not fully convey the complexities of food sovereignty practices across the country. However, it will strive to provide a representative understanding of the food sovereignty of the selected communities. Additionally, while visiting Indigenous communities is crucial, the lack of resources prevented this and instead made use of existing technologies for distant data gathering and virtual interactions in place of the limitation of in-person interactions.

Indigenous Food Sovereignty Practices in the Philippines

In the Philippines, which is home to at least 110 ethnolinguistic groups (NCIP, 2019), the essence of food sovereignty is deeply rooted in the Indigenous knowledge systems and practices of these communities. These Indigenous peoples collectively make up an estimated 10% and 20% of the country's total population (Dekdekan & Carino, 2019), making their cultural contributions invaluable to the country's identity. Within these Indigenous communities are time-tested agricultural practices and techniques that co-exist harmoniously with nature, nurturing a life that goes far beyond mere sustenance. Understanding and preserving these practices is not only crucial for honoring the rights and identities of Indigenous peoples but also holds significant implications for the country's food security.

The agricultural practices that the Indigenous peoples have nurtured for centuries are not just about growing food but also represent their connection with the land and the preservation of centuries-old traditions associated with it. These practices sustain the spiritual and cultural value of the food they farm in addition to ensuring a bountiful harvest that is necessary for survival even in the harshest of times. The preservation of these Indigenous food sovereignty practices is important.

The concept of food sovereignty that has been introduced recently in Indigenous communities has become a crucial cornerstone in recognizing and upholding the rights of these communities in their food production, consumption, and management (Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty, n.d.). These four fundamental principles emphasized the inherent rights of Indigenous communities to determine the communities' food systems.

The right to food sovereignty finds its legal grounding in the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) (Republic Act 8371, 1997), which upholds the communities' right to develop their lands and manage their natural resources in accordance with their cultural practices and traditions. IPRA provides a framework for preserving and promoting Indigenous food sovereignty, ensuring that Indigenous communities can continue to thrive in harmony within their ancestral domains.

The Tri-peoples Journal Online (2012) and the Kilusang Maralita sa Kanayunan-KilosKa (2022) provided illustrative examples of Indigenous food sovereignty practices that can be found in the sulagad and the suragad systems, practiced by the Téduray and Lambangian peoples in Maguindanao and the Erumanen ne Menuvu in North Cotabato, both located in the Southern Philippines. These systems demonstrate a holistic and sustainable approach to agriculture, where a variety of crops, including root crops, legumes, vegetables, and fruit trees, are meticulously intercropped in a single plot of land. The selection of crops is guided by a profound understanding of their compatibility with each other, their ability to enhance soil fertility, potential to minimize pest infestations and optimize land use. The intercropping system allows for a year-round harvest, enabling communities to enjoy a continuous supply of diverse and nutritious food, safeguarding them against potential food shortages and enhancing their overall food security.

Integral to these food sovereignty practices is the integration of livestock and aquaculture. Native chickens, pigs and carabaos and tilapia farming are integrated within the sulagad and suragad systems, ensuring a holistic and integrated approach to food production. This integration allows for a mutually beneficial relationship between plants and animals, enriching the overall ecosystem and optimizing the use of available resources.

These food sovereignty practices promote not only food security but also improved nutrition, all achieved through the implementation of Indigenous and sustainable agricultural practices that are adapted to the local environmental condition. Moreover, these practices fortify community resilience, by diversifying their crops, Indigenous communities ensure their food supply remains secure even during times of uncertainty. Further, these practices provide multiple benefits to the Indigenous communities and contribute to sustainable agriculture and community resilience while preserving and promoting the IKSPs of the Indigenous communities.

Indigenous people's food sovereignty

also involves the utilization of Indigenous knowledge systems and practices and sustainable ways of managing natural resources. Across the Philippine archipelago, Indigenous communities have honed practices that harmonize human activities with a delicate balance of their environments, nurturing a symbiotic relationship with their environment.

One exemplary practice is the lapat, embraced by the Isneg of Apayao and the Maeng and Tingguian of Abra in the Northern Philippines. The term lapat, which means 'to prohibit' or 'to regulate' embodies the essence of regulation and protection, serving as a method for responsibly managing natural resources (Buendia, et al., 2006). Through a complex set of rules and regulations passed down from generation to generation, these communities ensure the sustainable use of their rivers, forest, and hunting grounds, among others. Within the lapat system, specific portions of rivers or forests are designated for regulated activities, allowing the environment to replenish and recover while still catering to the needs of the community (Camacho, et al., 2012). This adaptive management approach demonstrates a profound understanding of the interconnectedness between human activities and environmental health. The lapat system fosters environmental resilience, ensuring that these critical resources remain abundant for future generations.

The muyong system of forest management by the Ifugao Indigenous peoples in the Northern Philippines is yet another example of Indigenous peoples respects for their surroundings. The muyong serves not only to support the ecological, economic and cultural values of the Ifugao community but also as a mechanism for rehabilitating watersheds (Camacho et al., 2012). Within the muyong, sustainable farming practices are harmoniously interwoven with forest conservation efforts. The muyong system becomes a living testament to the resilience and wisdom of Ifugao people, preserving both their cultural heritage and the ecosystem that has sustained them for centuries. These practices reflect the Indigenous people's deep connection to the environment. By nurturing and protecting the resources that sustain them, these communities ensure that future generations can continue to thrive in harmony with nature.

As we learn from these food sovereignty practices upheld by Indigenous communities in the Philippines, we recognize the importance of recognizing and respecting IKSPs. These age-old practices go beyond just ensuring food security but also contribute to the preservation of biodiversity, conservation of natural resources and the sustainability of food systems in the country which is part of the cultural identity of these communities. As we grapple with the consequences of a changing climate and other environmental problems, these food sovereignty practices offer valuable insights and solutions for creating more resilient and environmentally friendly models that respect and integrate Indigenous people's knowledge.

COVID-19 Pandemic and Indigenous Food Sovereignty

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply impacted our Indigenous food sovereignty practices. The sudden disruptions caused by the pandemic revealed the vulnerabilities of our communities, as traditional agricultural activities were hampered by lockdown measures and mobility restrictions. Despite these challenges, remarkable examples of resilience emerged as Indigenous initiatives strengthened and revitalized Indigenous knowledge systems and practices in agriculture that were gradually diminishing.

For generations, Indigenous food sovereignty practices have long provided a reliable source of food for our communities. However, the pandemic impacted on these practices, as critical agricultural tasks were left unattended due to the imposition of lockdowns and restricted movements. The consequences were evident in reduced crop yields and food production, resulting in food shortages and heightened concerns about food security. Exacerbating this, the closures of local markets and limitations on trade impacted our ability to access essential resources. Faced with these challenges, some Indigenous communities found themselves increasingly reliant on external aid and support from non-government organizations, government agencies and private institutions.

Amidst the challenges brought by the

pandemic, our Indigenous communities demonstrated resilience and resourcefulness to solve the problem within their communities. The urgency of the situation prompted community-led initiatives that significantly strengthened our disrupted food sovereignty practices. In some communities, the pandemic provided an opportunity for the documentation and preservation of these practices in various forms.

The Tinanaon Manobo in Arakan Valley, Cotabato, in the Southern Philippines were able to revive their traditional farming practices. With determination and unity, they established communal farms cultivated with vegetables, root crops, herbs, and fruit-bearing trees. Recognizing the importance of preserving and enhancing these practices, the IPS organized awareness-raising and education sessions. The IPS encouraged the active participation of both the experienced women, knowledgeable on traditional seeds, and the youth, who brought in their scientific experience to enrich the process (B. Sumin, personal communication, April 30, 2023).

Through the COVID-19 crisis, the Tinananon-Manobo community committed to preserving, reviving, and innovating their agricultural practices. These serve as a testament to the significance of preserving food sovereignty practices traditionally practiced by Indigenous peoples.

Loreta Alsa's (2020) insightful account sheds light on the resilience and resourcefulness of the Tagbanua people of Palawan despite the restrictions imposed by the government. Undeterred by the obstacles, the Tagbanua people proactively planted an array of crop varieties, strategically diversifying their crops. By cultivating different crops, they ensured a steady supply of food sources for their families, safeguarding against potential shortages and uncertainties. Moreover, they diligently maintained a seed bank, which housed a diverse variety of upland rice and other essential food crops. This example that showcased a proactive response to adversity by the Tagbanua should serve as an inspiring example of Indigenous communities taking charge of their food sovereignty practices and nurturing resilient communities.

The Erumanen ne Menuvu community's commitment to food sovereignty shines through their innovative and impactful "Food Always In The Home" (FAITH) program, as revealed by Timuey Jojo Ambangan (personal communication, April 30, 2023). This program is a testament to their deep-rooted connection with the land and their unwavering determination to ensure a continuous and sufficient supply of fresh, naturally grown food for their homes. The FAITH program is synonymous with the Department of Agriculture's "Plant, Plant, Plant" initiative which ensures self-sufficiency and resilience during the challenging times of the pandemic. By fostering the practice of producing fresh and healthy foods right in their backyards, the Erumanen ne Menuvu takes charge of their food security, creating a sustainable and locally controlled source of nourishment.

Through the FAITH program, families in the Erumanen ne Menuvu community have embraced agricultural practices that provide them with a diverse array of fresh produce. By tending to their backyard gardens, they have nurtured a deeper understanding of the intricacies of nature and the importance of responsible and sustainable food production. This initiative not only ensures food sufficiency but also serves as an affirmation of their identity and Indigenous knowledge in preserving and revitalizing Erumanen ne Menuvu's food sovereignty practices. As they cultivate their own fresh and healthy foods, they create a strong sense of ownership over their food systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on Indigenous food sovereignty practices in the Philippines, causing disruptions to traditional agricultural practices, threatening food security, and affecting cultural practices. However, despite these challenges, Indigenous communities have demonstrated resilience and adaptability by reviving and strengthening their Indigenous knowledge related to food sovereignty. The experiences during the pandemic inspired our communities to build back better reinforcing the core principles of Indigenous food sovereignty.

Challenges to Attaining Indigenous Food Sovereignty in the Philippines

Indigenous food sovereignty practices in the Philippines have faced numerous challenges. Over time we have environmental problems, weakening traditional knowledge, land grabbing, and community displacement impact food sovereignty for Indigenous peoples. We must engage with these challenges as they prevent our communities from maintaining food sovereignty which as shown during COVID-19 is one way we can survive global disasters.

Food sovereignty is intrinsically linked with the environment., the example clearly illustrated the impacts of environmental issues on food sovereignty. These climate-induced disruptions of prolonged drought and water scarcity impacted agricultural productivity and small-scale farmers, who often practice traditional and resilient agricultural methods. They were disproportionately affected by climate changes, impeding their capacity to exercise food sovereignty and by recognizing the linkage between the environment and food sovereignty.

Additionally, land grabbing which refers to the acquisition of land, often by external actors for commercial, agricultural, industrial development, or other non-agricultural purposes has threatened the food sovereignty of Indigenous communities. In the Southern Philippines for example, the Taboli-Manobo had only two weeks' worth of food at the start of the COVID-19 lockdown because they are unable to produce their food due to a large-scale coffee plantation that had taken over a significant portion of their land and is supported by the government (Friends of the Earth International, 2021). The encroachment of the coffee plantation challenged and deprived the Taboli-Manobo of their ancestral lands and disrupts the practice of their Indigenous agriculture and food sovereignty practices leading to dependence on external food sources and food insecurity.

Furthermore, community displacement is another way in which our food sovereignty practices are interrupted. Community displacement is when families must move away from their homes and find a new place to settle significantly affecting the ability of the Indigenous communities to practice and maintain their Indigenous food sovereignty practices. The increased military operations against the Bangsamoro Islamic Fighters (BIFF) forcing the Indigenous Téduray, Lambangian and Dulangan-Manobo to flee their ancestral domains in the province of Maguindanao, southern Philippines, leaving behind their farms and livestock (Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center-Kasama sa Kalikasan, 2022) is an example. When the Téduray, Lambangian and Dulangan-Manobo were forced to leave their ancestral domain, they lose access to lands where they practice food sovereignty practices such as the sulagad. When they are forced to adapt to an unfamiliar environment, they faced challenges in accessing familiar food sources and traditional crops that are well-adapted to the environment. This can result in a dependence on non-Indigenous food systems, affecting communities' self-reliance and autonomy over food production and distribution.

Ways Forward and Recommendations

Despite the challenges faced by Indigenous communities in the Philippines, there are ongoing efforts to promote and protect their food sovereignty practices. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act serves as a critical legal framework that recognizes and upholds the rights of Indigenous peoples. According to Alegado (2020), the mainstreaming of food sovereignty is necessary to secure the indigenous communities the control over their food systems and the incorporation of their IKSPs, which is in harmony with the environment.

In the pursuit of mainstreaming Indigenous food sovereignty, the Philippines' K-12 education program implemented by the Department of Education plays a role. The program's core objective is to foster an inclusive curriculum that reflects the diverse cultures and heritage of the country (Republic Act No. 10533, 2013). By incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems and practices related to food sovereignty into the curriculum, learners can gain a profound understanding of sustainable agricultural practices, the importance of food security, sustainable production, ecological harmony and community resilience that have sustained Indigenous communities for generations. The Philippines' K-12 program

provides a unique opportunity to integrate Indigenous food sovereignty practices into the education system which can nurture learners who are not only academically equipped but also individuals who possess cultural and environmental awareness.

Based on the data, it is necessary to support and enhance the Indigenous people's resilience through their food sovereignty practices as an integral part of securing food security and ecological balance in the Philippines. Moving forward, inclusive planning and decision-making processes must involve Indigenous peoples, IPS and Indigenous people's organizations in the management of their ancestral domains.

Conclusion

Food sovereignty serves as a lifeblood among the Indigenous communities in the Philippines. While this paper does not encompass all the diverse practices of our communities, it attempts to highlight some practices. By exploring these practices, we strengthen our communities and also acknowledge the challenges to our food sovereignty.

Throughout my work, I have been privileged to engage with different communities which are eager to preserve, document and share their food sovereignty practices. Their desire to share these traditions with the world stems from a collective aspiration to serve an inspiration and can set as an example for others to follow.

In this journey, my encounters with these resilient communities have instilled a profound sense of hope and determination. I have witnessed the passion with which they safeguard their ancestral domains. Their commitment to Indigenous food sovereignty practices empowers them to overcome environmental problems.

I hope that by sharing this article, others are inspired to share their own stories and practices. By amplifying the diverse voices of our Indigenous communities, we can grow a stronger movement for Philippine food sovereignty practices.

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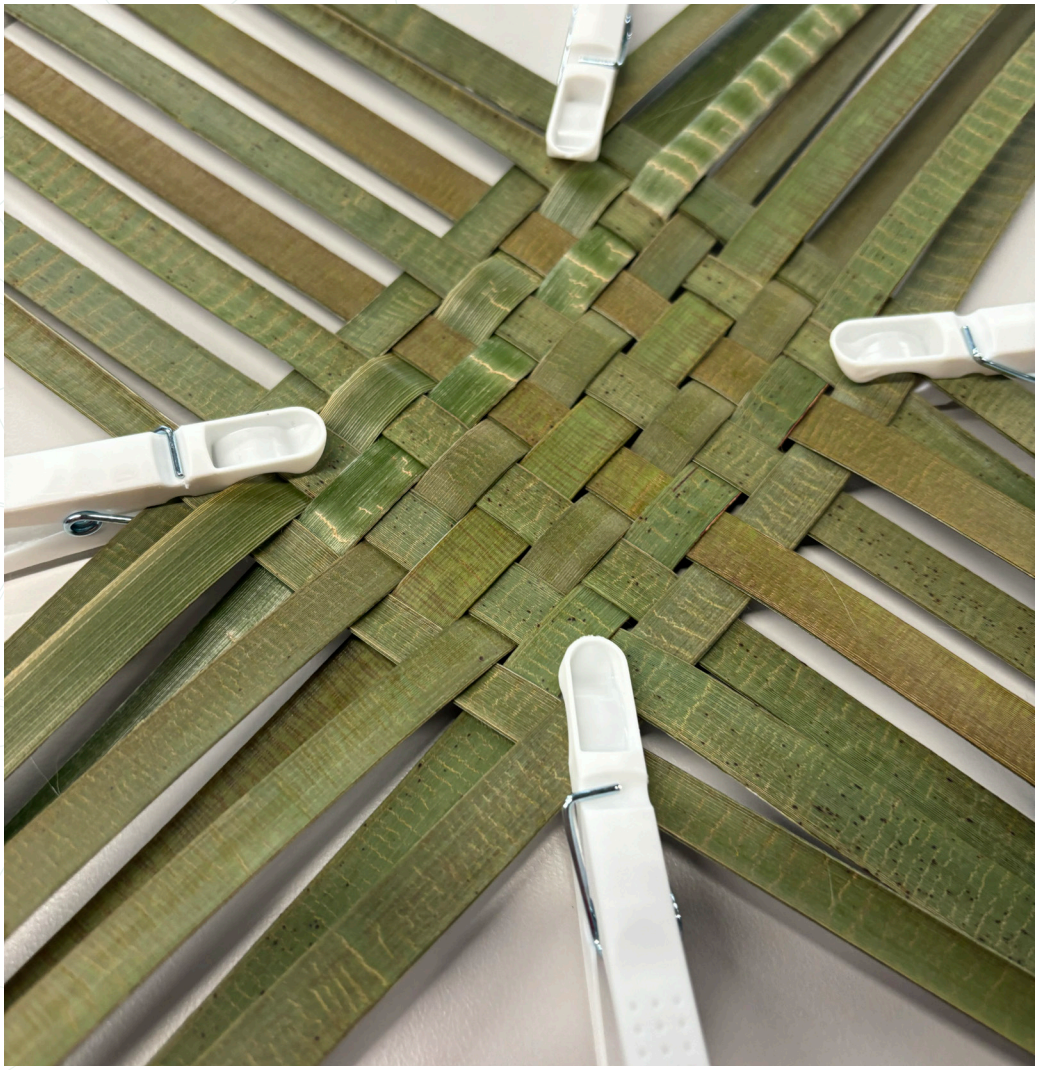

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"My grandmothers have left me these skills, and their spirit stays with me, guiding my hands through familiar movements. They are closest to me when I am using my hands in this way"

STITCHING THE GAPS IN MY FAMILY HISTORY: UNVEILING MY GRANDMOTHERS STORIES THROUGH BEADING

Introduction

Tawnishi, my name is Jess Owen, I am a Métis woman raised in Ktunaxa and Secwépemc territory. My parents are Janice Regnier and Fred Owen, and my family names are Bergeron, Nolin, Morin, Ouellette, to name a few. I grew up hearing stories from my mother about the strength of the Métis woman in my family. These stories were reflected in my own home, being raised by my strong, feral, outspoken, bush woman, whom I got to call mom. However, much of the historical documentation highlights the Métis men for their contribution to the fur trade and for the many battles they fought for our people. While this is true, if you grew up around Métis women like I did, you'd know that the wives of these Métis men would have been essential in keeping the community and culture alive and are likely behind many of the decisions made that influenced the trajectory of the entire nation (Macdougall, 2010).

Métis women in academia have started to share the voices of our Métis grandmothers in the literature. This implies that Métis woman have held our families and communities together through a culture of strong social networks using art, dance, song, and food. Records of many Métis events and family lineages exist because women have held those stories (Pratt & Markides, 2024). My grandmother, Annette (Bergeron) Regnier, and now my mother carry photos, documentation, genealogy, and stories for generations. They are strong matriarchs who ensure our identity as a distinct and strong culture and continue to lead our communities.

This research is about connecting to my grandmothers and aunties stories through beading. I am a spiritual person, and I have always felt my ancestors with me when I work with my hands. Over multiple days, I designed and beaded a medallion while opening myself up to teachings from my ancestors. Every day I journaled what I had learned, not only from beading, but from the land and my community surrounding me. In addition, I will share what I have gained from books and papers about my family and Métis women. This paper is only the beginning of my research into my lineage, as I am sure this journey will last a lifetime.

Research Objective

I find myself yearning for my grandmothers. I know they are with me every day because I hear them whispering to me in the wind, chatting by the river, dancing through the grass, and I feel them guiding my needle through the hide they helped me scrape. For many of them, my ears have not heard their stories, and my eyes have not read their names. If you look at my family tree, you'll see "Métis Women", "Indian Woman", "Saulteaux Woman", and "Chepewais Indian Woman" written in my grandmothers handwriting

(Regnier, n.d.).

This research is about coming to know them through an activity that draws their spirits in, beading.

Stories of my Grandmothers and Aunties

The Grandmothers of the Métis

No one truly knows who became the first Métis person (Pratt & Markides, 2024). Our identity was born from country marriages between European fur traders and our Cree, Saulteaux, and Chipewyan grandmothers (Van Kirk, 1984). When our grandfathers arrived, they did not carry the knowledge to survive on the cold prairie landscape. Their marriages to First Nations women and the acceptance into their communities were what ensured the survival of our grandfathers. Had it not been for the strength of these women, the fur trade would have concluded before it even started. Women sewed moccasins, weaved snowshoes, built canoes, navigated river channels, translated between nations, trapped, hunted, fished, preserved food, and kept those first voyagers alive, all while raising children (Buchaly, 2024; Teillet, 2019). While these relationships were mutually advantageous for social unification and economics, my grandma would speak highly of these relationships by emphasizing the love that they held for each other.

The Nolin Aunties in Red River

My family is quite large, and it will likely take me a lifetime of research into the literature and documentation to truly gather all the knowledge that is available about my grandmothers and aunties. However, I would like to share the stories of two very notable Métis aunties in my family, Angelique Nolin (1787-1869) and Marguerite Nolin (1780-1826).

Marguerite and Angelique were born in Sault Ste. Marie, on a plot of land that their father Jean-Baptise Nolin had secured with support from his wife Marie-Angelique Couvret. Jean-Baptiste Nolin sent his daughters, Angelique and Marguerite, to Montreal to receive an education from the "Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame". The Nolin sisters were fluent in French, English, Ojibway, and Cree, and when the Nolin family moved to the Red River Settlement in 1819, Angelique and Marguerite were asked to start a school for Métis and First Nations Girls (Chaput, Donald, 1987). However, Angelique and Marguerite's father, Jean-Baptiste Nolin, held onto Christian ideals of gender roles that he pushed onto his daughters and protested their desire to open a school for Métis and First Nations women and girls in Red River, Manitoba. It was not until after Jean- Baptiste Nolin's death in 1826 that Angelique and Marguerite were able to open the first school in Red River for Métis and First Nations girls that also incorporated Indigenous ways of knowing into the Catholic education system (Freeman & Barkwell, n.d.).

My grandmothers move west from Red River

By the mid-1800's, many of my ancestors had found their way to Red River, Manitoba, and by 1869, the population had reached over 10,000 people, making it the largest Métis settlement at the time (Oster & Lizee, 2021). The community held dances where people jigged to fiddle music, beaded beautiful flower patterns, earning us the name "The Flower Beadwork People", hunted, prepared buffalo, threw kitchen parties, and created a community that would solidify the Métis as a distinct people with a unique and fruitful identity. Other than my aunties Angelique and Margerite Nolin, I do not carry many stories of my grandmothers from this time. By 1869, the Red River Resistance began after the Hudson's Bay Company sold Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada without consulting the First Nations or Métis that lived on the territory. Louis Riel led the Métis into battle resisting the new proposed "Canadian" government. The Métis fought hard, but a lot of them ended up fleeing west. Louis Riel was wanted for his role in the resistance, and so he left to hide in the United States (Teillet, 2019).

Many of my ancestors fled Red River and rebuilt their communities in central Saskatchewan. Métis farming communities were built along the south Saskatchewan River, with 75% of the population having come from Red River (Payment, 2009). There is no doubt that the grandmothers played an essential role in re-establishing the nation by making this new territory a home for generations to come. The woman ran the household and would often have over 10 children to help work on the

farm. The Métis brought their vibrant party life filled with song, dance, food, and culture to Saskatchewan when they came. The woman continued to participate in smoking the pipe, keeping their extensive knowledge on traditional medicine alive, sewing, tanning hides, and creating masterful beadwork (Payment, 2009).

Life Post Battle

In 1885, after the Battle of Batoche and the execution of Louis Riel, life for the Métis changed. The Métis were pushed to the fringe of society and forced into poverty through the introduction of colonial systems such as the script system, road allowances, and settlements (Teillet, 2019). My grandmother and mother were both raised in central Saskatchewan post-loss at Batoche. My grandmother, Annette (Bergeron) Regnier, and my grandfather, Alfred Regnier, raised my mom, her siblings, and several of my mother's cousins on a cattle and grain farm in Edam, Saskatchewan. My grandmother passed away when I was pretty young, but from the stories I have been told, she ran the house and made the decisions on the farm that led to them working their way out of poverty. Although they were too poor to buy much from the market, they never went hungry because they farmed and hunted, and my grandmother could stretch a meal. My grandmother was also an artist; she made a lot of their clothes and knitted blankets. Nothing went to waste, and she would even save my uncle's cigarette containers to weave into trivets.

Methods

For generations, my grandmothers and aunties have been using their hands to create art through beading, hide tanning, sewing, knitting, weaving, and much more. I have been able to pick up all activities with very little practice. This is in part due to the collective generational memory that the muscles in my hands have evolved to hold. My grandmothers have left me these skills, and their spirit stays with me, guiding my hands through familiar movements. They are closest to me when I am using my hands in this way.

So, I have chosen to use beading as a method to connect to my grandmothers and to share their stories both through the art itself, and the stories that are revealed during the beading process. I spent a lot of time on the beading design, going through many variations of ideas before putting needle to felt. I hope the viewer sees both my family and their own in the many layers this piece bears. I chose the colours in the same way I always do, by standing in front of the bead wall at the store and picking whichever beads my eyes wander to.

Throughout the weeks that I was beading, I tried to locate myself within the territory as well as surround myself with community. As Métis people, we are very social, and storytelling connects us to our ancestors and reminds us that there is always more to learn. It was vital for me to intentionally open my mind, body, and spirit to be ready to accept the messages from my grandmother. Each day that I bead, I took my journal with me and wrote down essential teachings and messages that were shared with me.

Beading Journal Entries

Day 1

I am currently in Whitehorse, Yukon to play in the Yukon First Nations Hockey Association's 45th Annual Native hockey tournament. There are Indigenous people from all across the nation here to play in one of the biggest native hockey tournaments in the country. I have been playing hockey since I was a child. My first Native hockey experience came in 2014 when I was selected for Team British Columbia and played at the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships. These tournaments are not just about hockey; they carry great cultural significance. Tournaments serve as a gathering place, where I reconnect with old friends and relatives, and form new relations. We support each other through the inevitable triumph or defeat that hockey brings. Eleven years ago, we were brought together as teammates and watched each other grow from a distance. Upon our reunion, we found a sisterhood to rely on.

I have been fortunate to have suffered few injuries that have prevented me from playing; however, in this past year, I had to have surgery on my finger that should have taken me out of the game for a month. I see a stitched-up scar on my right ring finger over

my knuckle. It matches another stitched-up scar marked on the inside of the same finger. I have spent a lot of time looking at my own hands; it is incredible what our hands remember. I trace the scars that overlap and connect with the natural lines that run along my palms. I am proud of my rough, calloused palms that I have acquired from my many hobbies.

While we are growing in our mother's womb, our fingers are all joined together. Each finger connected to the next. At this stage in our lives, we look almost indistinguishable from our animal relatives. All of our hands were webbed as if prepared for the world of water, where creation starts. That is until our souls decide to choose the land and programmed cell death releases our fingers.

Today, I finished drawing out the design of my project after discussing many different ideas with my friends and family. Although you can't tell by the finished product, under the beads, I have drawn out the hands to start, the left hand is brown, the right hand is a light pink color. The hands are positioned in the same position my hands default to whenever I am in prayer. I have drawn two rings around the outside of the hands to mark the boundary of this project. The two rings represent the marriage of the two cultures, and I have shaded the outside blue as the water from which we all come. In this moment, I feel the connection to my grandmother. Her hand in mine, her culture shining through mine, her in the spirit world and me in mine.

Day 2- April 10th, 2025

I started beading today. I packed up my beads, drove 10 minutes down the road to the Battle Bluff trailhead in Kamloops, hiked to the top, and started beading. I decided to start putting needle to felt here because it was the first hike I did in the territory when I interviewed for my current position two years ago. My family, who includes my dog Max, all traveled from other areas of British Columbia to support me as I embarked on a new journey.

Today, while I am walking a land far away from my ancestral territory, I still call out to my grandmothers. As travellers themselves, I wonder if they can find me here. Oddly, the only presence I feel is that of my late dog Max. Max passed away right before Christmas last year, and going home hasn't felt the same without him. As I hike, I see the footprints of many other dogs. Battle Bluff is a popular trail, and I wonder if Max's footprints are immortalized in the mud somewhere close.

Dogs have always been important to Métis people. My great-great-grandfather Joseph Octave Nolin was known for traveling through the Saskatchewan terrain using a dog sled (Hiebert, 2013). Max was certainly not cut out for a dog sled. As my dad would say, he was a gentleman. I never needed a leash with Max because he always just stuck by my side. He had enough energy to keep up during long trips but was perfectly content hanging out at home. I am reminded that dogs are our relatives too, and they follow me and teach me just as my ancestors do.

Day 3- April 11th

Today, I have an annual faculty meeting, and I am facilitating an exam. I bring my bead project to both. Throughout my schooling, I have struggled to pay attention in lectures. For most of my undergraduate degree, attending lectures felt like a complete waste of time because I could never hold my focus on the professor. Then, Covid hit, courses went online, and I started beading during my lectures. Although it may seem like I am distracted by my beading, I was finally able to listen and engage in the class. When I think about it, working with my hands has always helped me learn, which makes sense when I think about how I have received many of my teachings from knowledge holders. Most of the time, teachings are shared while doing something that keeps our hands occupied, like beading, scraping hides, or berry picking. The commonality is the flow of my hands following the same patterns that my ancestors have done for generations. As a person who grew up with sports, I have been told that muscle memory is an individual learned experience. I believe that my muscles are guided by inherited memory from my grandmothers. I can feel these women with me, still here, conducting my hands through familiar motions.

Now that we are back in school, I'm nervous about taking my projects with me. Still, today I reminded of Angelique and Marguerite Nolin and their desire to take up space as Indigenous women in the education system (Chaput, Donald, 1987). It has been almost

200 years since my aunties started teaching, and since then, school has gotten worse for Indigenous people. School has and still is being used as a tool to colonize and commit genocide against us. Now, in 2025, just 29 years after the last residential school closed, I still find myself struggling to wrap my head around how to dismantle and decolonize a being that is marketed as being different. It will wear pieces of our regalia and speak words of our language, but bones and spirit still reek of erasure. I am told how lucky I am to be invited in by this being, and yet I am weak, starving, and I struggle to recognize myself as I waste away, surviving only on crumbs tossed recklessly in my direction. I wonder if Angelique and Marguerite Nolin ever felt the same way, given that they were able to do what I am struggling to do in a time where women and our people would have to fight even harder for a seat at the table. I suppose the difference is that they taught in a predominantly Indigenous school for women and girls (Chaput, Donald, 1987).

I struggle to make progress on this piece working in the school, and I don't feel my ancestors here.

Day 4-April 14th

This last semester has been the hardest semester of my life. Over the past four months, I took two courses at UBC Okanagan as part of my PhD requirements and taught two courses at Thompson Rivers University. I was required to travel 1-2 times per week from Kamloops to Kelowna. I stopped beading, working my hides, sewing, attending language circles, and going out on the land. Instead, I spent 90% of my waking hours behind my computer planning lectures, writing, reading, and doing research. Everything that makes me a person sat untouched in neatly organized boxes while I lectured to an auditorium of students, many of whose names I never learned. I am asked to share teachings, and yet the teachings I know, the teachings that come through my hands, are not translatable in this environment.

I didn't bring my project into the school today, even though I had time while facilitating another exam. This exam was in the gym along with many other classes, surely the grandmothers would struggle to recognize me here. So, I waited until the end of the day when I could visit with my friends and bead over food and a can of diet Pepsi. I finished the outline for the hands, which provides the structure for the test of the project. It takes time because I stitch down every bead. Typically, I stitch down every second or even every third bead, but the outline is intricate, and I need it to hold its shape even when I push against it with other beads as I fill in the design.

The loud reverberation of aunty laughs fill the room, and I know our ancestors are with us. It is common practice, as Indigenous people, that when we introduce ourselves, and it is appropriate to speak their names, we also introduce our parents, grandparents, and share extended family names. It is a meeting of the ancestors. In this visit, all my friends are Indigenous, and we all come from different nations in different territories. We are deeply engaged in what Janice Gaudet would call "Keeoukaywin" or "The Visiting Way", and to us, it is a regular Monday afternoon (Gaudet, 2019). I think about the turbulence my family has endured for generations, and the number of times they were pushed from one area to another. As Métis people, we have relied on the strength of our familial structure, of our culture, and of our relationships as Indigenous people. Women have been meeting in very similar ways for generations, surely having very similar conversations to what we are having today. Today, I feel lucky to connect and learn from my friend's grandmothers too!

Day 5- April 15th

There are two main protocols I follow when berry picking. Never pick from the first patch you see and always leave enough for Maskwa (bear). And, if you've ever been berry picking, you may run into Maskwa. Animals like following the least energy-intensive route, and that often correlates with the same trails you might find yourself on.

Lately, I have been heading straight through the thicket, lost and struggling to move forward. I need grounding and directions back onto the path of least resistance. So today, I am going to meet with two different elders. I bring fish skin leather I made as a gift, and we share moose jerky, smoked salmon, and Bannock. I bring my bead project with me, but I don't work on it while visiting. Instead,

I listen to their stories, look at pictures, and discuss our shared travels. They remind me to slow down.

Métis people are hard working. I come from a long line of fur traders and farmers, and the women in my family are often the head of the household. My mother was and still is a hard worker, and her mother, my grandmother, pulled the family out of extreme poverty. My grandmother was able to do this because she held direction and had the support of a strong working family behind her. So, I only tack down a couple of beads in the fingers to give myself time to locate my path.

Day 6- April 16th

In 2021, I drove from Nova Scotia to British Columbia in four days. I drove along the rocky coastline of the Atlantic Ocean, over the rolling hills that border Lake Superior, across the prairies, and finally, to the Rocky Mountains. I was fortunate to stay with family for most nights during my travels. My cousin doesn't know this, but the cooler full of moose meat he sent me with when I stopped in Regina would sustain me through some hard times while completing my master's at the University of Calgary. I cut up the roasts, rationed the sausages, and I made that meat last, just like my grandma did.

Môswa (moose) is an essential animal for Métis people. Not only is moose meat an important food, but moose hide is widely sought after. Over the last year, I have been fortunate enough to work on several moose hides. I use hides in my art, such as to back projects like the medallion I am currently beading. Many of the teachings I hold have been gifted to me through Môswa. Môswa has acted both as a teacher and as a classroom, because it takes lots of hands to work a moose hide. As women, it is often us who gather around a hide telling stories, sharing food, learning from each other, and scraping.

Today, I stitched down colourful beads within the outline of the hands, and I chewed the rest of the moose jerky gifted to me by one of the elders I visited yesterday. I chose the colours on the left-hand to represent the alpine glow on the mountains when the sun is setting, and the rays of the sun rise on the right-hand. It dawns on me that both hands are showing me a landscape east of where I grew up. On the other side of the mountains, my ancestral territory calls for me. I go home to Saskatchewan at least once a year and walk the land my grandmothers walked. It's easier to hear them over there. But as travelers themselves, I know they understand.

Day 7- April 17th

I like to think all our relations are connected through a network of veins, roots, xylem, and phloem. If you spend enough time listening to our songs and feeling the drums, you may see, hear, and feel the heart that unites us all as beings born of the land, through the land, rivers, and lakes, wind connecting and disconnecting to form a labyrinth of water channels across the nation. Rivers hold most of the energy across Turtle Island, and our grandmothers and their communities lived along these pre-colonial highways, making the connection to home wherever the river took them. They knew the power the rivers held, and yet never dammed, polluted, or overfished the rivers. They taught our grandfathers this knowledge when they came, and our Métis families learned to make home along the rivers working the fur trade (Teillet, 2019).

I grew up on the rivers in British Columbia, enjoying all of the water sports: canoeing, kayaking, swimming, fishing, snorkeling, and floating, to name a few. I feel the closest to my family when I am on the water because, in my mind, the rivers are the vascular systems of the earth. And like my ancestors, home has never been one location. Every year since I was in grade 11, I have moved. I have started over many times; each time, a new exciting adventure exploring a new area and meeting new people. I have traveled from coast to coast and have introduced myself to many nations and territories.

Today, I brought my project to the Women's Circle put on by the Two Rivers Métis Society. I beaded the river at the base of the Rocky Mountain landscape after I had cut away and restarted the bottom portion of the hands. Beading landscapes is outside my comfort zone, even though I don't really have a particular style, so I am usually outside of my comfort zone anyway. I tried to include trees in the forefront of the landscape, but I'm having trouble understanding the dimensions

of the bead placement. So, I cut out the trees and continued the river along the base of the palms. I prefer beading around other people, and I find bringing my projects to Women's Circle helps ground me in my identity as I navigate my story as a Métis woman living away from my ancestral territory.

Day 8- April 21st

Two summers ago, I got to watch my cousin compete at the North American Indigenous Games in Halifax, and this Spring I got to cheer on the players at the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships in Kamloops. At two different ends of the nation, I watched Indigenous culture come together through sport and celebrate our youth as they interact with Nations from all over Turtle Island. Sport has been a big part of our culture, and I have been lucky to participate in Native sporting events across the country both as a youth and again as an adult. My best friends today are the same friends that I made while attending those tournaments as a kid.

I took a break from beading over the weekend to play in the annual Nk'maplqs Challenge Cup Native hockey tournament in Vernon, BC. As women, we will often join teams in the men's rec division, and this year, with six women on a team of twelve, we came in second out of sixteen teams.

Today, I bead two blue rings around the hands to mark the joining of two nations, and I then bead swirls around the hands in the same teal blue colour as the river. The teal blue beads were a gift from a friend who works closely with Indigenous water protection and rights. The medallion is more abstract than I had initially envisioned, but that's part of the story. I wrap blue beads around the peri-cord, and sew the necklace down, and then stitch the moose leather I was gifted during a hide camp as backing, along with the beaded edging. I use more blue beads for the edging, because if anything, I want this piece to emphasize the importance of water. Today was a big day of beading, but I finished it in the company of the same friends I grew up playing native hockey with. We watched North of North (APTN, 2025-), laughed, ate food, shared stories, and talked about how we played over the weekend, all while I was stitching down the final beads of this project. Again, I find myself in the company of all our ancestors.

In this post-colonial era, Opportunities to showcase our strengths and tell our stories as athletes are scarce, and often, they are not considered equal to those of our male counterparts. This weekend, we played on a team with an even male-to-female ratio against teams with more men than women, and like our grandmothers, we were dominant.

Conclusion

When you call on the ancestors for guidance, you can't always know who will come through. I learned so much over the last couple of weeks, but it wasn't at all what I expected to learn when I first started. While much of my connection to grandmothers was through using my hands, a lot of it came from the community around me and through locating myself on the land. Additionally, my training in writing has been influenced by my experience in Western science programs, where I was advised to remove myself from the work. I am in the process of unlearning and relearning how to write in a way that is not just of the mind, but also of the spirit. This paper was an uncomfortable but necessary learning experience that I hope to bring into my future work in academia and my further exploration into my family.

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LIVING, LEARNING, AND LEGISLATED: A PERSONAL STORY OF FAMILY, POLICY, AND PERSISTENCE IN CANADA

Abstract

This article explores the lived experiences of international postgraduate students navigating Canada's shifting immigration policies, with a specific focus on those with accompanying families. Drawing from autoethnographic reflection and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it examines how recent 2024 policy changes, including study permit caps, limited work rights, and family sponsorship barriers reframe students as economic contributors rather than as holistic human beings. Using Nel Noddings' Ethics of Care (1984) as a guiding framework, the piece critiques the exclusionary language and systemic neglect embedded in federal and institutional responses. It argues for a care-based approach to immigration and education policy that centers on empathy, family integration, and student well-being. Through personal narrative and policy analysis, the article issues a call to Canadian institutions and policymakers: to move beyond transactional frameworks and build inclusive systems that reflect Canada's values of justice, inclusion, and respect for diverse student populations.

Introduction

Coming to Canada was not just an academic decision, it was a life-altering journey rooted in both necessity and aspiration. Like many others from the Global South, I left behind not only a professional identity and community, but also the comfort of the known, propelled by a vision of a more stable, secure, and promising future. I carried with me a suitcase of credentials, dreams, responsibilities, and perhaps most importantly, my family. My partner and our children were not just accompanying me physically; they were emotionally invested in the idea of a new beginning. This was not an individual migration; it was a collective leap of faith.

Canada had long been portrayed as a land of inclusion, educational excellence, and social justice (Government of Canada, 2014). Its global image as a tolerant, peaceful society that values multiculturalism was one of the strongest pull factors in our decision. We imagined a space where our family could thrive, where I could study and grow professionally, my partner could build a new life as an entrepreneur, and our children could learn in an environment that promised opportunity and respect. On paper, the path was viable. The policies seemed structured to support international students and their dependents. The lived reality revealed something entirely different, far more complex and, at times, disheartening.

Personal Experience in Canada

When I arrived in Kamloops, British Columbia in 2023 to begin my Master of Education program at Thompson Rivers

University, I was filled with both hope and resolve. The path to that point had been long and difficult. I had transitioned from a career in agriculture to education, not because I had to, but because I wanted to align my passion for teaching with pedagogical training. That decision was both professional and deeply personal, an act of reinvention grounded in a desire to understand how learning happens and how I could contribute more meaningfully to academic spaces. However, almost immediately, the excitement began to erode under the weight of bureaucratic and systemic obstacles. My family and I experienced visa processing delays that left us in a state of legal limbo for over five months. During this period, we were technically "out of status", a condition that stripped us of basic rights and protections (IRCC, 2024). Our British Columbia Medical Services Plan (MSP) was suspended. Job opportunities that my spouse had begun to pursue were withdrawn. A position I had applied for within the university was suddenly inaccessible because my legal documents had expired. These were not just paperwork issues; they were disruptions that impacted our physical health, our mental well-being, and our economic stability.

More than anything, it was the psychological weight of uncertainty that began to wear us down. Every day felt like walking a tightrope, uncertain if the permits would be approved, if we would be forced to leave, or if the life we envisioned was slipping away. Our children began asking questions we couldn't answer. They noticed the anxiety in our voices and the fatigue on our faces. As parents, we tried to shield them from the harsh realities of immigration limbo, but it's hard to protect children from uncertainty when your own future is unclear. This introduction is not just a recounting of hardship; it is a statement of reality shared by many international students and their families. It sets the stage for a broader exploration of how immigration policy in Canada, particularly in its recent iterations, intersects with human lives. It interrogates the tension between policy narratives that portray international students as valued contributors to the Canadian economy and the structural barriers that dehumanize them in practice. And it centers a lived truth: when students come with families, the stakes are exponentially higher, and the policy gaps become more glaring.

Framing International Students in Policy

One might think that studying in Canada, a country that touts itself as inclusive and progressive, would mean a secure and supported journey. Yet, policy realities contradicted that image. From fluctuating work-hour regulations to restrictions on access to funding, to new caps on international student enrollment, our presence was being increasingly framed as a problem rather than a contribution. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), I began to analyze the language embedded in these immigration policies. The findings were stark; international students were framed primarily as economic actors, not as whole individuals with educational, emotional, and familial needs. (Manning-Lewis, 2022). The rhetoric of "burden", especially around family sponsorship, emerged repeatedly. Dependent family members were portrayed as straining public services, despite being denied most of those same services (IRCC, 2024).

Nel Noddings' Theory of Care

Nel Noddings' Theory of Care offers a counter-framework that Canada would do well to consider (Noddings, 1984). In her ethics, care is more than empathy; it is about responsibility, reciprocity, and acknowledging interdependence. Immigration policies shaped without care become transactional. They strip people of dignity and reduce their presence to statistics and economic value. International students are often painted as "ideal migrants" because of their skills, education, and ability to integrate. But idealization quickly turns to marginalization when our needs don't fit into economic metrics. The 2024 IRCC policy changes imposed a cap on study permit issuance, increased financial proof requirements, and reinstated restrictive work-hour limits. These changes are justified in the name of sustainability, but their impacts are exclusionary. Many students with families like mine are being priced out or pushed into deeper insecurity.

Institutions Responses and Gaps

Our institutions, while more responsive than governments in some respects, also reflect these trends. Thompson Rivers University for instance, communicated support to affected students, but its primary focus was on mitigating revenue loss. Student services were limited, and information regarding dependent support was often inaccessible or nonexistent (Retrenchment Watch Newsletter, 2024).

When my study permit expired mid-program and my family's permits followed suit, we were plunged into a period of invisibility. We could not access healthcare, employment, or even basic support. My spouse's entrepreneurial dreams stalled. I missed a university job opportunity due to permit issues. This wasn't just bureaucratic oversight, but a failure of care. Institutions and immigration systems must recognize the ripple effect of every policy decision. Yet amid these challenges, there is resilience. Families like mine continue to study, work, and raise children under immense uncertainty. We seek community in churches, cultural groups, and food banks. We support each other, even when the systems around us do not. But this resilience should not be romanticized. It is born of necessity, not choice, and it is not a sustainable model for inclusion.

My story is not unique, but it is rarely centered in discussions about immigration reform. That's why I use autoethnography not just as a method, but as a statement. Lived experience is valid evidence. It reveals the gaps in policy language, the unintended harms, and the emotional toll that statistics can't measure.

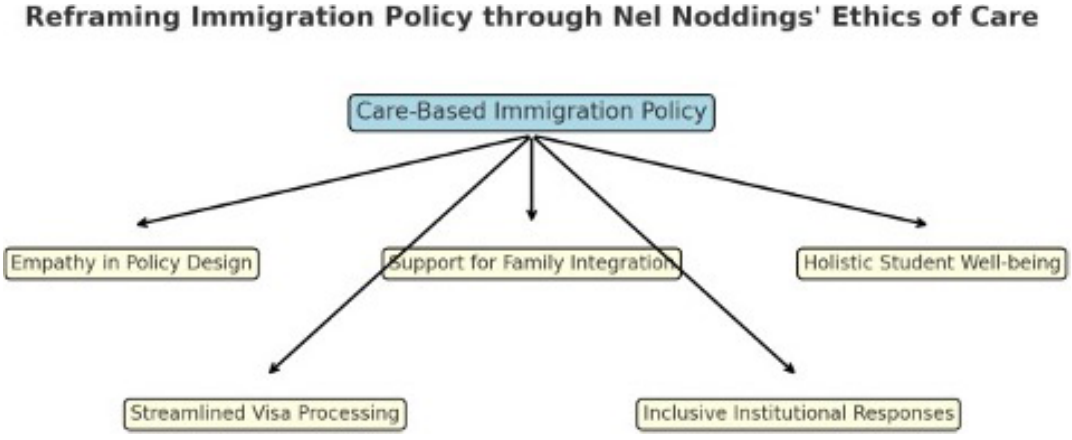
Reframing Immigration through Care

I propose a reframing of Canadian immigration policy through the lens of care. That means acknowledging families in visa processes, streamlining permit renewals, ensuring access to healthcare regardless of immigration status, and empowering institutions to support students holistically. A care-based framework does not dismiss economic sustainability, but it situates it within a broader vision of human dignity and social cohesion, and this aligns with studies that reiterates that international students' hopes for permanency are summarized in their push and pull factors that led to coming to Canada (Anderson, 2020; King & Sondhi, 2018). Canada cannot afford to alienate the very students it relies on for innovation, diversity, and economic growth. Nor can it ignore the families who support these students behind the scenes (Bai, 2016). If the nation truly wishes to remain a leader in global education, it must treat international students as full participants and not temporary assets.

Conclusion

Let this be a call to decision-makers: see us, hear us, and care for us. The lived realities of international students, particularly those who migrate with families reveal far more than the data points commonly used

Figure I: Reframing Immigration Policy through Care



to justify immigration policy changes. We are not just tuition payers or labor market supplements. We are caregivers, scholars, parents, and community members whose well-being is intertwined with the vitality of Canada's educational institutions and broader society.

Policies built on care do not weaken systems; they rather strengthen them. When immigration frameworks are guided by empathy, inclusion, and responsiveness, they foster trust, resilience, and a sense of belonging. A care-based approach would not only recognize the economic contributions of international students but also affirm our humanity. It would provide timely visa processing, enable access to family healthcare, offer clear work guidelines, and prioritize mental health and academic stability which are not luxuries, but they are necessities for success. The consequences of uncaring policies extend beyond individual students. They affect spouses who lose job prospects, children who face disrupted schooling, and institutions that struggle to support marginalized populations under financial pressure. If left unaddressed, these gaps will erode Canada's international reputation as a welcoming, high-quality education destination. Yet, change is possible.

To policymakers, educators, and institutional leaders: the time for transactional thinking is over. What international students need is not more performance metrics, but authentic support. Canada's story can still be one of leadership in global education, but only if that story is written with compassion, equity, and care at its core.

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BODY SOVEREIGNTY AND GENDER SELF DETERMINATION; WHY COLONIAL CONTROL CAN SUCK IT

Introduction

Taanishi Ellis Rondquist dishinihkaashoon, hello my name is Ellis Rondquist. I am a Métis person who is reconnecting and "coming in" to my identity as a Two-spirit and queer person. I have been taught that we cannot be impartial, and acknowledging our own positionality and social location is one way we resist colonization. When we learn our languages and introduce ourselves in those languages, we do it because it is important, and it shows that Indigenous peoples, languages, and cultures are still alive and thriving. It shows that Indigenous peoples are not relics of the past, and that we are the experts on ourselves and our communities. I am in the process of learning Southern Michif phrases to better introduce myself and feel a connection to my community and my ancestors. It's one small thing, and I will most likely never be fluent, but every piece learned adds something to my life and connects me to my community. My work to connect comes in the form of learning, unlearning, writing, beading, advocating, and nurturing connections. I am doing the work to unlearn the colonized ways of thinking that I have been taught, as Clark et al. states "colonization is not a thing of the past, it is a regular, active process happening again and again" (2020, p.71). I am a very recent graduate from the BSW program at Thompson Rivers University with a minor in Sociology. The University, and I, reside within Secwepemcúl'ecw, the unceded and traditional territories of the Secwépemc peoples who have lived here for so long that the time of occupation extends beyond the reach of memory. While studying on this land, my research has focused on body sovereignty, comprehensive sex education, and community advocacy. All of this is simply to situate myself, my positionality, and where I am at while I write this paper.

I could pretend that with all the experiences I have and the things I've done, I know where I am going, but I'm truly not sure. I'd like to apply to grad school, but I'm worried about it. I'm worried that it will cost too much, that I won't be able to keep up, that I don't truly belong there, that I will finish with a mountainous pile of debt and lack job prospects. As much as I wish to not have to engage in colonialist and capitalist structures, I also find myself with the unfortunate need to do things like eat food and have housing. I struggle with the idea that I'm just further entrenching this westernized institution of academia by giving my money and my time, while also recognizing that often a degree is required for our knowledge to even be…acknowledged. In the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Friere says this about education:

> *knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing.*

> *Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology) of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he- justifies his own existence. (2005, p.72)*

Looking at education with a westernized view makes me tired, what I want to see in my future is something that allows me to be part of a community with full understanding that learning is an exchange and learning with and from others is one of the most important things in life. We do not exist in isolation; we are not empty vessels waiting to be filled. In contrast, Absolon (2011) speaks about how "Indigenous knowledge systems are living and fluid, not concrete and fixed like typeset words" (p.5). Within one of my favourite zines, Everyone is an Ally, until it's time to do some real ally shit from Ancestral Pride (2015) it says "we understand that rent and bills are an imperative for surviving in a city, but there is much you can contribute if you are successful, if you are going to live in the system may as well excel at it and help as you are able with the grass roots and those on the land fighting for the future" (p.8). I can acknowledge that I am a fully realized human being who can contribute and exist and allow myself space to mess up and learn and grow to excel. I see myself working towards that goal in the future.

I seek to understand the nature of gender and sexuality as forms of control within the colonial project because it is important and vital to myself and those in my intersecting communities. To begin the arduous work of decolonizing ourselves and our spaces, we need to be able to understand the how colonial power and control manifest in Indigenous communities. To do this, I want to analyze all the ways gender and sexuality have been employed as the tools of colonial oppression and how embodying the concept of gender self-determination and asserting sovereignty over our bodies can be one of the tools we use to reject and combat the ways that colonial systems assert their control. Within their 2009 article, Kubik et al. discuss the historical implications of colonization on health outcomes for Aboriginal women. They speak about how, upon initial contact, the "colonization of the West was carried out by men steeped in centuries of patriarchal values and practices" (p.20), which they use to allude to gender roles and the weight they hold as a piece in the ongoing process of colonization. Kubik et al. (2009) describe how the country we now know as Canada was historically created and built upon the principles of capitalism and control. They go on to state that to this day, "colonization remains one of the most destructive elements affecting societal structures... Family organization, child rearing practices, political and spiritual life, work, and social activities have been turned upside-down by Canada's colonial system" (Kubik et al., 2009, p.19). We can see how this is reflected in issues that have persisted to this day; we see parents who kick their children out as soon as they can, families not caring for their elders. We see the individualized nature of childcare and the politicization that can come by simply existing in a world that refuses to acknowledge your existence.

Though race and gender are mere social constructs - as many things are - they are not only a product of colonization, but a requirement for it to persist. Being a social construct does not make them simple or imaginary, it makes them an idea that was created and accepted by the people in a society. It is made real by either convention or collective agreement. The imposition of the social construction of Western ideologies, norms, and values that surround sexuality and gender play a key role in the endurance of the ongoing colonial project. The oppression of one group over another relies upon the creation and maintenance of systems of inequality. Both Hull (2001) and Porter (1965) discuss this within their texts, even going as far as to assert that "In a capitalist system, inequality is an absolute necessity." and that "groups are oppressed by the dominant group that benefits from profits. The institutions within a capitalistic society perpetuate this oppression" (Hull 2001, p.3; Porter 1965, p.18). Inequality and oppression in many forms must be created, as they are necessary for the dominant group to benefit from those they oppress.

So, in discussing capitalism and colonialism, what does this have to do with gender

and sexuality? This paper speaks to the colonial control over Indigenous gender and sexuality and how it was, and continues to be, a method of domination, but that body sovereignty, gender self-determination, and cultural resurgence form the foundations of resistance

Settler Colonialism and Gender

The dominant categories of gender, sex and sexuality are still dictated through colonial processes and institutions. These common tools of colonization are used to create, enforce, and maintain adherence to strict gender roles and punish those who do not. As the English writer and historian Patrick Wolfe (2006) so aptly put it, "Settler colonialism destroys to replace." (p.388) His theory, the logic of elimination, addresses settler colonialism, how it is imposed and then made self-sustaining through the elimination of Indigenous peoples. As a system, it is inherently eliminatory. Wolfe also suggests that "invasion is a structure, not an event within settler colonial formations." (1999, p.2) It does not happen in a bubble; it is planned and enacted. This is also true of gender and sexuality; those who do not conform to the standards set by colonialism are eliminated.

The term Two-spirit is relatively young and came about in 1994 at the Annual Native American Gay and Lesbian Gathering (ANAGLG) in Winnipeg, Manitoba as an Indigenously defined pan-Native North American term that refers to the diversity of Aboriginal LGBTQ identities as well as culturally specific gender identities that do not fit within the binary (Morgensen, 2011). The term Two-spirit is intended as a placeholder for those who need it to connect with their communities' traditional knowledge on gender and sexuality, however, much of that has been lost or intentionally eliminated by the colonial project. The term Two-Spirit has its detractors and criticisms - its homogeneity and its pan-indigeneity and its overall broadness to name a few critiques – but there have been two-spirited, queer, and trans, Indigenous people since time immemorial.

Before colonization, Indigenous categorizations of gender emerged within other cultural and social practices and were as diverse as Indigenous cultures themselves (Driskill, Finley, Gilley & Morgensen, 2011). Some communities and Elders teach us that two-spirited people held special roles and responsibilities. These could include "counselling, healing, being pipe carriers, visionaries (seers), and conducting oneself in accordance with our belief, which states to respect all life" (Deschamps, 1998). In fact, two-thirds of the Indigenous languages spoken in North America are said to have contained terms to describe individuals who were neither men nor women (Tafoya, 1997) and there are many others which do not use gendered pronouns. Despite the widespread measures that enforce Western gender and sexual norms, Indigenous people have continued to live and embody their expressions of gender and sexuality and to resist assimilative strategies (Hunt, 2016). According to Alex Wilson in Red Rising Magazine "There is much work to be done to undo the work that has been done to us. When we call ourselves two-spirit people, we are proclaiming sovereignty over our bodies, gender expressions and sexualities. 'Coming in' does not centre on the declaration of independence that characterizes 'coming out' in mainstream depictions of the lives of LGBTQI people" (2020). We have no need to adhere to the westernized notion of "coming out," we are simply "coming in" to who we have always been in our families and communities.

Legislation on Gender and Sexuality

Though there were efforts to suppress and eliminate Two-Spirit peoples, gender-diverse peoples, and peoples with many different sexualities, the Indian Act marks the first official colonial efforts toward legislating a gender binary and compulsory heterosexuality for Indigenous peoples. The Indian Act has long been held as a tool of assimilation, used to erase Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions. This has had an impact on the expression of gender and sexuality within Indigenous communities, as traditional roles and teachings were disrupted and eliminated. Under section 12(1)(b) the Indian Act, an Indian woman who married a non-Indian man (whether non-Aboriginal or non-status) would lose her status. The legal framework perpetuated discrimination based on marital

status, treating Indigenous women as less than Indigenous men and disrupting traditional roles. Such as the many nations who were matrilineal. According to Leah Gazan, an instructor at the University of Winnipeg. Prior to colonization, most Nations lived in matrilineal societies. The women were the main decision makers within Nations. She goes on to say how "Equality was practised as our survival depended on all members fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. Women were powerful…. This rapidly changed with the imposition of patriarchal power structures brought over by colonists. The exclusion of Indigenous women in decision making eventually led to the cultural, social, economic, and political disposition of Indigenous women and girls that was and continues to be enforced through the Indian Act." (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019, p. 374)

These discriminatory practices were and are still intent upon reinforcing gender inequality within Indigenous communities and continue their work towards the erosion of Indigenous women's rights set about in the Indian Act. Even the legal definition of "Indian" in the Indian Act is gender-biased, reflecting discriminatory practices and reinforcing Western patriarchal norms. The Indian Act defined an "Indian" as, "any male person of Indian blood." and stated that Indian status was solely passed through the male bloodline, meaning that only the children of Status Indian men also had status rights under the Act. The Act also denied women their traditional roles by prohibiting women from participating in the band system. And rather than being defined as a struggle against patriarchal gender roles and the division of labour, Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people combat the very imposition of colonial barriers. Gender equality is not the goal; rather, it is to restore Indigenous nationhood, which includes gender equality and respect for gender fluidity (Vowel, 2016, p.110).

Residential Schools and Gender Roles

Another aspect of control came in the form of residential schools which, amongst its many efforts to assimilate or eliminate, also sought to enforce rigid gender roles and impose Western norms on Indigenous children. According to The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2015, traditional Indigenous teachings about gender and sexuality were punished, leading to confusion and conflict around identity. My fellow Knowledge Maker and friend Melissa Kelm shares that "the system is embedded in Eurocentric ideologies of individualism instead of in the betterment of the greater community" (2023, P. 131) when discussing the legacy of residential schools and the harms they have wrought on communities. The power dynamics within these institutions left Indigenous children susceptible to exploitation and abuse. This intentional removal of children from their families also sought to disrupt Indigenous family structures and communal support systems, inflict intergenerational trauma, and have lasting effects on the transmission of cultural knowledge, including cultural teachings related to gender and sexuality. This meant that generations have been -and are still – told to adhere to rigid gender roles and heteronormative practices and disconnected from their culture and supports.

Contemporary Barriers and Challenges

Within a 2019 article by Ristock et al., which is an exploratory, community-based research project, there is a discussion on the current barriers impacting Indigenous Two-Spirit/LGBTQ individuals. These groups often face intersecting oppressions based on their Indigenous identity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. This intersectionality contributes to heightened vulnerabilities and challenges in various aspects of life, "including migration and relationships." (p.771). They go on to discuss how "Historical and contemporary displacements of Indigenous communities have had profound effects on the experiences of migration and mobility, and displacement can lead to the loss of support networks, culture, and a sense of belonging." (p.770). On top of this, the continued push towards urbanization of Indigenous populations, often seen because of historical and ongoing colonial policies, has impacted the experiences of Two-Spirit/LGBTQ individuals

in urban settings. Limited cultural and community resources in urban areas can further contribute to isolation and vulnerability. Indigenous Two-Spirit/LGBTQ individuals often face barriers in accessing justice, healthcare, housing, and other essential services due to systemic discrimination and a lack of culturally competent support within institutions. These are some of the effects of settler colonialism which still work as intended.

Studies which examine the effects of Two Spirit identity on health are extremely uncommon. According to Thomas et al. in their 2021 review that focuses on the existing literature on the health and wellness of Two Spirit and Native LGBTQ people, research has mainly focused on sexual health, mental health, and substance use, at the possible expense of broader measures of holistic health and wellbeing required to determine necessary interventions to achieving health equity. They also go on to say that the dialogue about strengths unique to this subpopulation, protective qualities of Two Spirit and Native LGBTQ identities, and the importance of cultural practices for health maintenance are sorely lacking.

Gender self-determination means that individuals have the right to define, express, and embody their gender identity as they see fit. It is one of the cornerstones of the Yogyakarta Principles, developed in 2006 by leading human rights experts, which states:

> *Each person's self-defined … gender identity is integral to their personality and is one of the most basic aspects of self-determination, dignity and freedom. … No one shall be subjected to pressure to conceal, suppress or deny their … gender identity.*

For Indigenous peoples, the Yogyakarta Principles (2006) are not just a tool for inclusion in Western legal systems; they are one form of international affirmation of the gender sovereignty that our communities have always practiced. The notion that gender identity is something personal, spiritual, and inherently worthy of respect aligns deeply with pre-colonial teachings across many nations. As such, invoking these principles is not about assimilation into Western rights discourse, but rather a strategic act of asserting what many of our nations have known: that we have the right to exist as we are, without justification or alteration. We need no permission.

I want to touch on Audra Simpson's concept of the politics of refusal which she outlines in her work on her own Mohawk communities struggles to maintain their political sovereignty under the weight of centuries of settler colonial interference. She discusses how seeking political "recognition" places an emphasis on requiring tribes to express a specific version of cultural difference, or "otherness", instead of an autonomous one, independent from settler and colonial provisions. In other words, "recognition" still monitors cultural differences in a way that does not lead to equality or equity but rather serves as a reaffirmation of how things have always been done. To "recognize" still asserts control, it says that the one who is recognizing still holds the power, and they are the authority that bestows it upon those they deem fit. It touches on the argument of "tolerance" versus support when discussing 2SLGBTIA+ people. Tolerance is the belief that stigmatized groups should be "allowed" public expression and that social differences should be allowed even when viewed as disagreeable (Twenge et al., 2015). The similarity is that there is an assertion of control. To whom are these social differences agreeing or disagreeing with? Why on earth should we care about their agreement? It speaks to who holds the power within the scope of tolerance and recognition? How do we refuse this control, this assertion of what is agreeable and disagreeable about the life we live?

Cultural Revitalization as Resistance

To resist systems of settler colonialism, Indigenous communities often work towards the revitalization of many cultural practices. This may include revitalizing and rejecting strict gender roles within ceremonies or bringing forward traditional teachings. The writer Chelsea Vowel (2015) discusses this in her book and discusses how some Indigenous communities have actively worked to reclaim and restore practices surrounding gender that were disrupted by colonial policies. Including reinstating the knowledge and responsibilities associated with specific gender identities within their cultures (p.110).

She goes on to describe how the celebration of Two-Spirit identity within many Indigenous cultures can be interpreted as a form of resistance against the colonial attempts to erase diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. By understanding cultural practices as a form of resistance, Indigenous communities can further affirm their agency and assert their sovereignty. This perspective recognizes that cultural revitalization is not only about preserving traditions but also about actively resisting the ongoing impacts of colonialism that have sought to control and oppress based on gender or sexuality.

Politicization of Indigenous Work

The deliberate exclusion of Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people from colonial structures of power has meant that, by default, their work can be highly politicized, as it happens outside of colonial structures. Often seeking to challenge the colonial narratives on gender, sexuality, and sovereignty. Projects such as the Two-Spirit Archives at the University of Manitoba showcase the political and historical aspects of the Two-Spirit movement and operate as a centre for research to support the "needs of the Two-Spirit community" as well as "making Two-Spirit people visible in our documentary heritage; and supports research, teaching, and learning" (University of Winnipeg, 2022, para.1). Other institutions such as the Two-Spirit Dry Lab, a health research group that seeks to provide desperately needed health data for and by Two-Spirit people and be "inclusive of Two-Spirit (or 2S) individuals and communities by collecting and analyzing data in a culturally safe and affirming way" (BC CDC, 2022). Institutions such as these can serve to shed light and bring focus to the politicized nature and lack of mainstream acknowledgment surrounding the gender diversity of Indigenous communities.

The Future

Writing this paper has reminded me that my body, my gender, and my heart are not just personal but also political. Chelsea Vowel (2016) says that to exist as a Two-Spirit person is an inherently political act, and I have slowly begun to feel this within my heart. It should not be necessary to work so hard to overcome the imposed barriers of those who were supposed to share these lands as guests and, eventually, as kin, not as its sole overlord or ruler. Vowel goes on to say that "to exist as an Indigenous woman or Two-Spirit person is an inherently political act. Simply resisting erasure is part of the work" (Vowel, 2015, p.113). To exist within the systems of colonization is to resist them, and to be open in who you are is a political act. The systems of settler colonialism were designed to assimilate and eliminate, but Two-Spirit peoples have steadily persisted in their existence and their refusal to disappear. We continue to assert our own sovereignty over our bodies, to live our life as our authentic selves, and to exist despite all efforts to remove us. It is a true rebellious act, a radical act. One of joy, healing and an expression of love and sovereignty over ourselves and our bodies. As we continue to live and exist, we embrace this refusal to enforce the restrictions of colonialism and seek out the return to cultural practices as our resistance. Indigenous communities must continue to affirm their agency, embrace and celebrate their entire community and assert their sovereignty.

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I was a Human before I was a student. I was a human before I was a reader. I was a human before I was a writer. I am a human first. Many who read this will also likely be human first.

~ Brody Fisher

Leticia Kanywuiro

Kikuyu

Master of Education

MAMA NDOVU

Introduction

I believe the purpose of my being is derived from exposure to experiences and individuals that have played a part in my personal growth and development. This affects the way that I function in the world, my work, my services, and my relationships with others. This is within circumstances in which I seek some form of enlightenment, guidance, advice, or comfort during difficult situations. To every encounter and every interaction that nourishes my being, there have always seemed to be similarities in the leadership qualities exhibited by the people I am able to familiarize myself with. There exists a level of sensitivity, understanding, and care that would otherwise not be so evidently practiced by most, especially those in powerful positions in our world today. A need to implement an element of safety that can allow for more vulnerability to those that may not have the opportunity or liberty to do so.

Mixalhíts'a7 (2024) profoundly elaborated in St'at'imc Matriarchal Leadership Ethics that "Leadership is looking at the strength of an individual and providing a safe space and opportunities to flourish, and we need to do that right to make strong leaders that are going to be thoughtful of others" (para. 22). This embeds doing away with the individualistic approach that may focus solely on success, rather than the collective aspect of equipping those around us with as much resiliency to prosper not only in the present, but also in the future.

The Elephant in the Room

I recall an occasion back home when I was seated at the dining table with both my mother and father. Being raised in a traditional Kikuyu household, it is typically common to regard the man as the leader of the family. However, in that instance, my father had admitted to something, after all the years of my first-hand experience in witnessing my mother ironically take on the vast patriarchal duties bestowed upon their union. "In this home, I would say that a lot of the accomplishments that have brought this home a success is because of your mother. If you have seen a herd of elephants, they are all led by a matriarch."

The term matriarchy according to Bakker (2007), is defined as a scenario in which a woman takes on a significant role within a nuclear or extended family. This definition evidently analyzes this term from a familial perspective. Practically, I would say my mother serves as an example that challenged my cultural standards of who gets to lead and has the higher say. But I notice that testimony of matriarchal leadership was said by someone else, not necessarily from the horse's mouth. Even though she did have the right to verbalize all that she has done for the family, which

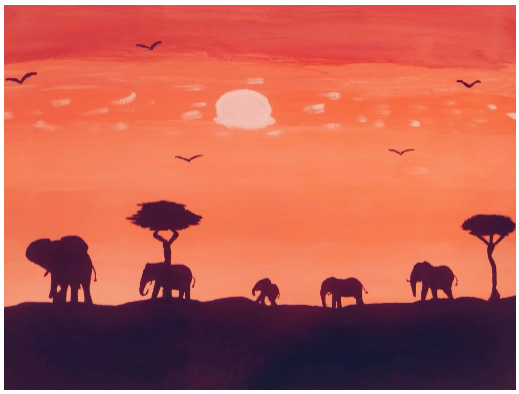
are limitless to say the least, instead all that I am met with is a thoughtful smile. Is that not humbling?

Reflecting on my father's words, I would like to envision matriarchal leadership like that of an elephant cow, its calf and the rest of the herd trailing along the savannah, all with a common purpose; survival. Nature on PBS (2023) documentary on the life of African elephants, analyzes how these majestic creatures live in herds led by the oldest and most knowledgeable female, known as the matriarch, who plays a central role in their social structure. Within these herds, comprises a clan of other female cows and their calves who travel for long distances in search for food and water. From this documentary (Nature on PBS, 2023), it is noteworthy that the matriarch does not come upon this leadership by chance. The matriarch is selected based on her leadership qualities, expertise, and capabilities, along with her well-developed instincts and moral character.

The criteria for this selection may be tied into ways in which a leader can fulfill the social and physiological needs within a community. When I look at instincts and morality, it extends beyond the innateness of personal desires, by first prioritizing the needs of others, particularly those with a lesser advantage or those in vulnerable positions. In a herd, these are the calves. However, this is not to be mistaken for those who cannot do anything for themselves, but rather those who need a leader that can guide them to that place of resiliency that was always meant for them. For this to be done, it means that everyone does their part to contribute towards the community's survival, no matter how big or small.

Smith and Stacey's (2022) Netflix documentary titled Surviving paradise: A family tale, follows through on the elephant herd travelling along Botswana's Okavango delta, relying on the land's resources before the oncoming drought season. What makes the matriarch special is the ability to utilize their vast memory, a valuable skill set that guides the herd to the few areas where food such as the fan palm trees are still left, where the herd can serve their roles by eating the fruit left to grow by their ancestors, continuing the lifecycle. As the matriarch fulfills the role as the herd's guardian, the other members such as the adults and their young ones take on the responsibility to not only follow but keep close to each other by not leaving anyone behind. Thus, fostering the value of unity, an essential by-product of matriarchal leadership.

Protectors rather than Dominators



Comparing wildlife to that of our human society, the animal kingdom compounds diverse leadership styles, each of which determines the communal survival its members are subjected to. Taking on animal breeds such as the Felidae, their survival and prosperity heavily rely on strength and assertion, to which the pride lion leads and protects. In terms of protection for the carnivores, this is limited to only young cubs. Therefore, those that are older but may not portray as much vigor or are gradually weakened by circumstances such as attacks or illness, are unfortunately destined to be excluded from the community, either by being overthrown or exiled. Contrary to the Elephantidae, Elephants Up Close (2020) documentary observe the mammals' sensitivity, closeness, and tenderness to each other, especially in instances where they see their counterparts in distress, and moments of suffering such as before death. It is particularly drawn from a scene where a dying elephant that is too weak to get up and is stuck in a pool of muddy water. The herd, instead of immediately leaving the elephant to its inevitable end, provides comfort to their member through the touching of the trunks, and protecting him from any oncoming predators.

Imagining these creatures as a reflection of how we care for one another in society reveals much about how we treat our so-called 'calves'; those who depend on us as

well as individuals who experience isolation due to both controllable and uncontrollable circumstances. These include race, gender, economic class, sexual orientation, abilities, and other marginal groups. Despite the progress that has been made, we find ourselves living in a governance of competition, moving according to strength though not entirely with physicality, but rather with monetary advantage, influence, and control. The detrimental effect of such power is that its drive may tend to only focus on the sustenance of that strength for selfish gain, not realizing its paramount need to protect those that are lacking it. As though the herd passes by the elephant stuck in the mud with no aid or support. The privilege of power and strength that comes along with leadership I find would be of much benefit if it can be maximally utilized to safeguard the rights, hopes and goals of the calves within our communities, establishing a great level of empathy that eventually narrows the great division that easily separates us from our humanity.

Memory; Harnessing our abilities for survival

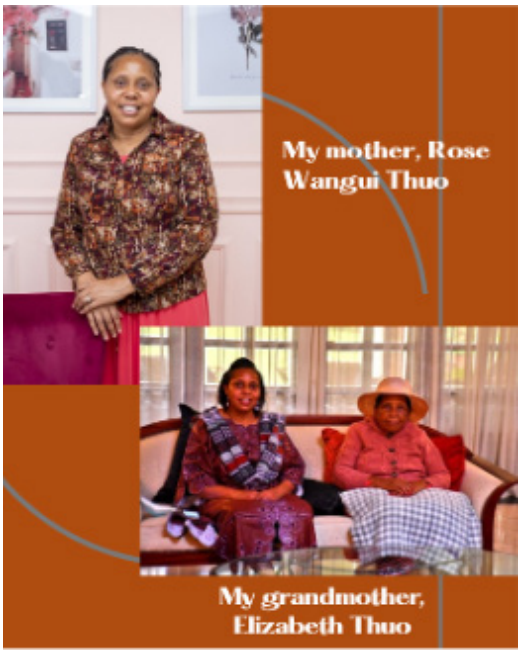
Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory on 'survival of the fittest' is broadly analyzed by Gardner et al., (2008), that elaborates:

"The ability to find food during harsh seasons and avoid threats from major predators are the main factors that determine whether individuals and whole species can survive. These factors also influence how large or small a species' population becomes. By thoroughly analyzing all these aspects, we can start to understand — and partly explain — why some species are extremely common while others, even closely related ones, are very rare" (p.11).

Pertaining to these factors, aside from the biological advantages animals are born with to help them survive, significant consideration should also be given to traits possessed by animals that can guarantee their survival. Especially traits that are not only used but also are taught to their young ones; cultivating a whirlwind of intergenerational knowledge that safeguards them from extinction. In the documentary Elephants Up Close (2020b), it is emphasized that one of the keys defining traits of an elephant is their memory. The possession of this trait has been found to be a resourceful gift that strengthens matriarchal leadership within a herd, during uncertain circumstances that threaten their survival. This is justifiably noticed in the work of Smith and Stacey (2022b) which follows the elephant herd's quest to the few areas left with pockets of water along the Okavango delta, guided by the matriarch's infused memories from prior journeys when she was also a young calf. Thus, we see that this gift does not only uniquely define the qualitative aspects of the matriarch's leadership but also discovers how it has an impact on intergenerational development for future communities.

As the matriarchal elephant guides the herd with her gift of memory, it is just as if leaders should utilize their own gifts and talents, be it innate or learned to enrich those under their leadership. It encourages the value of communal development, such that the gifts we possess are not for the purpose of self-nourishment, but for the fulfillment of generational survival, ensuring the preservation of these gifts which make us wholly unique and prosperous.

Mama Ndovu; A transformational shift from patriarchy



Ndovu is the Swahili word for elephant. In our lives we may more or less have encountered individual(s) that portray the characteristics of the matriarchal elephant,

profusely leading a herd of their own kind, despite living in a wildlife world of our own, predominantly governed by man-eat-man philosophy. I come from the land of my ancestors, the Kikuyu people of Kenya, one of the 47 tribes of our nation. The history of my tribal lineage has been rooted in a patriarchal leadership of chiefs and council elders served as the overall decision-makers.

However, in my family, my grandmother Elizabeth Thogori, whom I am fortunate to share the same name 'Thogori' and my mother, Rose Wangui Thuo serves as valuable examples of a mama ndovu, that have led and continues to lead various herds to the palm trees and water puddles in droughts of adversities. Thus, challenging the singular patriarchal system of tradition. My uncles endlessly narrate my grandmother's endeavors protecting a home, as my late grandfather would be away joining the resistance during the colonial period, in their fight for land reclamation. My mother is an extension of her courageous spirit that is beyond her status as a mother of four, her cultural duties as a wife, and her longstanding career as a teacher. Her compassion, gifts and instincts to protect are all woven into harboring a better sense of purpose and being, that has the potential to deliver a monumental impact on those around her and those to come.

Women from the Kikuyu community celebrating

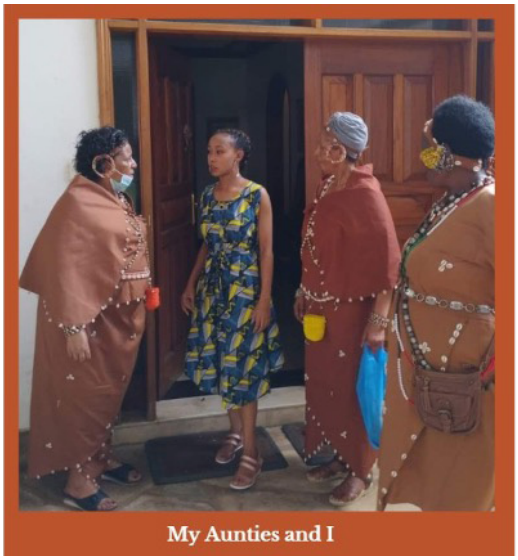
As a daughter part of her herd, I have grown to familiarize myself with that need for encompassing empathy and would hope to effectively weave it into any leadership opportunities bestowed upon me. But for that to happen it would at times entail a certain level of sacrifice on my part to partially separate myself from the selfish desires that align with my own development, rather than the holistic growth of the community in which I belong.

Our Mama Ndovu may not necessarily be someone of superior leadership status or someone we have a mutual relation with. At times it can be an acquaintance or a stranger we met on a random day that may have made a significant impact in our lives, through a simple conversation or gesture, whereby our moments of vulnerabilities as calves were not ridiculed or ignored but respected and understood. Maybe even appreciated at times it can take a lot of courage to acknowledge the limitations of our pride, and express some form of humility, a value that may not often be orthodoxically intwined in many leadership roles of today. To exhibit a natural gift that can enable those around us, be it known or unknown, to feel that a safe atmosphere and unravel their vulnerability is the truest form of power. Not the usual kind of power of rule and control, but protection and guidance.

Finding Your Herd

As an international student, I write this during a time where my country Kenya, is faced with political turmoil. Numerous reports of abductions of people that show contempt toward governmental injustice have spurred fear and anger especially among the young generation, a vast number of them actively protesting for justice, and freedom of speech. My country is just an added number to many other nations suffering under harsh leadership systems where fear and instability are eventually forced to be the norm; creating a hurt and wounded society.

From my own reflection, I could ask myself, where is my herd and who is among them? If I were to ever be placed in a leadership position to guide them, would we survive or succumb to the drought? A variety of risks can affect the way the matriarchal elephant is. In some cases, simply leading with empathy and compassion is not enough. Some issues require a bit more of a tough exterior, while remaining vigilant to protect the calves in the communities. Not to mention, the risk of betrayal can come along with those that may take advantage of the parts of selflessness executed in this kind of leadership. However, the benefits would outweigh the cons, given



My Aunties and I

the eventuality of reaching the water.

There is so much to cherish from mama ndovu. She is not just guiding the herd, she is giving them hope; a purpose for their being by bringing them a form of yearning for self-development and resilience to reach their utmost potential, even in the face of adversity that the wild is bound to expose. Finally, her leadership values can be remembered and passed on to future generations as emblematic memories who forge on to provide for their communities and continue to attain the water, be it in the rain or in the drought.

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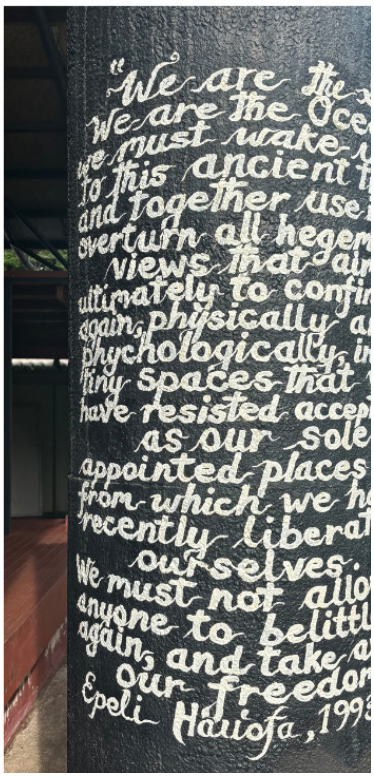
I find myself yearning for my grandmothers. I know they are with me every day because I hear them whispering to me in the wind, chatting by the river, dancing through the grass, and I feel them guiding my needle through the hide they helped me scrape thanks to generations of muscle memory.

~ Jess Owen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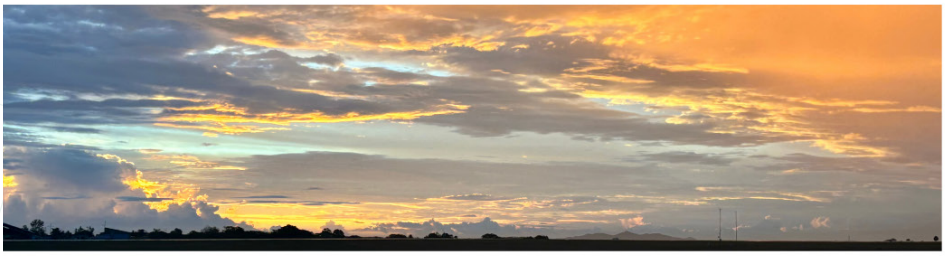


Le7 te Melámen |
Good Medicine
Weyt-kp xwexweytp
Tēnā koutou katoa

Brody Fisher
Métis
Bachelor of Social Work

THE WATER WE CAN SEE

This article was created in the stolen, unceded, and beautiful territory of Secwepemcúĺecw. Secwepemcúĺecw has taken care of many for many generations. In support of the re-Indigenization and decolonization of Northern Turtle Island, entities of the canadian government will not be given proper grammatical capitalization. This is vital to understand as current discourse is often highly impacted by the canadian government. In this same sentiment, I will intentionally not be capitalizing entities of the government such as the rcmp within this article.

Introduction

In the following narrative, I actively reject the western academic notion of what research should look like, and rather follow Indigenous storytelling methods that more genuinely align with my voice as a human being. As researchers Lewis & Hildebrant (2019) assert, storytelling is a central experience to being human and making meaning as a human being. 'Stories are sacred as is the space created through the sharing of stories. When we share our stories, they come to life through the telling" (Lewis & Hildebrant, 2019, p. 502). This method of study was also chosen to transmit new information while also verifying past information, tying the individual's knowledge into the findings, and correcting previously held assumptions (Ignace & Ignace, 2017; Morgan & Simon Fraser University, 2005). In this spirit, I have chosen to share some of my lived stories and invite you to make meaning with me to better understand the possible futures we all can and will create. This article was designed to enhance the understanding of how as living beings composed of mostly water, our surroundings directly impact us at the molecular level. Because of this, humans should be understood as complex conscious beings who are directly relational to other forms and entities of energy. This concept is vital in determining the cosmic relation of energized entities.

Selur Retaw

When I was younger, I had a friend named Selur Retaw. Selur wasn't just any ordinary friend; they were the friend I could never let go of. Selur always had my back when I needed them most. Selur spent a lot of time travelling the world, and I never understood how their family could afford it. I always looked up to Selur because of how they lived their life, who they lived their life with, and why they lived their life. A significant part of Selur's self-care was chilling. When most people think of chilling, their minds often imply it has to do with regulating thermal dynamics. When Selur chose to chill, they chilled their spine. Because of the colossal age gap between us compadres, many things they said took a long time for me to really understand. Selur often said things like "Life Is Liquid", "Good Things Take Time",

"We Need Darkness to See the Light", and "The World IS as YOU Perceive it". Selur had never worried about me not understanding any of these because they often mentioned that "everything happens for a reason", and that "the universe will only give you what it knows you can handle". I always figured Selur was just wise because of their travel experience. I never really worried about the meaning in their messages until they found me through a means I was ready to comprehend.

The Militant Ghost of Education

I first learned about molecules in my Grade 9 science class in high school. I never really appreciated our education systems in Turtle Island because I felt they never really supported me in ways that I could understand. In 2017, the world seemed to be so intricate, I believed there was no place for someone like me really to do anything with the information I learned about liquid, gas, and solids. I often got bullied and harassed by the other kids who didn't value me because they also believed there was no place for me. Selur taught me to stick up for what I feel is right, even when it's hard. Because of that, when I saw younger kids getting a similar treatment, I would intervene, protect, and befriend them to bring unity against bullying and harassment. 2018; it was the month of April, and I had stood up for many students who had experienced bullying and harassment, sometimes intervening in sales of substances. My courage and compassion led me to a place of constant fight or flight. Many people from the realm of illegal marketplaces did not appreciate my stance on methamphetamine, ketamine, and MDMA being sold to children in school.

Physical death is currently commonly understood as "a permanent cessation of all vital functions: the end of life" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). For over a year, I received messages from countless people who wanted me to experience this definition. Torch lighters, odourizing body spray, bike chains, knuckle dusters, batons, blades, and explosives became what I felt I had to wear to protect myself. Sometimes when the sun hadn't risen for the future day, I found myself a click or swing away from life in prison. I held back because subconsciously, I knew either way, I had no choice but to fight; I didn't want to fight the fight that would leave someone where they wanted me. I wanted to be wise, strong, and someone others could look up to, like Selur.

A misty Kamloops morning rose on April 18th, 2018. Early in the morning, rcmp secured communications with my mother regarding a possible suspicion of a threat. They gave my mother two options: (1) she could keep me at home to miss the day of school, or (2) she could let me go to school even though there was a possible suspicion of a threat. My mother is an educated medical professional and has been my primary caregiver my whole life. My mother is a strong leader, role model, support, and advocate for many. My mother understands the significance education can have in human health, safety, and overall life satisfaction. My mother knew it was in my best interest to support my education efforts, especially considering previous education efforts and focus. When I was getting dressed in the morning, I had a weird feeling in the bottom of my stomach. My mouth salivated, and my eyes scrunched; I felt something wasn't right. I shuffled the contents of my bag to take my tools out as I wanted a lighter load on my shoulders. I make my way to the front door where I tie my shoes to my feet, slip my NEFF hat on, and hop out of the doorway to be greeted with the white wooden porch.

I navigate the public transit systems to complete my journey at the stop at the end of a concrete path. The concrete path led from the public roadways to the school. I survey the clouded valleys all around as I hop my way over to the box-cast building where they meet me. I waited. I waited. I waited some more. They weren't my friends. I knew the rcmp weren't my friends when a group of them held me against the frosty blue brick wall, "detained" me, and riffled through my bag, pockets, and hat. Professors, pals, and prejudice passed in shock, yet not one person intervened to see what was actually happening. While the air was chilly, sweat found a way to weave its way through my skin and stick to my clothes. The rcmp then requested I walk with them to the facility staff office. I knew I didn't have a choice. They sat me down in the

office and finally debriefed me on what they were harassing me about. They accused me of threatening to shoot up the school.

Smoke & Mirrors

I spent the whole day mostly alone, sitting, not learning much, and thinking. The rcmp did not offer any compensation for their interference in my life, not even an apology. For weeks people asked me what happened, so I told them the truth: "They thought I was gonna shoot up the school". Many people followed my response with "why", which resulted in many confusing conversations. Later, it was found that this rumor had started in an elementary school elsewhere in the city. It was found that one of the bullies of the people I was sticking up for had been talking about me with others when I wasn't there. A large game of telephone resulted in my embarrassment, humiliation, and dehumanization sponsored by the rcmp. This experience was significant to me because it was when I started paying more attention to negative energy. After all, I feared it. I started paying more attention to people's intent, rather than their appearance, sound, or size. This was when I had mainly realized that in life, no matter what I did, I would always be an evil entity in someone's story. I explored and learned more about my identity and how others may perceive me. I learned "The World IS as YOU Perceive it".

Second Chance of the Spirit

For the next while, I struggled with my mental health, attachment and connection, self-care, communication, and substance use. I felt hurt, tired, worthless, and undeserving of Love, empathy, compassion, pride, and connection. My behaviors changed to align closer to a lifestyle that was harmful for me. When I didn't hurt, it was because I was numbed. I was numbed because it hurt too much to feel. It hurt too much to think. It hurt too much to talk. It hurt too much to look in the mirror. It hurt too much to share how I was really feeling, doing, and thinking because I feared making my life worse. I felt like it couldn't have gotten worse. One day, it did get worse. Self-sabotage and self-harm weren't new concepts to my subconscious. One night, I had some friends over to chillax, drink, and smoke. The evening started well, we went on walks, had some fun, and played a couple of games. I later decided that my life was not worth living. Locked in the bathroom door, cold blood flew across the room as I smashed my head against the shiny silver faucet. Everyone woke up; my friends and family saw me trying to end the life of a person in their lives, myself. The local rcmp were notified, and they wanted me in a small, cold cement cell. My mother advocated for my health to be more urgent to attend to rather than capital punishment. I was angry with the world and felt like I had nothing. In the hospital I treated the staff like shit. The medical professionals, security, and rcmp were greeted with spit, swings of closed fists, and rageful aggression. The handcuff restraints did nothing because I felt like I wanted death.

The next two days were a blur; my mind barely functioned, and my eyes stayed open for no longer than minutes. When I woke up for good, it felt like a bear had wrapped its mouth around my head and started biting down on my jaw as hard as it could. For roughly 40 minutes, my body was seizing. It was the most painful hospital visit I've ever had, and because I was awake, I had time to reflect on what actually happened during this time. Shortly after I arrived in the hospital, they injected 400mg of ketamine into my body. They obtained my registration information used by the canadian government and put me in a room to wait for me to wake up so a psychologist could have secure communications with me. The only thing I remember from those couple of days were the tears that rolled down my mother's face. I remember seeing my mother hurt more than ever before. It still hurt to be alive. It took a long time for me to learn to love myself because the people around me did things that made me feel like I hated myself.

I wanted to drop out of school because I felt like it played a significant role in teaching me to hate myself. My mother mentioned she would not be okay with that and why. After what I put her through, I felt like I owed it to her to do better and make better choices that will align me closer to a lifestyle that is beneficial and meaningful for me. I started seeing my life as a second chance. I started seeing life as a gift. The way I saw things was that I

should have already been dead, so why not see how far I could go? I graduated a year early as valedictorian. I got a couple of apprenticeships. The people around me were also able to support me enough to further my education. I am a coach, community leader, and role model to many, but most importantly, I am a warrior. I have dedicated my life to good. I will never stop fighting for what is right: Love, peace, and unity for all everywhere. I have dedicated a plethora of reflection and analysis since this happened, and I found I value that experience because without the darkness, I wouldn't have started seeing the light more. I learned "We Need Darkness to See the Light" and that "the universe will only give you what it knows you can handle".

Mechanical Metal Horses

When I was 16 years old, I applied for the british columbia's motor vehicle operator's license. I did this because I found motor vehicles particularly interesting. As a human being, I have spent time developing, exploring, and understanding my capabilities and capacities of my physical self. I learned to crawl before I learned to walk. After I learned to walk, I learned to run. After I learned to run, I learned to sprint. When I was learning my limits, strengths, and goals, I noticed that travelling took quite a long time. I learned at a young age that I could travel faster when I traveled with advanced human technology. I learned to love biking and skateboarding. I thought it was super awesome that other human beings have designed machines that are large, light, and powered by explosions. Not only do these machines look shiny, saporous, and sketchy, but they promote humans travelling at speeds that would otherwise be 'impossible'. I just thought they were the neatest thing, and I figured I wanted to learn to be really good at operating them. They handed me my yellow sheet of paper at the local DMV and sent me a plastic card later in the month. This was when I started learning more about motor vehicles and how they function, fix, and fritz-out.

My first life was a gift. Oops, I meant to say motor vehicle. That's right grammar police! Creative writing does have a place in academia! I argue it actually enhances the meaning and significance of the literature, thus prompting more people to be interested in learning more about the subject. If you would like to read an article that omits sincere reflexivity, I would highly recommend reading on the subject of human mathematics. It feels good to write in a way that reflects how I learned to learn. Now I can get back to the story. If you left reading this article on standby, then I really do hope you find human mathematics more satisfying for now.

My first motor vehicle was the 2009 edition of the Ford Escape. Promptly after I started driving around in the main public roadways, I spiked an interest in automotive sports. I started joining car clubs for meets, cruises, shows, and races. I have spent many hours in, on, and under my vehicles. I actually wrote my first draft for the Knowledge Makers journal fully about that experience. Similar to building race cars that are perfect for the driver, reading this article takes time. I believe time to be one of the most valuable entities because it holds space for life. Thank you for taking the time in your life to learn more about something that could bring more understanding and love to the world. While I learned "Good Things Take Time" much earlier than writing this article, it is still an excellent example of good things taking time. The first attempt at this article needed much more revision, relevance, and clarity.

Power of Knowledge

The year is 2025, and the world changes daily. There are those who may, and those who may not. I may have had an excellent opportunity to learn more about how the canadian government handles conflict within the borders they control. The Jet 711112 is a very special tool to me. The Jet 711112 is an adjustable wrench. The Jet 711112 is roughly 6 inches long, shiny as gold, and cast for mass production. I first got my 711112 when I was 16 years old. The 711112 has been there for me like Selur has; when my hands call for help, the 711112 has got my back. There is yet to be a bolt too greasy, a nut too small, or a corner too tight for the mighty 711112. In the canadian government policy, it mentions that those who enter courthouses are not to bring any item that may be considered a weapon

(Privacy, 2020). Prior to entering the building, I ensured I was congruent with their policy to the best of my abilities and understanding. When I was in the house, one of the sheriffs requested a bag search. I was more than welcome to comply with the bag search because I believe people would have the right to basic safety, health, dignity, and independence of thought. During the bag search, the sheriff had noticed the noble 711112. Upon unique, elegant discourse, we agreed it would be in the best interest of safety and security if I did not have my mighty 711112. I did not have time to go and store it off the property, so we made a borrowing agreement. This meant that they would look after 711112 while I was in the courthouse, and as I was leaving, I could swing by their office and have it returned. Finally, I could spend the day learning.

I learned lots that day, before, during, and after my courthouse visit. One piece of this experience that has stuck with me to this day is something rather unusual. A plastic bag. When the agreement was made, 711112 was placed in a thick semi-transparent pouch and labelled with my name and the location in which the agreement was made. When I decided to leave, something strange occurred. I found my way through the polished floors and empty halls to the office. I went to open the office door and I found it to be locked, not a soul in sight. I intricately inspect the door and notice an electromagnetic door buzzer system. A long buzz later, a head swiveled its way into my line of sight. Who was this stranger in the sheriff's office? When they unlocked the door so I could enter, I started to figure that they must work here. As I enter, the person walks into the hallway of the office, and it's made clear that there was another sheriff. The sheriff inquired if I needed any assistance, and I replied with "No", and mentioned I am here as one of their co-workers borrowed my wrench earlier in the morning.

Sheriff: "Why would any of my co-workers want to borrow a wrench from you?"

Author: "I'm not too sure, but I figure it might have something to do with courthouse safety."

Sheriff: "Well I haven't heard of anyone borrowing any wrenches."

Author: "Earlier, I gave permission for one of your co-workers to conduct a bag"

Sheriff: "So you mean we took it, and now you're requesting to have it back?"

Author: "No, one of your co-workers borrowed it and told me to pick it up here before I leave."

Sheriff: "So we took it, and now you are wanting it back."

Author: "Please let me reframe what I'm trying to say. My name is Brody Fisher, and I am a bachelor's social work student with Thompson Rivers University. Today I am conducting an outing to learn more about other social services in the community."

The sheriff walked leisurely through a nearby door into a bright room. I heard a few things ruffle together, and out they came. They walked up to me, handed me my 711112, and told me to have a good day. I thanked them for all their hard work and efforts in ensuring human beings' safety and well-being while participating in their courthouse system. I mentioned I have many other friends who are in law enforcement, and that good things will come. The sheriff wanted to know who, and I decided it might be in everyone's best interest if I declined answering the inquiry, so I did.

My chin held high as I looked near the sun for most of the rest of the day. I reflected a lot that day, and I found that I got to experience what it means to have knowledge. It felt good to stand my ground against law enforcement and have my words respected. I noticed as soon as I mentioned who I was and why I was there, the energies changed significantly. I remembered how much I disliked school when I was younger, and realized this was why it was important for me to pursue post-secondary education. Unlike situations in the past where I have not had much power, education has made it possible for me to have more power. Knowledge is power, and I finally get to have power. Many people have unique power dynamics, and I find my power is best used to advocate for human rights. I learned that "Life is Liquid," and what it can look like when things are always changing. Change can be difficult, and when I feel like I am constantly changing, I remember that "everything happens for a reason", and that we should try our best to do our best, especially when it seems the most difficult.

Brody Fisher

I wanted to share those stories of my life so the readers of this article know I am a human being first. I am Indigenous to Turtle Island, this is my home. I believe all are equal, and when we are open with one another, we may better understand each other. I want everyone who reads this to understand the significance of this article for them. The structure of this article was intricately designed to best represent me and what I represent. This is a part of my journey to see how far I can go. My journey will end when the world rests in harmony. I was a Human before I was a student. I was a human before I was a reader. I was a human before I was a writer. I am a human first. Many who read this will also likely be human first. I shared these stories because I have had successful healing journeys from them. These stories played important roles in how my life has been shaped, designed, and lived. Now, what do these stories mean for the future of humanity?

Cosmic Relation Development (Findings)

Masaru Emoto is a well-known researcher because of their understanding of water. Many Indigenous communities around the world have maintained an understanding of the significance of water to the human species. Masaru Emoto is another human being who shares concern for the safety, well-being, and overall life satisfaction of others. Emoto explores how the human consciousness directly affects water at the molecular level. Emoto found a few interesting outcomes of their studies. Firstly, Emoto fundamentally found water to have the ability to absorb, memorize, and carry information as it is presented (Emoto, 2004). Emoto explains the delicate process of photographing crystallized water molecules to further understand the effects of negative and positive energies. Emoto found the results of each test to best fit the theory and understanding of kotodama, the belief that words hold spirit, and that words can change the world (Emoto, 2004). Further studies found that intent and type of energy were more significant in the memory of the water in comparison to language selection (Emoto, 2004). This opens many doors for belief, perspective, and understanding. Emoto's overall understanding from the studies was that water that is thought of, spoken of, or acknowledged with energy that has positive intent will form crystals that are more visually appealing (Pitkanen, 2018). It was also found that water that is thought of, spoken of, or acknowledged with energy that has negative intent are less visually appealing (Pitkanen, 2018). This means there is a variable in structural integrity, attractiveness, and strength in the crystals of water photographed. Emoto's overall goal was recorded as to help others heal and live lives that are healthier, enjoyable, and longer (Emoto, 2004).

In the colonial western context of Turtle Island, these findings could mean many things. I find congruence between Emoto's findings and traditional Indigenous understanding. Many people in Turtle Island are familiar with a popular saying. "Who you surround yourself with is who you will become". In the stories I shared about my life, I noticed a similar pattern. The stories I shared were examples of Masaru Emoto's theory of water from the lens of social justice. Selur Retaw was not just an ordinary friend, they were the water. For a large portion of my life, I have decided it has been important that I have water with me. I keep water with me because it is healing and has taught me many things. I am also water. I know that when I am around positive energy, positive outcomes are more likely to occur. I know that when I am around negative energy, negative outcomes are more likely to occur. Every time I felt something was not right, it wasn't, and I was right. I know when I am doing positive things because positive things happen more often, and closer to me. Why did I decide to share these findings?

Spiritually, skeptically, socially, and scientifically, it has been recorded that how we think can significantly impact our human discourse. Because human beings are biologically mostly water, I argue that similar to Emoto's test water, humans can be directly affected by their surroundings at the molecular level. What does this mean for human beings? Mind control? Shapeshifting? Water databases? I think it is something much more meaningful. This means that perception and

others' understandings of themselves can significantly impact the world's discourse in possible relations, revolution, and evolution. One may focus on the "cup-half-full vs cup-half-empty" analogy if they find there are too many negative or positive things happening in their lives. This is because words where and how symbolic entities communicate meaning and message (Allot, 1990). Understanding the energetical intent of communications can significantly impact the flow, feelings, and outcomes of most earthly communications (Thomas, 2012). The CASW Code of Ethics, Values, and Guiding Principles (2024) currently covers many beliefs that are found to be the most adequate for the greatest number of beings and could be followed to improve positive discourse flows within our planet. Trust yourself to be who you are and support yourself when you know you want to. Life may be liquid, and good things do take time.

Recommendations

Future research could compliment this article by further exploring lived examples of how one's surroundings directly affected them. This article may best be utilized to represent how water holds memory, spirit, knowledge, and how cosmically aqueous beings are interconnected and directly affect one and others discourse. Because of this, all entities who understand this theory should be held to a high ethical and moral standard. If you plan to use this article to harm or exploit others in any way, you also understand that would inherently harm and or exploit yourself. Knowledge is power. "Real Eyes, Realize, Real Lies" - Tupac Shakur

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The importance of Indigenous tourism in Canada extends beyond its economic impact, serving as a powerful vehicle for cultural preservation, reconciliation, and community well-being.

~ Jason Johnston

TRU Open Press

James Owen
Métis
Bachelor of Computer Science

A LITERARY REVIEW ON EXISTING RESEARCH FOR REVITALIZING MICHIF THROUGH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Abstract

This document is a literary review on research done in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to revitalize the Indigenous language Michif. Michif is the primary language of the Métis People and is endangered, which this paper aims to find what research is being done to prevent in the context of AI. There is not any current research looking at specific dialects of Michif, so this paper focuses on the general research done around the language as a whole. With this information this paper aims to find a consensus on the viability of using Artificial Intelligence as a language revitalization tool.

Introduction

Michif is the language of the Métis people, who are Indigenous people primarily located within Canada. The language has seen a decrease of speakers thus in need being revitalized. The Canadian encyclopaedia reported in 2021 that there are only 1,845 speakers left of the language thus making it “endangered” [1]. Many Indigenous languages like Michif in Canada are being revitalized through computation and specifically Artificial Intelligence (AI). This paper aims to analyse what research has been done to revitalise Michif through AI as a literary review to find if AI technology is viable and what more research is needed. This topic is very important to me as I am both a Métis Indigenous person and as of writing this, in school for Computing Science which has some focus on AI. In papers I and others have written about computation, it is standard to use the IEEE citation style, thus this is what is used for this paper. This is all shown through five sections of this paper.

The five sections of this paper are used to show the importance of language revitalization in respects to Michif and how AI can assist. The first section of this paper titled “AI Explained” shows what Artificial Intelligence (AI) is and how it can be used to model languages. The second section titled “Why AI for Revitalizing Indigenous Language” gives considerations on viability to revitalizing endangered Indigenous languages through AI. The third section of this paper shows how Michif can be modelled through computation to show how the language can be broken down for training. The fourth section provides the current research done to revitalize Michif through computation though there are no published papers in respect to AI at this time this solidifies the discussion of this topic showing more research is needed. The fifth section discusses the findings throughout this paper and states that more research is needed to fully show that Michif can be revitalized through AI. Finally, this paper concludes all the findings and restates the importance of using AI language models to revitalize Michif and that continued research will assist in its

revitalization.

I. AI Explained

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a computational algorithm that simulates a form of learning to gain knowledge of a topic. The AI is trained on data which is used to statistically see what the most likely answer is based on the training algorithm. This information then can be output by the AI to form a prediction of what is likely to happen next. In the form of language AI, it is used to translate by calculating the most likely word that can be translated based on the data it has access to. This is often seen through what is called machine learning as a neural network which can create a web of knowledge that AI connects and pulls from [2]. These AI models are trained from data that is categorised and to put in the web to help simulate learning.

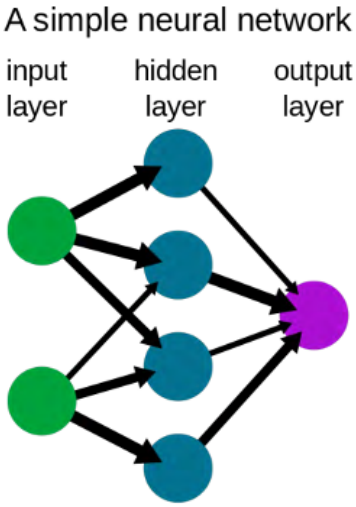

Figure 1: Neural Network Example [2].

This system has been used to model languages through simulated learning to assist in translation. Some examples of language modelling can be seen in modern Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT created by the company OpenAI [3] or Gemini created by Google [4] which are both prompt based language models that respond in English as that is the language it is trained in. This language modelling is complex and often requires lots of data categorization. The next section continues this discussion by explaining why AI is an important tool for revitalization of Michif.

II. Why AI for Revitalizing Indigenous Languages

Most Indigenous languages including Michif need revitalization, and this is because they are considered endangered languages. UNESCO identifies languages as endangered when children no longer learn the language as their first language, and when most speakers are in the older generations with very few fluent speakers emerging as youth [5]. The loss of Indigenous languages such as Michif would mean loss of distinct culture, history, stories, protocols, and knowledge. Statistics Canada shows the number of Indigenous speakers in Canada has decreased by 4.3% between 2016 and 2023 making their death more likely each year unless revitalization efforts increase dramatically [6]. Many computational AI models have been able to assist people in learning new languages, and this technology has strong potential when applied to help in revitalizing these languages to prevent their decline. The following section discusses two ways in which AI models can possibly be applied to help in Indigenous language revitalization. First, how the Large Language Model (LLM) prompting has potential to teach indigenous languages [7]. Second, how interactive AI voice recognition has the potential to teach Indigenous languages [2]. Both are potential viable options to revitalize Indigenous languages including Michif which is concluded on in the last paragraph.

Large Language Models (LLMs) are a prompt-based AI tool where a user sends a prompt, and the model aims to answer said prompt based on the language data it is trained from. As mentioned in the section titled “AI Explained” this includes tools like ChatGPT [3] and Gemini [4]. A tool like this could be developed for Indigenous languages where it is prompted by a user and responds in an Indigenous language helping the user understand how the language is structured. A study by Cameron Bishop, Xiaodan Zhu, and Karen Rudie from 2024 titled “Large Language Model Translation of Indigenous Languages” is optimistic about this premise [7]. This shows the mentioned ways that AI prompting can be used to form answers that help teach Indigenous languages such as Michif. The study also makes a call to researchers near the end to

find more utility for LLMs to revitalize Indigenous languages in a way that is "ethical". Ethics is a requirement making sure communities are not negatively affected by the AI, and that AI does not alienate communities as has been done in the past through corporate involvement. Such instances have been reported at the company Microsoft in the 2021 Nathan Thanyehténhas Brinklow study titled "Indigenous Language Technologies: Anti-Colonial Oases in a Colonizing (Digital) World" on the mistreatment of Indigenous data through alienating a community [8]. The previous mentioned study states that this could be in the form such as "digital colonialism" where data is stolen from Indigenous people thus the need for "Data Sovereignty" which would make sure there is still Indigenous ownership over data regarding their traditions [7]. This analysis helps understand how LLMs are a possible tool to teach Indigenous languages to people which will help revitalize them while making sure ownership of data and training stays with the communities. Another AI tool that can be used to teach Indigenous language is through voice recognition.

Voice recognition shows much promise in its ability to assist in revitalizing an Indigenous language. A study by Benjamin Wald titled "First Nations and Artificial Intelligence" analyses AI as a tool and how voice recognition can be used to revitalize Indigenous language [2]. This system would work in a similar way to "Apple's Siri or Google's Alexa" to recognize words spoken in an Indigenous language and understand their meaning within a sentence [2]. This could help users wanting to learn Indigenous languages learn phrasing and pronunciation through the AI's feedback. This has been seen in testing through the First Languages AI Reality (FLAIR) project which is using text to speech technology to revitalize the language of the western Canada Wakashan language through its teaching feedback [2]. If used correctly, this has the potential to help teach Indigenous languages to a wide range of members worldwide. Though the FLAIR project has not concluded and published its findings, it shows immense promise in its vision and hope to utilize AI to revitalize Indigenous languages.

AI is important in revitalizing Indigenous languages because it can be used as a teaching tool. This is demonstrated in the first paragraph of this section, showing how LLMs can support language revitalization. The second paragraph also shows this through voice recognition of the AI. These tools are great for teaching users how to speak indigenous languages which will ultimately help preserve them. Now that it is clear why AI is important in revitalizing Indigenous languages, these are needed to understand how this can be applied to Michif. The next section looks at computational analysis of Michif that can be used to help train the AI models.

III. Michif Language Modelling

For AI models to be used for revitalization of Michif it is important to understand how the language can be modelled for computation. For Michif to be modelled and used for computation, an intensive understanding of the linguistics is needed to break down the language into data to be trained on by AI. Linguistics scientifically breaks down languages into sound, grammar and meaning of a language [9]. This is done through categorizing structures and verbiage of a language to create data sets of the language [10] through analysing a languages lexicon, text or audio data, language descriptions, and metadata [11]. This in turn can be broken into data points and used to train AI models.

For AI to be trained to translate Michif it is important that we know computers can categorise and understand this language. A study by Fineen Davis, Eddie A. Santos, and Heather Souter titled "On the Computational Modelling of Michif Verbal Morphology" shows an example of modelling done in Michif, and was able to break down Michif through categorizing the different idiosyncrasies of the language [12]. They were able to create a verbal template to show these verbs and use computation to create sentences in Michif which is exemplified in Figure 2 below. The study was successful but admitted that more research is still needed to cover the full scope of the language. This however gives a great understanding on how to categorise the language structure of Michif through computation that can then be used to train AI models to fully translate the language.

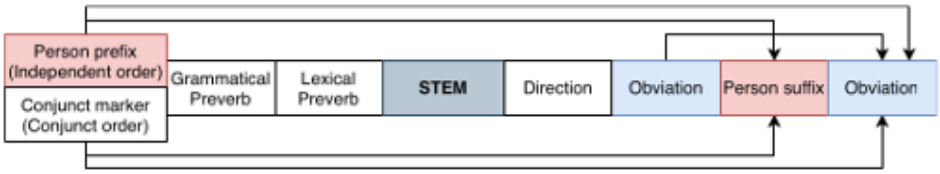

Figure 2: Verbal template of Michif [12]

IV. Research on Michif Revitalization

In this paper, there have been highlights on some of the possible ways AI can be used to revitalize Michif. This section shows the research being done with Michif in computing and how it can be expanded with AI. Though the goal of this literary review was to find AI research done specifically to revitalise Michif it appears there are no papers published on this topic currently and this remains a gap in need of more development. However, there is research currently being conducted that has not yet been published which will hopefully assist in filling this gap. This section overlooks other computational research for revitalization of Michif and shows how AI can be used to further that research. The first paper discussed in this section covers a web-based game called Michif SoundHunters that can teach children Michif [13]. The second paper discussed shows another computational game called WordWeaver that has plans to implement AI in the future [14]. Third, this section goes over some of the current research being done with AI to revitalize Michif. Finally, this section will explain the findings on how AI research to revitalize Michif is important and introduce the next section.

The use of AI in collaboration with a web-based game can further help language revitalization. A web-based game to teach Michif discussed in a paper by Delany Lothian titled "Southern Michif SoundHunters: A Collaborative Process of Re-Purposing an Indigenous Language Learning Technology" discusses this [13]. The game is called Michif SoundHunters, and its goal is to teach Michif through computer assisted language learning. The game mechanics have the user sound out words of Michif through mini games based off of pieces of Indigenous culture. The data for this was collected through recording Michif speakers and using that recording to help the game development. Within just thirty minutes of having users play the game, there were notable improvements in pronunciation of Michif words amongst the tested users according to Lothian [13]. The results found here is not surprising as many studies have shown that gamification of learning can make a topic more approachable and motivating than other methods [15]. This shows great potential; however, further intervention through AI may be needed: for example, AI models such as the text to speech discussed in section three would allow for this [2]. The building of a language model such as this could further the game to have strung together sentences in Michif that can be generated procedurally throughout play to make the game feel larger in scale and have greater variety. Though even without the intervention of AI the study was able to show notable improvement in users' understanding of Michif [13]. With further research that includes AI it would likely prove to be a great tool for revitalizing Michif. To continue discussion on research done to revitalize Michif I will discuss a game called WordWeaver that was created to teach the language.

Learning through word recognition and sentence structures with computational AI can help revitalize Michif. A game that does help teach word and sentence structuring is called WordWeaver, and is discussed in a 2020 paper by the National Research Council (NRC) titled "The Indigenous Languages Technology Project at NRC Canada: An Empowerment-Oriented Approach to Developing Language Software" [14]. WordWeaver is a game designed to help with sentence structuring and shows strong ability to help individuals trying to learn Indigenous languages. NRC shows that there is current ongoing development to implement Michif into this application and research to see if it can be used to help revitalize the language [14]. The paper also discusses the possible

future implementations of added AI to this game. This would entail either the discussed Large Language Model implementation and/or the text to speech implementation mentioned in the previous sections. What has been found so far provides great promise as there is significant research showing that other Indigenous languages have great improvement in revitalization through this technology, and that Michif implemented into ongoing expansion of these programs.

Although there are no currently written studies published that provide results using AI to revitalize Michif, there is current research being done that I will explore here. One of such projects is the "Infinity" project which is being developed through a collaboration between the Infinity Women Secretariat (IWS) and the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) [16]. This project is currently in the training stage however studies will be conducted in the coming months to test the viability "Infinity" has to teach the Michif language. In addition to this project the National Research Council of Canada (NRCC) is conducting a text-to-speech AI project to revitalize Indigenous languages [17]. This project will be an Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) software that enable speech segmentation to hopefully help revitalize Michif and other Indigenous languages. These projects will hopefully show viability to help revitalize Michif upon being published, however they do seem promising based on the previous research shown through gamification of learning Michif shown in the previous two paragraphs.

Both studies show that revitalizing Michif through computation has future potential improvements and are strong indications for positive further research. Though there is no publish research available as of writing this paper in this domain with respect to AI it is positive that there is currently research being conducted to revitalize Michif using AI.

V. Discussion and Recommendations

This paper has shown that use of AI can be helpful to revitalize Michif, though more concrete research showing best practices is needed. Discussed in this section is possible research that can be done, or expanded on to help revitalize Michif and makes recommendations based on the discussion. In the previous section it was shown that there are current studies being conducted around revitalizing Michif through AI, however these have not yet been published as of writing this Literary Review. As I cannot yet analyse their findings, this section primarily aims on expanding on the previous research and, provides recommendations as to how those studies should conduct their research. These discussions and recommendations are done through two vectors within this section. The first discusses how improving the games shown in section six and analysing users' learning. Second, gives ethical recommendations to the current studies being conducted. These two vectors are ways that Michif can be further researched to assist in its revitalization.

One tangible way to further revitalize Michif is to add AI to existing games working to teach new learners. These games are discussed in the Research on Michif Revitalization section through analysing two studies that gamify learning Michif. The primary way to add AI is through building a language model for text to speech feedback through the games which, would add an extra element to the games where users would have to pronounce words and get feedback on correct pronunciation. This would be a great implementation and use of AI to help learners by creating more user involvement in the language itself. The difficulty mentioned by this paper exploring the Michif SoundHunters states that with very "few" speakers of the language it is hard to build a large enough database and exhaustion of Indigenous speakers to build this database needs to be considered. This is expressed as the reason for why this type of feature has not been implemented into the game already. Thus, to do further research on implementing AI into a game teaching Michif through text to speech it has strong indication of being a viable way to revitalize the language but considerations around speakers needs to be considered. Withing the next paragraph of this section I will discuss how AI can be implemented through Large Language Models (LLMs).

Current research on AI to revitalize Michif should look at its viability in addition

to having strong ethical considerations in relation to data ownership and exploitation. As discussed in the section titled "Research on Michif Revitalization" There are currently research projects being conducted to revitalize Michif through AI. This is exciting but there is not a discussion on whether this technology is actually viable to teach Indigenous language. A paper by Gerhard W. Dueck titled "Using AI to help Preserve Indigenous Oral Histories" discusses this with respect to the Enlhet people of the Gran Chaco region of Paraguay and revitalizing their language [18]. The papers findings show that it was able to successfully translate to "Spanish, English, and German" giving access to those wanting to learn who are fluent in one of the three languages. This allows shows that there is viability in creating an AI model to teach Indigenous language as it was successful in translation to help teach individuals. The previously discussed "Infinity" project plans to use the same techniques for building an AI model for the Michif language [16]. Both the research done on Paraguay language and the planed "Infinity" project are conducted around Large Language Models (LLMs) for their research thus it is possible that they will produce similar results. This is because the training and learning of the LLM is the same regardless of the languages use in teaching will be similar, and there is a likelihood of similar results. In the study on the Paraguay language, it brought up some flaws with the technology. This is shown in the ethical issue the paper brings up that some Indigenous knowledge is too culturally sensitive to share. This along with the discussed ethical issues shown in the section titled "Why AI for Revitalizing Indigenous Languages" through digital colonization are major issues to be considered. This is because Indigenous communities can and have had their cultural data stolen and used in ways undesired by the communities which was also discussed in the previous mentioned section. It is important to consider these ethical issues, and this paper recommends that the AI technologies being developed to revitalize Michif.

Using AI to revitalize Michif is promising through possible future research and current research. This is recommended through considering text to speech-based games to teach language and through language modelling to translate and discussing viability and recommending ethical analysis for the current research being conducted. The primary two paragraphs of this paper show and recommend this for future research on the topic. To conclude this and the entire paper showing that AI technology in revitalizing Michif is viable and the need for more research the next section discusses.

VII. Conclusion

Revitalization of Michif through AI is a likely viable technology that could benefit from additional research. This can be seen throughout this paper giving a literary review of what AI is, why it is being used for indigenous languages, what modelling the language looks like, the research done in computation of Michif, and the recommendations for future and current research. These recommendations are to continue research in the field, possibly add AI to help gamify for teaching, and make sure it is all done ethically by assuring Indigenous communities are not alienated and taken advantage of. This gave context of what AI is along with different forms of research and how to expand on that research through use of AI.

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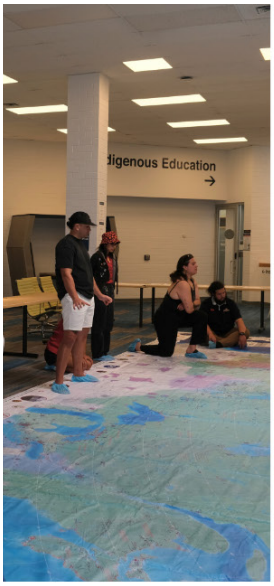
Figures

My Indigenous ways of knowing include storytelling, which has greatly benefited me in Canada's educational system. My oral traditions have shaped who I am, and I have carried those traditions into the Canadian education system. Without this, I would not have been able to survive the education system.

~ Denise Dunstan


digenous Education


HINE


WELLS GRAY
PROVINCIAL PARK


Waikato University Visit

The concept of food sovereignty and agriculture are interconnected. It ensures people's right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sustainable and socially just means.

~ *Milanie June Batangy-ay*

Chuying Jiao
Chinese
Knowledge Makers Manager

"I believe this is what education means - it is not about us, it is never about us, it is always about the future, How will what we do influence the next generation"

LEGACY OF NICOLA VALLEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (NVIT) FIRST BACHELOR OF INDIAN SOCIAL WORK (BISW) CASE STUDY (1989-1993)

Abstract

This Indigenous-led exploration discusses the transformative legacy of the first Indigenous social work program (1989-1993) at NVIT. The research was conceptualized by Dave Manuel, a Secwépemc man from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, who was a member of the first NVIT Bachelor of Indian Social Work cohort. The study primarily focuses on Dave's educational journey at NVIT and how this experience influenced his post-graduation life, while also examining the experience of one NVIT instructor of the cohort. This study aims to explore Dave's personal experiences from his NVIT Education journey. It also explored how he applied this knowledge to Indigenize, decolonize, or promote reconciliation in his social work practice. The findings are grouped into four themes: (1) the cohort members (2) the program (3) personal healing and reconciliation (4) giving back to the community. The themes identified by the participants can provide valuable insights and guidance for the development of future Indigenous social work programs designed at NVIT.

Keywords: Indigenous education; Indigenous social work; Indigenous social work education; community-based research; Social work program; Indigenous social work program

Introduction

On May 27th, 2021, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc verified the discovery of unmarked graves containing the remains of 215 children who had attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School. I was a master student at the time in TRU and it was announced while I was in the MEd Indigenous Research class. I can feel that everyone spoke less on that day at the talking circle. The confusion and grief was palpable, and everyone had lost track of what to do. I vividly recall how hopeless I felt that day, and I began pondering what I, as a non-Indigenous master's student, could do to support the community. The next day we started learning about Indigenous research methodology and ethics. As we discussed the OCAP principles: Ownership, Control, and Access (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2018), Dr. Mukwa Musayett posed an important question. When researchers enter Indigenous communities, can they practice reciprocity and identify the community's needs? At the time, this question had barely registered in my mind. As researchers who are uninvited guests on these lands, the most important thing is to conduct research that meets the needs of Indigenous communities. The study is not about us; it is about Indigenous peoples, who have the right to determine what they want and what can be achieved. 'Nothing about us without us' - if we want to

do anything that can benefit the Indigenous community, we need to privilege their voice in the first place. After the course, I wrote an email to Dr. Mukwa Musayett expressing my interest in conducting Indigenous-related research without a specific topic in mind, as I wanted to understand the community's needs first; she promptly responded. Subsequently, we held a meeting to discuss potential Master thesis projects. Two months later, in October, I had the opportunity to meet with Dave Manuel, who suggested the idea of conducting research on the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology Bachelor of Indian Social Work (NVIT BISW) program. He believed that he received a lot from that program and wanted to know how his classmates are doing 30 years after graduating from the NVIT BISW program, what they received from it, and if their experience aligned with his.

Purpose of Study

This study focuses on the first Indigenous social work programs at the NVIT. It seeks to understand the transformational legacy resulting from the first cohort members' NVIT social work education experiences (1989-1993). NVIT has been an Indigenous post-secondary institution since 1995, and three significant stages contributed to the development of NVIT as an Indigenous-led post-secondary institution. In May 1983, the Nicola Valley Indigenous community contracted with the British Columbia Institute of Technology to start the first program at Nicola Valley (NVIT, 2021). Since November 1, 1986, the BC Ministry of Labor has accredited Nicola Valley Technical College as a private training college. The Coldwater, Shackan, Nooaitch, Upper Nicola, and Lower Nicola Indian bands established a society and obtained the Certificate of Incorporation for the "Nicola Valley Institute of Technology" under the Society Act of British Columbia (NVIT, 2021). On June 2, 1987, NVIT received its registration certificate as Nicola Valley Technical College under the Society Act of BC. In 1995, NVIT was designated a public "Provincial Institute" under the College and Institute Act (NVIT, 2021, para 3). To gain an understanding of cohort members, it is important to consider their personal experiences, families, and communities, as well as their educational backgrounds and achievements, all of which contribute to their NVIT educational journey. This understanding can benefit future education learning and teaching in NVIT BSW programs and current Indigenous-focused social work programs across the country (Johnson & Manuel, 2019). This study aims to examine cohort members' benefits from their NVIT educational journey and how they applied this knowledge to Indigenize, decolonize, or promote reconciliation in their social work practices after graduation (Johnson & Manuel, 2019).

Secwépemc -led Research Project

The idea for this research comes from Dave Manuel, a Secwépemc man from Tk'emlups te Secwépemc. He also contributed to the development of research questions, focusing on the needs of Indigenous people and the community. He was one of the thirty students to graduate from the first Bachelor of Indian Social Work (BISW) program in 1989-1993 at NVIT in Merritt. Dave stated that the NVIT BISW program provided him with numerous personal benefits. Additionally, his educational journey toward obtaining a BISW provided him with significant experiences that have helped him set future goals and have profoundly influenced his life after graduation. He considers his experience at NVIT a crucial part of his journey towards decolonization and reconciliation, and it has given him the confidence and knowledge to give back to the community based on what he learned from NVIT. Given this information, Dave is interested in exploring whether other graduates of the NVIT BISW program have encountered similar experiences to his own. Furthermore, he is curious to understand how their educational journey in the NVIT BISW program has shaped their success and accomplishments up to this point. I arranged a meeting with Dave, and he wrote down some research and interview questions he was curious about regarding his classmates. The research itself is guided by the Indigenous way of knowing and centers around collecting the voices of Indigenous participants. It aims to share their experiences and life stories, specifically focusing on their culture and adherence to ethical protocols (Wilson, 2019). The Indigenous

participants play a central role in this study, while the researcher serves as a tool to assist them in achieving their goals. The project is grounded in Indigenous ontology and fully embraces an Indigenous worldview. As Wilson states, "An important aspect of research is that Indigenous peoples themselves decide exactly which areas are to be studied" (2019, p.15). The researcher and two Indigenous participants engage in a one-to-one interview to facilitate communication and understanding.

The project was initially initiated by Dr. Mukwa Musayett in late 2019. However, due to the impact of Covid-19 and the retirement of the primary personnel responsible for the project from NVIT, the official start of this project was delayed until 2021. The project is now being carried out by Dr. Mukwa Musayett (Shelly Johnson), Dave Manuel, and myself. The study is guided by an Indigenous relational framework as a protocol, with engagement from members of the NVIT's first Bachelor of Indian Social Work cohort. I initiated the REB application process in December 2020, and it remained in progress for two months as it required review by higher-level. In April 2021, I received approval from the Thompson Rivers University Research Ethics Board (REB), allowing me to proceed with data collection.

Data Collection

In order to commence the project, I reached out to NVIT directly to contact the past learners as I was unable to access their database. Due to technical difficulties they encountered as a result of an internet attack in 2019, this led to the loss of data for past students dating back 30 years which meant I could not interview additional participants. The only available sources of information are the graduate list provided by Dave Manuel. Dave was able to identify and connect with some of his classmates, but unfortunately, none of them had time available to participate in the project. Due to time constraints, I ultimately decided to begin the project by conducting an interview with Dave on behalf of NVIT BISW cohort. Dr. Mukwa Musayett also assisted me in locating another participant, Sharon McIvor, who was an instructor in the NVIT BISW program from 1989 to 1993, thirty years ago.

In December 2022, I met with Dave Manuel, and Dave provided me with eight questions to ask during the interviews, which are as follows:

1. Can you share your memories of the first cohort of NVIT BISW program?
2. How could you describe your experience as a student at NVIT?
3. What did you do after you graduated?
4. Have you continued your learning journey after graduation? If so, what did you do (Further education)
5. What steps did you take to decolonize, Indigenize, and reconcile yourself during and after your graduation at the community, national, and government levels?
6. In what ways have you given back to your family or community by sharing what you have learned from the program?
7. Have you had any experience working with a social work practicum student? If so, could you describe what it was like?
8. What were your takeaways from the NVIT BISW program?

I conducted interviews with two participants using the same set of eight questions. However, some questions were modified due to Sharon and Dave holding the different roles as student and instructor. The interview with Sharon McIvor was conducted via Zoom, while the interview with Dave Manuel was conducted in person, and each interview lasted for an hour and a half. I did not take any notes during the interview. Following the interviews, I provided both Sharon McIvor and Dave Manuel with a small gift and a $50 gift card, In accordance with the approved REB ethics application. Participants interviews are recorded. The audio was saved to the password locked computer. I transcribed the interviews. I provided both participants with a copy of the transcripts. They had one week to edit or make changes to the transcripts.

What We Can Learn from a Student and Teachers Experience within BISW Program

Through discussions with the BISW program instructor and one student, they identified the following four themes: The cohort members, the NVIT BISW program structure, personal healing, and giving back

to the community.

The Cohort Members – "Most of us are Indigenous."

Within the interviews with Sharon and Dave, there was considerable discussion about the ways in which the other cohort members influenced the participant experiences. This cohort was comprised of 30 students, 29 of whom are Indigenous and one who is non-Indigenous. Many cohort members were friends or family members before joining the program. This dynamic created a unique and inclusive environment where everyone was familiar with each other and created opportunities for cultural sharing. Sharon mentioned that this was the first time she had the opportunity to teach primarily Indigenous students, and it proved to be a remarkable experience.

> *"Witnessing the growth and learning of these students and the unique perspectives they brought to the classroom was truly fulfilling." (Sharon McIvor)*

Compared to her other classes, Sharon mentioned that the BISW student cohort possessed a wealth of life experience deeply rooted in their Indigenous cultures. They brought a solid foundation of Indigenous land and community history from their former life experiences, greatly enriching the learning environment. According to Sharon most students in this cohort can speak their language or have had a chance to learn their traditional language. This allows the students to easily access traditional knowledge, oral histories, and cultural practices, in a way that fosters a strong sense of identity and belonging. Moreover, as mentioned by Sharon and Dave, some students had already established careers and occupations before joining the program. Dave specifically emphasized that those students possessed specialized knowledge in their career fields, so other students have benefited greatly from their classmates' expertise.

> *". . .(she) was the oldest one, I believe, but she worked many, many years at Round Lake Treatment Centre, and I had nothing but respect for her. So, when somebody like her that works so many years in the field all of a sudden start talking, people like me, I believe, shut up and listen to learn." (Dave Manuel)*

This supportive learning environment helped cohort members overcome many challenges during their program experience. In Dave's reflection, the majority of cohort members were required to attend university upgrading courses as part of their agreement to enter the program. Dave noted that this requirement posed a significant challenge for him as it added to the workload in the program. However, the supportive class environment established by his classmates helped him overcome this challenge. The other highlight of this cohort is that this group of students has high level of self-efficacy and ability to effect meaningful change. Initially, this social work program was intended to be a two-year diploma program. The cohort members collectively advocated to extend the program beyond the initial two-year diploma to a four-year degree.

> *"If we want to take care of third (year) and four (year), we have a choice. We can go to Victoria or go to Regina. But why not here in the Merritt? How do we make that happen but letting the board know, and making our voices heard? So, 30 of us said so we want to do this. Let's make this happen" (Dave Manuel).*

They actively advocated for their preferences to the NVIT board for this request. The program was finally transformed into a degree program, which allowed the cohort to complete their studies at NVIT in collaboration with the University of Regina.

Many cohort members have maintained contact with Sharon after they graduated. According to Sharon's recollection, some students who stayed in touch with her have been working in the field of social work for several decades until they retired. Some of them chose to continue doing their master's or doctoral degrees. Sharon noted that the students from this cohort have remained in one job position for a significant duration, which is rare among her current students.

The Program

The unique program setting of the NVIT BISW program was another prominent theme that emerged during the interview. There are two unique teaching methods that have been discussed. First is the one-week workload

teaching method. In contrast to the Westernized social work programs with class sessions taught by various instructors, this program adopted a one-week workload teaching method. Students will have a new instructor and a new theme for each week. This unique teaching approach enables students to concentrate deeply on the weekly topics.

Moreover, the students of this cohort attended all classes together, and the cohort remained unchanged throughout the entire program. This allowed students to build close relationships with their classmates and created a supportive and collaborative learning environment. The regular cohort also cultivates a sense of belonging, enhancing their overall educational experience.

The second teaching method that was discussed in the interview is called the "cultural camp". Sharon and Dave did not specifically discuss how the cultural camp operated. However, both Sharon and Dave emphasized the cultural camp's significant role in enhancing the student learning experience. Sharon reported that the students who participated in culture camp showed less stress when they attended the classes.

> *"And I didn't see the panic and the stress in that group of students. I think part of it was the grounding they got with the cultural camp". (Sharon McIvor)*

Dave described the cultural camp as "a huge part" of his learning experience at NVIT. He shared a story about the cultural camp. The cohort visited one of their classmates' communities for their culture camp. Unfortunately, that classmate happened to be the first person to drop out of the program, which Dave considered a "great loss" for the entire cohort. By reflecting their experience, we can see that the culture camp is a means of establishing a culturally supportive and empowering environment. It appeared to foster meaningful connections between students and communities.

This program incorporated traditional ways of teaching without any restrictions from the institution, for example, average grade requirements. The course schedule was flexible to accommodate students' schedules. It created a comfortable and empowering student learning environment. Sharon commented that the University of Regina did not exert much supervision over this program, which allowed instructors to develop course schedules and assessment systems in their own way.

> *"We didn't get much supervision from Regina. So, Regina was happy with what our students took, they did all of the qualifications, and I think that's the bigger thing." (Sharon McIvor).*

NVIT instructors had the flexibility to make decisions based on individual student circumstances, without being bound by institution policies. This includes granting extensions for assignments or exams. Sharon also emphasised that the school did not impose restrictions on the average grade within a class, so if students performed well, everyone could get an A.

Beyond that, the student-teacher relationship also played an important role in this 4-year program. Dave reflects on how these relationships helped him to make a positive change in his life. For example, he described the instructors like Sharon McIvor, Dr. Lee Brown, and Dr. Bill Mussel in the following:

> *"You know, these people are sitting there talking to us, educating us, influencing us, inspiring us to be able become (the best versions of ourselves as) young individuals." (Dave Manuel)*

Dave described these instructors as "game change experts" and "impact players" to reflect their role as mentors in guiding students and helping them make positive changes throughout their lives. He felt supported by these instructors in facing challenges. This supportive relationship worked both ways. The instructors were also learning from the students. Sharon, as an instructor, expressed how she was influenced and gained new perspectives on how history can impact people when students brought their own histories and experiences to the classroom.

> *"I've learned so much about what history has done to our people, and I've done that by being in a classroom and having my students tell me their experiences." (Sharon McIvor).*

To sum, the program had several unique features highlighted by the two participants that may have contributed to the success

of the program: most students were Indigenous; instructors were flexible, supportive and inspirational; and there was a strong sense of community facilitated by keeping cohorts intact throughout the four years.

Personal Healing and Reconciliation

The following two sections will focus on Dave's personal experiences at NVIT. It provides insights into how this program influences him today. Dave joined this program in an unplanned way when the program was first established. He described how valuable this opportunity is to him because he never thought he would be able to go to university. NVIT gave him an opportunity for an interview, and he got accepted. When he first got into the program, he faced financial constraints preventing him from covering the tuition expenses. He approached the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc band council chief at that time and Sean Leonard, his education worker, to request sponsorship from the band council. He promised that if the council could sponsor his education at NVIT, he would return to his community and become an addiction worker serving the community. He fulfilled his promise and served his community as an addiction worker for nine years.

During the interview, when he talked about the reconciliation, Dave shared his experience of how he started forgiving his mother. He considered it the initial step in his own reconciliation journey. his forgiveness began in the BC Native woman class. Attending the class provided him with different insights about his mother, helping him to understand how the residential school system and government policy destroyed his family and communities. He stated:

> *"Because I went there, I learned so much about my mom. When I learned about my mom there, I learned how to forgive my mom." (Dave Manuel).*

Dave grew up in various foster homes, and each family had its unique rules and beliefs. As a result, Dave was confused about his own identity and lack of belongingness. His journey at NVIT allowed him to confront the question, "Who am I?" Dave had a conversation with one of his instructors, Lee Brown, to discuss this question in a talking circle at the beginning of one of the classes at NVIT. During that talking circle, he claimed that he wanted to be somebody just like Lee Brown. However, the instructor declined that idea. He recalled,

> *"Lee Brown said that "I couldn't be like Lee Brown," and when he said that to me, I said, "Well, who can I be like if I can't be like Lee Brown?" He says, "You have to be yourself," and so that's one of the things I challenged myself at going to NVIT is, who am I?"*

This conversation made Dave realize he could not be like someone else but had to embrace his true self and run through his own path. This realization began his reconciliation journey at NVIT. He recalled an assignment in which he was tasked with creating a community profile based on where he was from. It was challenging for him because he came from the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc community but was not raised there. As a result, he had limited knowledge about his community and felt embarrassed about it. He reached out to Chief Manny Jules to ask for help. Chief Jules was a member of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and served as Chief from 1984 to 2000. Dave expressed his need for guidance and assistance to complete the assignment. In response, the Chief extended an invitation to meet in person for lunch to discuss the assignment in detail. Dave expressed his surprise and gratitude that Chief Jules was willing to assist him with this project and help him become more acquainted with his community.

They met for lunch, during which Dave shared the assignment details and took notes while learning from Chief Jules. Dave expressed that this experience offered him a sense of belonging, and support from the community. Local Elders and community leaders have played a crucial role in his education and journey of reconciliation. The support him received has helped him develop a deep understanding of community responsibility and cultural aspects, leading to a strong sense of connection and belonging. "Elders serve as repositories of cultural and philosophical knowledge, playing a pivotal role in transmitting such information (Archibald, 2008, p. 37). Learning from local Elders and community leaders facilitates intergenerational

knowledge transfer and promotes community resilience (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). As Dave reflects,

> *"The culture component is not so much about culture(itself). It is about the (engaging with the) Aboriginal (community), being with First Nations and learning (the culture and knowledge) together." (Dave Manuel).*

This realization underscores the importance of cultural support and highlights the profound impact that education and the journey of reconciliation can have on one's life. This impact continued after Dave's graduation. Through education, Dave had the opportunity to study how colonial history has influenced his family and his self-identity. This led him to have a chance to reconnect with his community, from which he had been isolated for a long time. He gained the opportunity to initiate reconciliation during his education with his mother, his family, and his community. It became a healing process for him. During the interview, Dave mentioned that he faced a lot of challenges when he began his learning journey through NVIT. One of these challenges was financial difficulties. He talked about how he had to sell his fancy car to his cousin to pay for the program and live with his wife and three children in low-income housing with the help of the Kamloops Friendship Center. However, when he talks about that experience, his reflection focuses on his belief that his journey in NVIT was worth it. He stated that:

> *"When I went through NVIT, it was almost like four years of treatment, four years of healing or years of cultural awareness (Dave Manuel)".*

Dave was chosen as the NVIT student council representative, which began his community engagement journey. This opportunity profoundly impacted his leadership skills and sparked a deep passion within him to make a difference in his community. He recalled the experience of sitting next to the respected late Grand Chief Gordon Antoine and working with him on the student council. He stated that it was a valuable experience working with those community leaders as a young student, because he never felt that his work was undervalued. Instead, he was expected to do the same things as the community leader. In these meetings, Dave realized his responsibility as a community member and learned how to observe, learn, and understand community engagement.

After graduating from NVIT, Dave had a chance to return to his community. He describes his feeling about this decision as scared and uncertain because he was away from his community for a long time. While facing this decision-making moment, one night he had a spiritual experience that guided him to connect to his father. He told of this experience in the interview:

> *"I opened my eyes, and my dad was standing there. My dad died when I was 16 years old, and he was standing there that night beside me. Then I went "Whoa! Where did you come from?" He turned around, walked up the hallway, and disappeared like smoke." (Dave Manuel)*

Dave was shocked and immediately reached out to Elder Roger Porter. Roger helped calm him down and suggested him to smudge and sing a song to pray. He asked Dave to come to meet him the following morning. The Elder explained this experience to Dave as a significant turning point in Dave's life and saw it as a clear sign that he needed guidance and support. He suggested that Dave take four bundles of sage, find a secluded location, and pray, facing each direction to seek guidance. Following his instincts, he explored the town of Merritt. Eventually, he felt a strong pull towards Monk Park, where he discovered a sacred spot adorned with white sagebrush. Following the Elder's instructions, he gathered sage and began his prayers, starting from the East and moving around the circle, seeking guidance from each direction. He spent seven and a half hours in prayer.

As he drove back to Kamloops, he stated:

> *"All I see is T'kemlups, my community, and my family. There was all this awareness that was happening even before I got to Merritt. (Dave Manuel)"*

Inspired by the experience, Dave decided to return to his community and contribute to its growth. The significance of seeking guidance, embracing spirituality, and discovering a deep sense of belonging left a lasting impact on Dave. Following a promise to his mother, he eventually returned to the community.

Giving Back to Community

Dave spent a year in his community; learning, observing, and building connections with his community members. During his employment at the Kamloops Friendship Center, he developed a strong connection with community social services, further enhancing his understanding and involvement. He worked as a youth street worker and dedicated himself to helping high-risk youth who faced challenges similar to what he had experienced in his own youth. His primary focus was to assist them in developing community connections and providing them with the necessary social services and resources they needed.

With his experience at the Friendship Center, Dave had the opportunity to connect with Connie Leonard, a member of the school district. She recognized his interest and skill set and invited him to work in the school district with Indigenous youth. He spent fifteen years in this role. His dedication led to empowering First Nations youth, challenging them in leadership, sports events, and peer mentoring programs. He noted that mentorship was crucial to his personal and professional development, and that is what he wanted to pass to the next generation. He has worked in several schools, and emphasized the valuable opportunities and meaningful interactions he experienced with youth while working in the school district. He noted that the mentorship that he received from NVIT, community leaders, and Elders made a significant contribution to his personal growth, and that was what he wanted to pass on to the next generation. Dave talked about the leadership training he offered in school and how he taught students to take on community responsibility and leadership roles. He told one student,

> *"My job here is to educate you as much as possible, so I'm here to support you to get an education so that when you're chief and council, you'll know what you're reading" (Dave Manuel).*

He also discussed his experience with social practicum students. During his first-year practicum at NVIT, he mentioned he received lot of support from one of his supervisors, Jean Anderson. This supervisor encouraged him to give back to the social work program by taking on social work practicum students, just as she had done for him. He fulfilled his promise. He supported many social work practicum students while he was working in the school district. He provided a valuable platform for new social work students, and did it because he knows that social work is the type of work that requires experience and community connections. The education is not enough. As he stated in the interview,

> *"I would have gone from right from NVIT right into the addiction worker position and I wasn't ready" (Dave Manuel).*

By reflecting on this experience, Dave expressed his contributions to the community and explained why he wanted to do it. He stated that through his journey in the NVIT student council, he began to learn the meaning of community responsibility. This experience was pivotal in helping him realize that communities can be diverse yet still come together in unity. Regardless of people's backgrounds, when they join forces and concentrate their efforts toward a common goal, they have the power to make a substantial impact. He states,

> *"School is a community but it's just part of the (big) community. NVIT taught me that. We're all from different places and when we got together, we became a force" (Dave Manuel).*

Aside from school, Dave also talked about the mentorship he received from the Elders and community leaders, which gives him an insight of what community development looks like. He states,

> *"The communities, you know, see mentors like Elders Roger Porter, Rick Alec, you know all these guys like the late Daniel Seymour, Clarence Jules Junior (Manny's Dad), all these gentlemen that were very strong … all these guys that contribute to the community in all sorts of ways" (Dave Manuel).*

These mentors empowered him to give back to the community and provided him with the knowledge and support necessary to successfully navigate his personal and professional life. It creates reciprocity between community leaders and Elders. By listening, learning, and observing these individuals engaging in activities that benefit the

community, he learned what he was supposed to do as a community member and how to carry community responsibility. By receiving the support from his instructors and mentors he noted the importance of mentorship and was given the responsibility to pass mentorship knowledge to the next generations. This level of reciprocity creates an inherent give-and-take dynamic between those mentors and Dave, which benefits his personal growth and leads him to carry this responsibility to the next generations. Dave receives these teachings with respect, attentiveness, and a commitment to apply the lessons that he learned from mentors.

As a social work student, I was deeply impressed by his experience and how he received support from both individuals and the community. It was inspiring to see how he ultimately reciprocated this support by giving back to his own community and assisting those in need. He describes the Indigenous ways of healing as being about a people, centered around the community, and emphasizes that this healing process should extend across generations.

> *"There's not one Aboriginal status Indian that has not been impacted…Doesn't matter who where they're from or their background. If they're walking through the doors and need that support, I'll help them" (Dave Manuel).*

Dave describes the social worker as someone who has the ability to address and tackle the challenging or uncomfortable issues, as the "elephant in the room." He talked about the experience in the Community Action Partnership (CAP) when he was the addiction worker in the school district and was the only First Nation person out of fifty. He went into that room, stayed in front of the microphone, and fought for his communities.

> *"I said: "What we need to do is make sure our targeting funds are going to Aboriginal people. They kept it the way our Elders wanted it, because if they didn't, we would have pulled our funding, and it would have gone through the First Nations Education Council instead. But those are the moments where we have to fight for our Aboriginal rights" (Dave Manuel).*

This is what he observed that the late Grand Chief Gordon Antoine did in fighting for Aboriginal education, which Dave witnessed when he was a student, He stated:

> *"I learned this leadership from NVIT… Learned what a good social worker will always be an advocate. If I teach anybody, that is being that voice, voice of reason. It's a challenge because it takes a lot of courage to stand up and share something the rest of the room won't want to discuss. But that gets the mojo going. That gets the truth" (Dave Manuel).*

At the end of the interview, I asked him about the most important thing that he gained from NVIT. He said that NVIT had a profound impact on his personal healing and growth. Joining the program allowed him to learn about his community's history, find forgiveness toward his mom, and get a chance to go back to his community.

Why Is This Program Important?

During the interviews, Sharon and Dave both stated that the NVIT BISW program is unique, and it helped to create a difference throughout their life. Through Dave's own experiences and reflections, he witnessed how the entire NVIT program influenced and shaped him into the person he is today. As a researcher, I was curious to know what made the first NVIT BISW program special, and what we can learn from it today.

Relationship-Building and Culture Immersion Course

This program has a highly representative population of Indigenous students who bring with them rich personal histories and experiences, particularly related to Indigenous culture and ancestral origins. The students' collective wisdom and unique perspectives greatly enriched the learning environment. This contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous culture and community. Students came into the cohort with their former life experiences, especially those which occurred within their communities. According to Myers et al. (2019), affinity groups can provide a space for connection and recognition, allowing Indigenous students to gather in environments

that are not influenced by dominant cultural expectations. This group of students shared a common cultural background and found themselves in an environment that respects and acknowledges their culture and heritage. The knowledge they learned and shared, as well as the skills they acquired and put into practice were closely connected to their everyday lives. Dave's personal histories and professional expertise helped to create an inclusive atmosphere within the class, where cultural knowledge was shared and celebrated (Clark, 2020). Some of the students worked in the community before they entered into the program. They are students who have gained valuable experience and knowledge to share with their peers. By sharing this knowledge, they have earned the respect of other students. It creates a reciprocity environment. This knowledge exchange enhances the learning experience for everyone involved and contributes to a more holistic understanding of social work practice within an Indigenous context (Smith, 2012). This fosters a collaborative environment where students support one another.

Moreover, relationship building is a crucial aspect of the instructional process in this BISW program. The same cohort members are together throughout the whole program. This creates a special bond between the students. They are friends and family throughout the entire study progress, even though they come from different regions. Instructors not only serve as educators but also act as advocates for students. They actively engage in the relationship-building process between students and instructors. They guide and supported Dave throughout their academic journey and personal growth. The relationship between instructors and students in this cohort is more akin to that of family members. They guide and challenge students and accompany them through the challenges he faced. Smith (2010) emphasizes the importance of mentorship and advocacy in educational settings, as it increases student motivation, academic success, and overall well-being. The student–instructor relationship extends beyond the classroom until the student graduates.

Finally, it is essential to emphasize the significance of the cultural component in the program, as discussed by Sharon and Dave. It began with the culture camp (which has since been phased out), a distinctive teaching method employed in the program, which served as a field school experience. The immersive nature of the culture camp created a supportive and empowering environment, effectively mitigating some of the pressures students face in the social work program. The immersive experiences enhance cultural competency and a heightened appreciation of Indigenous knowledge systems (Lockhart et al., 1997). It can be seen as experiential learning, which can positively influence students' cultural understanding and self-reflection.

Elder and Community Leader's Involvement

The involvement of Elders and community leaders is another vital aspect of the program, particularly highlighted in Dave's story. Throughout students' personal healing and reconciliation journey, the presence and guidance of Elders played a significant role. Elders bring their wisdom, cultural knowledge, and lived experiences, which greatly contribute to the student's learning and growth. Elders play a crucial role in Indigenous communities, serving as custodians of traditional knowledge and cultural practices. Their presence in the program provides students with a deeper understanding of Indigenous values, protocols, and ways of being. They offer spiritual guidance, cultural teachings, and emotional support, creating a nurturing environment for personal healing and reconciliation. According to Kovach (2010), Indigenous pedagogy emphasizes the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, where Elders play a central role in guiding and mentoring the younger generations. Their presence ensures that Indigenous ways of knowing and being are upheld and integrated into the learning experience. Elders' wisdom and teachings foster a sense of cultural identity, self-esteem, and resilience among Indigenous students.

Community leaders' involvement provides student mentorship and creates a better understanding of community responsibility. Indigenous community leaders were acknowledged as community leaders due to their

knowledge, experience, wisdom, and integrity. Their leadership status was established through a consensus within the community, and this recognition had to be earned by aligning with the cultural values upheld within their communities (Cajete, 2016). Learning from community leaders can create a sense of community responsibility among the students. This sense of responsibility motivates students to apply their learning and skills gained from the program to address community needs and make positive contributions.

Community engagement and empowerment

Community engagement and empowerment were also vital aspects of this BISW cohort. The program actively involved and empowered students to identify their needs through the advocacy and support of instructors and the school broad of directors. Indeed, it led to change the direction of the initial plan of a two-year program to four years. Students were highly involved in the process. Dave actively participated in the NVIT school council and advocated for positive changes. This in turn developed his leadership skills that he used to advance social justice, equality, and the overall well-being of Indigenous peoples. As Dave stated, he learned carry on the community responsibility by watching someone from the community. This is what NVIT provided to him as a part of his community engagement education. The influence of these mentors, Elders, and community leaders is instrumental in shaping Dave's understanding of community development and his own role within it. Their guidance, teachings, and support empower him to give back to the community and carry the responsibility of mentorship to future generations. This is education and commitment to community that he continues to demonstrate today in his role of a community leader.

Conclusion

The first NVIT BISW cohort project offers a unique and significant perspective. As emphasized by Sharon, it goes beyond simply creating a standardized social work program by actively involving Indigenous teachers, students, Elders, and communities. The program recognizes and prioritizes the value of relationships, not only among the students themselves but also between the schools and communities. As a social work student during my own bachelor's studies, I observed the crucial role that relationship-building plays. Listening to Dave's story, I can clearly see how his transformative educational journey has shaped him to become who he is today. Dave does not stop at learning from the education he received, he carries it gratefully into the type of responsibility he must pass it onto the next generation. He is not the only one doing that; the education he received from NVIT taught him about it, and the people he met when he was young guided him in that direction. This is an important example of the intergenerational delivery of community responsibility. The older generation carries the weight of benefiting the next seven generations. This is a specific type of community responsibility that is deeply reflected in the words of one cohort member. When Dave reflects on the work he is currently doing to prepare the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Healing Centre in Kamloops, he states:

"We're building the foundation for healing for the rest of our lives. The agenda has changed. It goes from before we're just trying to navigate. But now we, since the 215 (potential gravesites found at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School), has showed themselves, the healing generation has started the foundation we are building, not for ourselves, has nothing to do with us. It has to do with the future generation of children coming our way" (Dave Manuel).

As a master's student researcher, this project experience makes me think about what I'm doing, and what research means for the future. It makes me question how I will pass on what I've learned to the next generation, and how it will influence their well-being. I believe that is what education means—it is not about us, it is never about us, it is always about the future. How will what we do influence the next generation, and the healing and growth that lies ahead.

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE MÉTIS?

Introduction

Like many other Métis individuals, I grew up unaware of my Métis heritage. This disconnection is not uncommon and can be understood within the broader context of silenced stories and historical omissions shaped by colonial violence. For many Indigenous families, concealing their identity was often a means of protecting oneself and one's family from the harms inflicted by colonial institutions (Teillet, 2019). In particular, the white-passing appearance of many Métis individuals allowed for a form of conditional inclusion within settler society (Teillet, 2019). This perceived ability to "pass" as white offered protection from the overt racism and exclusion that visibly Indigenous peoples were more likely to endure (Teillet, 2019). However, this form of assimilation came at a cost. While it may have provided short-term security, it simultaneously contributed to the erasure of Métis identity both externally, through exclusion from legal recognition and collective rights, and internally, through the lack of identity, cultural practices, and connection to community (Teillet, 2019). As a result, questions of authenticity, visibility, and belonging persist, as Métis individuals continue to work to reclaim and affirm their identities today.

In my own family, this legacy manifested in my grandfather's decision to hide his Métis heritage. This choice, I now realize, was indicative of the deep-rooted stigma surrounding Indigenous identity within families affected by colonialism. I now question whether his reluctance to speak openly about our Métis heritage stemmed from internalized shame, a fear of lateral violence, or simply a survival mechanism developed over time in response to the systematic marginalization of Indigenous peoples. Regardless of the reasons behind his hesitancy, it has had a lasting impact on how identity is understood within my family. Due to this, as I began exploring my own familial heritage and our Nation's histories I was prompted to critically reflect on one question: What does it truly mean to be Métis?

Etymology of the Name Métis

As one of the three constitutionally recognized and distinct Indigenous Peoples in Canada the Métis, also known as the Michif people, are frequently misunderstood, both by non-Indigenous individuals and within Indigenous communities. A persistent misconception held by many non-Métis individuals is the belief that anyone of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry is automatically Métis (Auger, 2021). This assumption, however, overlooks the specific historical, cultural, and political foundations of Métis nationhood. Métis identity is not solely based on racialized notions of "mixed blood," but rather on ancestral ties to the historic Red River (Auger,

2021). Despite its name, the Red River is not just a river but a vast geographic region that spans parts of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the northwest corner of Minnesota, and a large portion of North Dakota (Teillet, 2019). Two major rivers, the Assiniboine and the Red, dominate this area (Teillet, 2019). The Métis viewed these rivers as one interconnected system: the Assiniboine was known as the Upper Red, and the Red River as the Lower Red (Teillet, 2019). When Métis people reference the Red River, they are referring to the entire region, not just the waterway itself (Teillet, 2019).

Figure 1: Image displaying the Red River region.

The Red River is central to the emergence of a distinct Métis people, with shared language, culture, political organization, and collective resistance to colonial encroachment. However, the full significance of this region and the identity rooted within it is often misunderstood. This misunderstanding is partly rooted in the etymology of the term "Métis," derived from the French word meaning "mixed race" (Teillet, 2019). Such a reductive interpretation reflects the colonial frameworks that sought to categorize Indigenous peoples through blood quantum and racial hierarchies, rather than recognizing nationhood and self-determination. As a result of these colonial constructs, Métis people have often been subjected to the derogatory label of "half-breeds," a term that reinforces the erroneous idea that Métis identity is merely the product of mixed ancestry, rather than a distinct and sovereign Indigenous nation (Teillet, 2019). Historical documents make this colonial perspective particularly evident; for instance, Teillet (2019) cites a priest who described the Métis as "one-and-a-half-men… half Indian, half white, and half devil". These legacies of colonial classification continue to obscure Métis identity and contribute to ongoing challenges in asserting cultural and political legitimacy in both settler and Indigenous spaces across Canada.

The Impact of Colonialism in Métis Communities

Like other Indigenous Peoples in Canada, the Métis have a distinct and complex relationship with colonialism, one that cannot be fully explored within the scope of this discussion. While the broader public may be familiar with certain aspects of Métis history, such as the leadership of Louis Riel and resistance movements like Batoche, Many Métis stories and histories remain overlooked or misunderstood (Teillet, 2019). Among the most prominent yet often forgotten colonial harms endured by Métis communities are the far-reaching impacts of residential and day schools, forced displacement from ancestral lands, and the systemic denial of Métis rights and identity. Although these experiences mirror the colonial violence faced by other Indigenous peoples, the Métis have frequently been excluded from these dominant narratives of colonization both within settler discourses and, at times, within pan-Indigenous contexts. This exclusion stems from the Métis' unique cultural and historical position which does not conform neatly to the categories of Indigeneity established by colonial institutions, nor align fully with the cultural frameworks of First Nations or Inuit communities. As a result, Métis histories are often rendered invisible in spaces that are either not designed for them or lack the understanding necessary to include them meaningfully. It is precisely this erasure and its ongoing consequences that compels me to engage critically with these issues.

Residential and Day Schools

A common misconception about the residential school system is that only First Nations and Inuit children were taken;

however, many Métis children were forcibly removed from their families as part of Canada's broader colonial project to assimilate Indigenous peoples (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). This erasure has led to Métis survivors commonly being referred to as the "forgotten people" in narratives about residential schools (Métis Nation of Alberta, n.d.). As Logan (2015) observes, colonial authorities perceived the so-called "destitute Half-breeds" as "worse off than Indians" due to their residency in squatter settlements and the colonial belief that Métis children lacked the intellectual capacity to benefit from the provincial education system. However, Métis children who appeared phenotypically more European were frequently deprioritized for placement in residential schools, reflecting the inconsistencies and racial hierarchies embedded within colonial education policies (Logan, 2015). In one instance, the presence of Métis children at a Catholic Mission in British Columbia was even met with disappointment (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). French-born Oblate missionary Adrien-Gabriel Morice, who arrived in Canada in the 1880s with the intention of working with what he considered "exotic Indians," expressed dismay upon discovering that the students were Métis (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

The Métis children who did attend residential or church-run schools endured experiences like those of First Nations and Inuit children, including emotional, spiritual, physical, and sexual abuse (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). During his time spent at Grouard (St. Bernard's) residential school, George Amato recounted that his sister once ran away from the school to attend a local dance (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). When a priest found and returned her to school grounds, she was tied to a chair and had her head forcibly shaved (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). After striking one of the nuns in response, she was sent to a reform school for girls in Edmonton (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Alphonse Janvier recalled being punished for speaking the "wrong" language by being forced to stand for extended periods holding books above his head and standing at a blackboard, pressing his nose into a chalk circle (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

The harsh, and at times physically abusive discipline was also coupled with sexual abuse (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). According to one former Île-à-la-Crosse student, "Older boys molested younger boys at night in the dormitory and priests and supervisors molested their 'favorite boys" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Survivor Mike Durocher recounted being expelled at the age of fifteen after posting signs that named his abusers (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). His claims were dismissed by the principal and his family refused to accept his accounts of abuse (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). George Amato recounts one day being told "you have to go help the Brother downstairs" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). According to Amato, the priest took him down "into the boiler rooms where he sat down in a chair and undid his bib overalls, pulled them down and he exposed himself, and forced me to fondle him" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

In addition to institutional abuse, Métis children often experienced lateral violence from First Nations and Inuit children (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). One survivor shared that they were met with the same kind of animosity from Inuit peers, stating that "one was made certain to know how you were not really, truly, an Inuk. In addition to the petty cruelties incited upon half-breeds for being born as such, there was the obviousness of illegitimacy" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Raphael Ironstand, who was of mixed descent and raised in a First Nations community, experienced bullying from Cree students during his time at Pine Creek Residential School in Manitoba (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

> *"The Crees surrounded me, staring at me with hatred in their eyes, as again they called me 'Monias,' while telling me the school was for Indians only. I tried to tell them I was not a Monias, which I now knew meant white man, but a real Indian. That triggered their attack, in unison. I was kicked, punched, bitten, and my hair was pulled out by the roots. My clothes were*

also shredded, but the Crees suddenly disappeared, leaving me lying on the ground, bleeding and bruised" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

These institutions served not only as mechanisms of cultural genocide but also as sites where Métis identity was further denigrated, misunderstood, or entirely ignored by settlers and Indigenous peoples alike (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

Forced Land Dispossession

Historically, assimilative policies have worked to sever the Métis from their homelands (Auger, 2021). As part of Canada's broader colonial project, Métis communities were often uprooted to facilitate the expansion of settler society in the North-West (Auger, 2021). This colonial restructuring not only enabled the consolidation of settler power but also entrenched the marginalization of the Métis, who were routinely excluded from the legal recognition, protections, and benefits extended to other Indigenous groups (Auger, 2021).

During the period of westward expansion First Nations were often engaged in treaty negotiations that, while deeply flawed, formally acknowledged their collective land rights (Teillet, 2019). In contrast, the Métis were systematically excluded from these processes, and as Teillet (2019) observes, "treaty commissioners repeatedly informed the Métis that they were not empowered to deal with the collective rights of the Métis". Not only were they denied participation in treaty negotiations, but were also excommunicated from reserve lands, further exacerbating their displacement, and rendering them legally unrecognized in an intentionally created legal grey area. (Teillet, 2019).

In lieu of treaties, the federal government implemented the Scrip system, a policy mechanism designed to pacify the Métis and extinguish them of Aboriginal title throug individual land or monetary compensation (Teillet, 2019). Much like treaties with First Nations, the goal of scrip was to clear land for settler occupation while undermining Indigenous landholding systems (Augustus, 2008). Scrip was administered in three major phases: in Manitoba in the 1870s, in the North-West during the 1880s, and later in conjunction with Treaties 8 and 10 across the northern prairies (Augustus, 2008). Under this system, eligible Métis individuals were offered certificates redeemable for either land or a one-time payment, initially valued at 160 acres or 160 dollars, later increased to 240 acres or 240 dollars (Augustus, 2008). However, the Scrip system was deeply compromised by fraud and exploitation (Teillet, 2019). Settlers frequently took advantage of Métis individuals by pressuring them to exchange their Scrip coupons for cash amounts far below the actual value of the land (Teillet, 2019). Others were deceived by priests into handing over their Scrip with promises to safeguard the coupons, which were never returned (Teillet, 2019). Although the government publicly stated that scrip could not be transferred to third parties, in practice, Métis impersonators came to possess most of the Scrip (Teillet, 2019). As Teillet (2019) observes, the government knew there were impersonators and forgeries but chose not to intervene to ensure Métis title could be quickly laundered into the settler market.

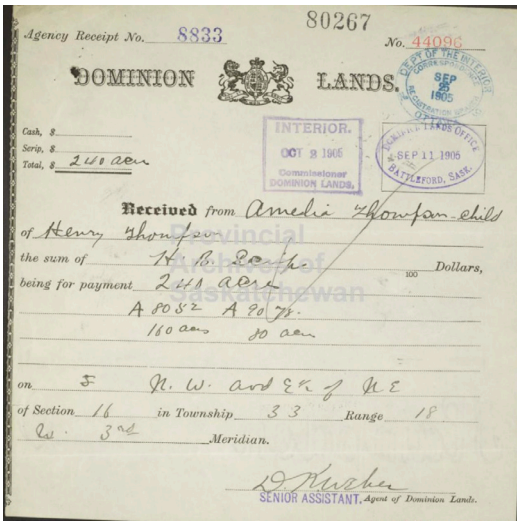

Figure 2: Scrip issued to Amelia Thompson.

In the end, Métis people were left with virtually no land and no recourse. This mass dispossession pushed many to the margins of settler society, where they established makeshift communities along the edges of towns and cities, areas known as road allowances (Teillet, 2019). These narrow strips of Crown land, reserved by the government for potential future road construction, became

temporary refuges for landless Métis families (Teillet, 2019). In southern Manitoba, several road allowance communities emerged, such as Rooster Town, Ste. Madeleine, Dog Patch, and Tin Town (Teillet, 2019). However, despite their efforts to create stability, these communities were inherently precarious. When the municipalities decided to proceed with infrastructure development or repurpose the land, these communities were subject to forced eviction (Teillet, 2019). Families were often displaced with little to no warning or compensation, perpetuating cycles of instability, marginalization, and systemic dispossession.

A striking example of dispossession faced by Métis communities is the destruction of Ste. Madeleine in Manitoba. The Métis had homesteaded the land at Ste. Madeleine and the nearby Pumpkin Plain since the 1870s (Barkwell, 2016). However, in 1935, the Canadian government set up the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (Barkwell, 2016). Under this Act, the town of Ste. Madeleine and surrounding area was designated to become community pasture (Barkwell, 2016). Although compensation and relocation were promised to families with paid taxes, most Métis residents impoverished by the Great Depression did not qualify (Barkwell, 2016). As a result, these families lost everything: their homes were burned, their dogs shot, and even the church was dismantled, with its logs repurposed for a piggery (Barkwell, 2016). Today, all that remains of Ste. Madeleine are the stone foundations of the Belliveau School and a cemetery marking the spot where the church once stood (Barkwell, 2016).

Denial of Métis Existence

The denial of Métis existence has been a persistent and deeply damaging aspect of colonialism in Canada, shaping Métis cultural identity at both individual and collective levels. Historically, colonial frameworks allowed only binary understandings of identity: one was either White or Indian (Teillet, 2009). This dichotomy left little conceptual or legal space for the recognition of people of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry, and it effectively rendered the Métis invisible within dominant political and cultural discourses (Teillet, 2009). This persistent denial has fueled a broader identity crisis, carrying far-reaching structural implications. The resulting invisibilities of the Métis has opened the door for growing tensions around identity fraud, particularly through the rise of pretendentians, non-Indigenous individuals who falsely claim Indigeneity, for personal, academic, or professional gain (Dyck, 2023). In recent years, public discourse has been increasingly shaped by high-profile revelations of false Indigenous identity claims. A prominent example is Carrie Bourassa, a former professor and public health researcher, who falsely claimed Métis, Anishinaabe, and Tlingit heritage (Gabet et al., 2024). Her claims, which dated back to her graduate studies, were discredited following an anonymous tip from a former student that revealed inconsistencies in her narrative (Gabet et al., 2024). At the time, Bourassa held significant influence in Indigenous health research, serving as a professor at the University of Saskatchewan and as Scientific Director of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health (Gabet et al., 2024). Her case sparked national debate about the harm of identity fraud and its implications for Indigenous communities already struggling for recognition, resources, and institutional inclusion of Indigenous voices (Gabet et al., 2024).

The harm caused by such fraudulent identity claims is multifaceted. Identity fraud undermines public trust and diverts critical resources, opportunities, and recognition away from legitimate Métis individuals and communities (Dyck, 2023). At the same time, the increased vigilance and calls for accountability have fostered a climate of suspicion that disproportionately harms Métis people, particularly those with lighter skin, limited documentation, or fewer visible ties to cultural practices (Dyck, 2023). Many face intrusive questioning and are forced to "prove" their Indigeneity, often leading to feelings of alienation, anxiety, and imposter syndrome (Dyck, 2023). The paradox is stark: while accountability is necessary to protect the integrity of Métis identity, an overzealous culture of scrutiny risks reproducing the very colonial erasure it seeks to resist (Dyck, 2023).

In response to this crisis of recognition and belonging, Métis scholars have

emphasized the importance of creating distinctly Métis cultural spaces. For example, Richardson (2016) proposes the development of a third space, a psychological and cultural homeland where Métis people can reconnect, resist, and revitalize identity. These third spaces are not merely physical but also emotional and symbolic, providing Métis individuals with a sense of continuity, community, and self-understanding in the face of ongoing colonial disruption (Richardson, 2016). Richardson (2016) describes them as Métis cultural and psychological spaces within a nation where their physical homeland has been taken over by colonial powers. They serve as crucial sites of healing and resistance, where Métis people can explore identity on their own terms, beyond the constraints of settler or First Nations categories (Richardson, 2016). This framework is especially relevant given the common Métis experience of "living between worlds", a phrase that captures the cultural dissonance many Métis individuals feel (Richardson, 2016). As Richardson (2016) and others note, Métis people are often made to feel too white in Indigenous spaces and too Indigenous in settler ones. This in-between positioning underscores the ongoing struggle for belonging and self-definition that Métis communities continue to navigate within both Indigenous and settler contexts.

What Does it Mean to be Métis?

Understanding what it means to be Métis is not a fixed destination but an ongoing, evolving journey, the one that I, like many other Métis people, continue to navigate throughout my life. As a proud Métis woman, I have come to see that our identity is shaped not by static definitions but by the constant negotiation of recognition and belonging. Listening to our Elders and witnessing the strength of our communities has shown me that being Métis is deeply rooted in resilience, kinship, and collective memory. This identity, however, does not exist in a vacuum. It has been forged against the backdrop of colonial efforts to displace us from our lands, erase our culture, and question our legitimacy. Despite this, the Métis have endured, adapting, and asserting ourselves in ways that ensure the survival of our culture and the dignity of our people. The perseverance of our ancestors carved out a place for us to stand proudly, and it is from their strength that I draw my own.

For me, being Métis is not about proving a right to exist; it is about embodying the truth that I do, and that we always have. Yet, this truth is lived within a complex tension. As Richardson (2016) and others have noted, Métis people are often made to feel too white in Indigenous spaces and too Indigenous in settler ones. This in-between positioning is not just a challenge but also a defining aspect of our identity. It reflects the layered history we carry and the unique space we inhabit, holding both worlds while creating one of our own. In this way, the journey of understanding what it means to be Métis is less about finding a final answer and more about living the questions and honoring our ancestors, asserting our presence, and continually shaping a collective identity that resists erasure and celebrates survival.

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> My ancestors legacy speaks to me; I hear their voices and feel their hearts in my bones.

~ Trevor Starchuck


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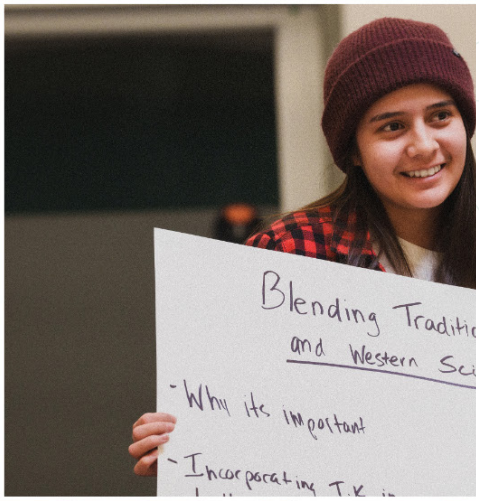
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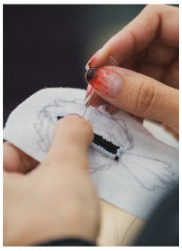

These layers of discrimination have contributed to a common Métis experience of 'living between worlds,' navigating a distinct culture and worldview that often feels out of place within Western society... As a proud Métis woman, I have come to realize that a distinct part of being Métis is navigating this ongoing identity crisis.

~ Olivia Lane

Peyton Anderson
Nuxalk
Research Coordinator, All My Relations

LAND DISPUTES: AN EXAMINATION OF INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS AND TITLE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA AND ITS PRACTICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Three legal cases: Calder v. Attorney-General of British Columbia (Calder case) in 1973; R. v. Guerin (Guerin case) in 1984; and R. v. Sparrow (Sparrow case) in 1990; are viewed in retrospect as a trilogy of Supreme Court of Canada cases that set foundational precedent for Indigenous rights and title cases in British Columbia (BC), and further across the country. Of most recent importance, the trilogy's rulings were cited in the three following landmark cases: R.v. Van der Peet (Van der Peet case) in 1996; Delgamuukw v. British Columbia (Delgamuukw case) in 1997; and Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia (Tsilhqot'in case) in 2014. The rulings in each of these cases builds off of the decisions and ramifications of the case preceding it, making their specific chronology an important facet to address when studying current legal cases involving Indigenous title and rights.

Each of these cases are specific to the Province of British Columbia, as BC is best considered a "special case" in the Canadian context of land rights and title. There are no treaty nations specific to BC– the only treaty nation that crosses provincial borders is Treaty 6 nation in the northeast corner, as it also moves into Alberta's provincial territory. The notable exception is in regard to the fourteen agreements, "concluded between various Indigenous groups on Vancouver Island and James Douglas" from 1849 to 1864, of which the legality is still disputed (Cook et al., 2021). Treaties, for the rest of Canada, are still considered binding contracts, despite the various legal arguments for why they should not– this simplifies their cases of land rights and title disputes with their respective provincial governments and the federal government greatly, as they are bound both by their treaty contracts (signed in the 18th and 19th centuries), and Section 35 of the Constitution. Nations that are within the confines of British Columbia's provincial borders, on the other hand, are not bound by any sort of treaties– only Section 35. This is why there are significantly more land rights and title cases that appear in the Supreme Court of Canada that originate in BC, than in the rest of the country. They are also extremely important, because the rulings for land rights and title that come out of these Supreme Court cases are thereafter applicable to other nations in Canada, as they modify the precedent and interpretation of different sections within Section 35 of the Constitution. To understand the literal and theoretical implications of forcing Indigenous nations, their worldviews and perspectives, into a Western legal framework, it is thus important to first understand the array of cases that best exemplify it.

Each of the Nations that were involved in the aforementioned cases faced significant systemic barriers throughout their legal proceedings, most of which can be attributed to the incompatibility of Indigenous worldviews

and perspectives and the colonial legal system in which Indigenous rights are defined. This has led to inequities with finding legal representation (such as in the Guerin case), the view of Indigenous culture as static and unchanging (as in the Van der Peet case), and the inherent bias of the legal system itself which undermines the legitimacy of Indigenous cases (as in the Delgamuukw case). While each of these cases is predicated on the literal idea of land and Indigenous politics, through their fights for the physical territory they inhabit, they also– perhaps more importantly– highlight the theoretical differences that exemplify how colonial legal structures continue to interfere with meaningful dispute resolution and reconciliation processes. Reconciliation will not be found in a Western-modeled courtroom– despite the various levels of Canadian government forcing Indigenous nations to do so, and understanding the history and reality of why this is, is a step towards building healthier government-to-government relations.

Case Overviews

The Calder, Guerin, and Sparrow cases built upon each other to identify, recognize, and determine the extent of Aboriginal rights and, subsequently, Aboriginal title. The Calder case acknowledged and confirmed the presence of Aboriginal title to the land, the Guerin case set a precedent for the recognition of Aboriginal rights (and therefore title) and the fiduciary duty of the government, and the Sparrow case produced a test to determine whether a right is existing and how those rights may be infringed upon (Salomons, n.d.; Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-a; Salomons & Hanson, n.d-.b). It is for this reason they are commonly referred to as a trilogy, as their individual rulings had a direct impact on the ruling of the next case, beginning with the Calder case.

Calder v. Attorney-General of British Columbia (1973)

The origins of this case stem back to the 1800s when Indigenous nations were pushed from their traditional territories onto reserves, with no consent or treaties to compensate (Cruickshank, 2020). The Nisga'a claimed that their right to their traditional lands were established by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and appealed to the premier of British Columbia in 1887 for recognition (Cruickshank, 2020). No recognition was given, and in 1890 the Nisga'a chiefs formed the Nisga'a Land Committee to petition to the Privy Council in England- this case was never heard (Cruickshank, 2020). In 1927, the Government of Canada prohibited Indigenous groups from "organiz[ing] politically about these disputes and hir[ing] legal counsel to resolve land claims" (Cruickshank, 2020). This was the political landscape in 1967 when Frank Calder of the Nisga'a Nation, along with other Nisga'a elders, sued the BC provincial government under the claim that Nisga'a title to their lands had never been lawfully extinguished (Salomons, n.d.).

The claim was rejected by both the BC Supreme Court and the BC Court of Appeal, before being brought by the Nisga'a to the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) for a final ruling Salomons, n.d.). The SCC confirmed that Indigenous title had existed at the time the Royal Proclamation was issued in 1763 (Salomons, n.d.). This was the first instance of the Canadian legal system acknowledging and confirming the presence of Indigenous title to land, and that this title existed outside of colonial law (Salomons, n.d.). Ultimately, the individual case of the Nisga'a Nation's title to their land was not resolved, however, this ruling set the groundwork for subsequent cases regarding Indigenous title and rights in BC.

R. v. Guerin (1984)

The Guerin case has roots in 1956, when the Shaughnessy Golf and Country Club was interested in leasing 162 of 400 acres in the Musqueam Nation's territory (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-a). The Department of Indian Affairs negotiated terms of leasing with the Musqueam directly, denying them legal representation in the negotiation process, and assured the Nation that they would receive adequate revenue from the rent, which was to be adjusted every ten years to fairly reflect market prices (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-a). After confirming this deal, the Department of Indian Affairs re-negotiated terms with the Shaughnessy Golf and Country Club

and settled that the Club would pay only ten percent of the fair market rent, disregarding the previous deal that had been made with the Musqueam Nation in the process (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-a). For twelve years, this deal modification was unbeknownst to the Musqueam, who had at that point lost millions of dollars in rent revenue from the deal they privately agreed to.

It took an additional five years for the Musqueam Nation to acquire legal representation to bring the case to court, as lawyers were reluctant to undertake a case involving Indigenous title and rights– at the time, there was still little to no acknowledgement of Indigenous title from either the provincial or federal governments (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-a). When the Musqueam were able to hire legal representation in 1975, the case proceeded through various court levels, before being ultimately appealed to the SCC. In 1984, the SCC ruled that the Crown had neglected its fiduciary duty to the Musqueam Nation and awarded them ten million dollars in compensation (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-a). This case set precedent for the recognition of Indigenous rights (which inherently includes Indigenous title) and acknowledged the fiduciary duty of the government to act in the best interest of First Nations, specifically regarding reserve lands (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-a).

R. v. Sparrow (1990)

The Sparrow case began in 1984 with the arrest of Musqueam Nation member Ronald Sparrow, for fishing with a net that was not in compliance with the BC government's food fishing license restrictions– a restriction that specifically targeted the Indigenous population as a means of decreasing the amount of fish they could harvest (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-b). The Musqueam Nation perceived this as an infringement of their collective rights, and brought the case to the BC Provincial Court with two main arguments: that their "rights to the land and its resources had never been extinguished by treaty," and that Section 35 of the Constitution protected their right to fish, as there was no reasonable justification to claim necessary conservation action for fishing in the Fraser River delta (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-b).

This case proceeded through three levels of courts before being heard at the SCC, which in 1990, ruled in favour of the Musqueam Nation (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-b). The ruling cited Section 35 of the Constitution, as the Musqueam had initially argued, and clarified the interpretation of the phrase "existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed" (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-b). The key words, "recognized" and "affirmed," were explicitly defined to mean "that the government cannot override or infringe upon these rights without justification," upholding the previous decision from R. v. Guerin in 1984 that outlined the fiduciary duty of the provincial government to First Nations (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-b). As a result of this decision, the SCC introduced the Sparrow Test, to determine whether a right is deemed to be existing, and how governments may infringe upon it, under a set of criteria (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-b).

R. v. Van der Peet (1996)

The R. v. Van der Peet case (1996) further defined Aboriginal rights as laid out by the Sparrow case, in regard to Section 35 of the Constitution (Hanson & Salomons, 2019). Dorothy Van der Peet of the Stó:lō First Nation was charged with selling salmon that she had caught under her food fishing license, which limited salmon fishing to ceremonial and sustenance purposes only. Van der Peet challenged the charge claiming that her right to sell fish was protected under Section 35 (Hanson & Salomons, 2019). The British Columbia Provincial Court and Court of Appeal ruled that Van der Peet's "right to sell fish was not protected by Section 35, as selling fish did not constitute an 'existing' Aboriginal right" (Hanson & Salomons, 2019). The SCC reaffirmed this ruling, however, and went beyond the Sparrow ruling in 1990, which was implemented to determine if a right was existing, and if so, how the infringement upon it may be justified by the government (Hanson & Salomons, 2019). The SCC also created the 'Integral to a Distinctive Culture Test' (also known as the Van der Peet Test), to determine how an Aboriginal

right is to be defined (Hanson & Salomons, 2019).

Delgamuukw v. British Columbia (1997)

The Delgamuukw case was the most intertwined with the discussed cases thus far, deriving influence from Calder and Van der Peet, and having a direct impact on the Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia (2014) case. This case considered the definition, content and context of Aboriginal title, meaning ownership of traditional lands (Beaudoin, 2019). After years of failed negotiations with the British Columbia provincial government, the hereditary chiefs of both the Wet'suwet'en and Gitxsan Nations filed a land action title, covering 133 individual territories amounting to 58,000km2, with the Supreme Court of British Columbia (Beaudoin, 2019). The SCC ruled that Aboriginal title had not been extinguished in British Columbia, and that the provincial government had no right to infringe upon such title (Beaudoin, 2019). It also elaborated on the distinction between Aboriginal rights (which are "personal and usufructuary") and Aboriginal title (which claims rights to the land itself and is a subcategory of Aboriginal rights) (Armstrong, 1998). The Delgamuukw case also produced the Delgamuukw Test to set guidelines for how Nations must demonstrate Aboriginal title, stating: "the Indigenous Nation must have occupied the territory before the declaration of sovereignty"; "if present occupation is invoked as evidence of occupation before sovereignty, there must be a continuity between present occupation and occupation before the declaration of sovereignty"; and "at the time of declaration of sovereignty, this occupation must have been exclusive" (Beaudoin, 2019).

Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia (2014)

The Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia (2014) case was centered around the status of Aboriginal title on Tsilhqot'in Nation's traditional territory, and British Columbia's duty to consult (Milne, 2017). The root conflict between six Tsilhqot'in bands and the provincial government began in 1983, when the province issued forest licenses within the Tsilhqot'in traditional territory, leading to years of unresolved negotiations and eventual court cases (Milne, 2017). When negotiations came to an impasse, the Tsilhqot'in Nation sued the Province of BC and claimed for Aboriginal Title (Milne, 2017). The SCC confirmed that the Tsilhqot'in Nation had Aboriginal title to over 1,700 square kilometers across their traditional territory (Milne, 2017). Ramifications of this ruling also gave more entitlement to provinces (instead of the federal government) "to attempt to justify infringements of Aboriginal title and rights" (McIvor, 2016). So while the Tsilhqot'in Nation established that they do have Aboriginal title to their traditional territory, the caveat from this ruling is that provinces can also seek to justify its infringement (McIvor, 2016). The impact of previous cases on this decision included the Sparrow case, which solidified the appropriate assessment of "the constitutionality of an impugned provincial law," which had ramifications for the Tsilhqot'in case in their dealings with BC (Milne, 2017). As well, the Delgamuukw case affirmed a "territorial use-based approach" to establishing Aboriginal title, and outlined three criterion of occupation: sufficiency, continuity, and exclusivity- the SCC expanded on these criteria in their ruling in the Tsilhqot'in case (Milne, 2017).

Examination

These six landmark cases can be effectively viewed as two respective trilogies– with Calder, Guerin and Sparrow spearheading the legal fight for land rights and title, and Van der Peet, Delgamuukw and Tsilhqot'in expanding the former's groundwork into a process towards reconciliation. Throughout each case, the struggle that Indigenous nations face in colonial Canadian courts is evident. The provincial and federal governments have a long legacy of viewing Indigenous peoples as racially inferior– there are numerous examples given throughout these cases: from disallowing Indigenous peoples legal counsel, to prohibiting the admission of Indigenous evidence into court. While this is beginning to change, the colonial history of racism against Indigenous peoples is still alive and well in BC and embedded within the legal system.

As mentioned previously, land rights and

title in BC, and the incompatibility of their subsequent cases with the Western legal framework, can be viewed in both a literal and theoretical sense. While one is tangible, the other is not. Both are valuable to examine, because both directly impact the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the colonial government. This section will examine some of the most important literal incompatibilities between the aforementioned cases and the colonial legal system.

Case Examples

One of the key issues in court cases between Indigenous groups being forced to work within the colonial legal framework is the incompatibility of the two ideologies in a practical sense. This inherently puts Indigenous groups at a systemic disadvantage, as they must try to adapt and portray their traditional ways of knowing and being into an acceptable Eurocentric lens and construct. The difficulty translating Indigenous worldviews into Canadian legal language and the discussion from the courts of Indigenous culture in a historical narrative, as static and unchanging, create judgements that are not culturally accurate or reflective of Indigenous traditional understandings (Asch & Bell, 1994). It has the unfortunate propensity to harm Indigenous nations if they are confined to a ruling that places them in a historical context, as it prohibits them from adapting and evolving as they have done for centuries. The difficulty of adapting the Indigenous perspective to a Eurocentric lens is not necessarily impossible, but without a committed willingness from both sides, it is impractical, and Indigenous nations will continue to be at a disadvantage in the Canadian legal system. This section will outline a handful of examples that Indigenous peoples experienced throughout the above cases.

In the Guerin case, after having been unknowingly shorted in the deal originally made with the DIA for the Shaughnessy Golf and Country Club lease on their land for twelve years, they had to wait an additional five years to find a lawyer willing to take their case (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-a). The fact that there was "little to no legal or governmental acknowledgement of Aboriginal rights and title at that time" made it extremely difficult to take their case to court (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-b). The exploitation of the Musqueam by the DIA and the lack of legal protection was characteristic of the Indigenous relationship with the colonial provincial government. Another issue, stemming from the Van der Peet case, is in regards to the application of the 'Integral to a Distinctive Culture Test' (the Van der Peet test) to determine how an Aboriginal right is to be defined. Tanisha Salmons and Erin Hanson outline this critique by stating that the test "situates Aboriginal culture in the past" and relies "on the notion that Aboriginal cultures and traditions are static and unchanging, and ignore the inherently dynamic, adaptive nature of the culture" (Salomons & Hanson, n.d.-b). This outright negates the ability of Indigenous nations to demonstrate their traditional understandings of time and space as fluid indicators for place-based, territorial circumstances, for fear of not meeting the criteria for Western legal protection of their Indigenous rights.

Prior to the Van der Peet case in 1996, oral history, a traditional staple of Indigenous history-keeping and storytelling, was deemed inadmissible as evidence in court (Asch & Bell, 1994). The decision from the Van der Peet case that oral history is admissible as evidence was reaffirmed in the Delgamuukw case a year later. The problem that this ruling still poses is the systemic bias that non-Indigenous courts have to accept "a vantage point outside of his or her own culture from which to interpret historical fact" (Asch & Bell, 1994). This has led to judges neglecting to give non-traditional forms of evidence, such as oral history, significant weight "in the absence of independent and familiar forms of verification" (Asch & Bell., 1994). The placement of Indigenous cases into a colonial structure impedes the ability of the Court to remain objective in the absence of cultural relativity (Greymorning, 2006).

Each of these cases demonstrated the struggle that Indigenous nations have faced in navigating the colonial legal structure. The physical idea of land and place as being static, unchanging places has been foundational to BC's approach to legal cases involving land rights and title. This is inherently incompatible with Indigenous ways of knowing and being,

and the opportunity to allow Indigenous traditional knowledge and perspectives into the legal realm has been continuously shot down. While some slow progress has been made in this respect (despite taking decades to happen), it is an extremely small step towards reconciliation between the colonial levels of government and Indigenous nations. For there to be a chance at meaningful discussions and subsequent actions that propel the government-to-government relationship towards reconciliation, a truthful understanding of Indigenous philosophy, legal frameworks, and perceptions of land and stewardship is essential.

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INDIGENOUS TOURISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CANADA AND AOTEAROA (NEW ZEALAND)

Abstract

Indigenous-led tourism is a powerful tool for cultural revitalization, authentic representation, and cross-cultural education. This paper compares Indigenous tourism initiatives in Canada and Aotearoa (New Zealand), analyzing how Indigenous communities assert control over their cultural narratives and ensure authenticity within tourism experiences. Drawing on extensive experience in the Indigenous tourism sector and academic research, this study utilizes existing documentation, including sector reports and Indigenous-authored analyses of national park consultation processes like those in Jasper National Park, alongside the practices of Māori tourism enterprises such as Whakarewarewa Village. Indigenous-led tourism in both nations significantly contribute to their respective economies, generating an estimated $1.6 billion in GDP in Canada and $1.2 billion in GDP in Aotearoa. These initiatives serve as vital vehicles for cultural preservation, education, and fostering community pride. Authentic Indigenous representation has been demonstrated to enhance visitor understanding, challenge colonial narratives, and strengthen Indigenous cultural identity, directly supporting reconciliation efforts. However, systemic challenges persist, including residual Eurocentric interpretations in national parks, barriers to self-representation, and a lack of full Indigenous decision-making authority in key tourism spaces. This research emphasizes that advancing Indigenous tourism requires prioritizing Indigenous voices. This means ensuring Indigenous leadership in governance, marketing, and developing tourist experiences. It also involves creating Indigenous-led interpretive content, fostering community-driven tourism planning, and educating the public, governments, and non-Indigenous tourism entities about Indigenous histories and cultures to build sustainable intercultural understanding.

Keywords

Indigenous-Led, Indigenous Tourism, Māori Tourism, Authenticity, Cultural Revitalization

Introduction

Renowned Anishinaabe author and scholar (and the author's grandfather), Basil H. Johnston, recounted a poignant experience that underscored the importance of Indigenous voices. Invited to a school open house in Toronto, Johnston toured displays created by grade 5 students who had "studied Indians-in-depth." The displays covered various aspects of "North American Indians…". One interaction stood out. A student asked Johnston, "Is that all there is to Indians, sir?" (Johnston, 2015). The question showed an example of the limitations of an external understanding of Indigenous cultures. It highlights the need for a nuanced and comprehensive approach

to Indigenous education that goes beyond stereotypes and generalizations. Johnston's experience is a reminder that non-Indigenous individuals, school children and adults, may have limited understanding of who Indigenous peoples are and what it means to be "Indigenous".

Indigenous tourism, in both Canada and Aotearoa (New Zealand), serves as a powerful vehicle for education, economic resilience, and cultural reconnection and revitalization. It offers a unique opportunity for visitors to learn from Indigenous peoples directly, rather than simply about them, fostering understanding, respect, and appreciation for the richness and complexity of diverse Indigenous cultures. Despite Canada being significantly larger, both nations share striking similarities, including rich Indigenous histories that predate European colonization and vibrant Indigenous cultures that continue to thrive across their distinct landscapes, showcasing a shared legacy of resilience and cultural richness.

This paper will introduce the readers to the concept of Indigenous tourism by examining relevant terminology, its crucial role, economic benefits, the importance of authenticity, and the broader advantages it offers Indigenous communities. Real-world case studies of Indigenous tourism will provide additional context. This paper serves as an initial exploration of Indigenous tourism, in these countries, rather than an exhaustive exploration of its complexities.

Methods

This paper employs a qualitative research design based entirely on secondary data analysis to provide an introductory overview and synthesis of existing knowledge regarding Indigenous tourism. The primary objective was to comparatively analyze similarities and differences in Indigenous tourism between Canada and Aotearoa (New Zealand), specifically focusing on themes of authenticity, cultural revitalization, and economic benefits.

Data Collection

Information was systematically gathered from a wide range of secondary materials. The collection process involved identifying resources across several categories:

Academic Journals - Relevant peer-reviewed articles were identified through comprehensive searches on Google Scholar and the Thompson Rivers University Library databases. Key search terms included "Indigenous tourism," "Māori tourism," "authentic Indigenous tourism," and location-specific terms like "Canada," "Jasper National Park," "Aotearoa," and "Te Urewera."

Government Reports - Official documents and policy papers from pertinent governmental bodies in Canada (e.g., Parks Canada) and Aotearoa (e.g., Department of Conservation) were reviewed.

Industry Publications - Reports and analyses from leading Indigenous tourism organizations and associations, such as the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada and New Zealand Māori Tourism, were consulted to gain industry-specific insights.

General Information Sources - This category encompassed reputable news articles, academic books (e.g., The Routledge Handbook of Tourism and Indigenous Peoples), relevant websites (e.g., Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand), and other publicly available reports.

The validity and reliability of the information gathered from secondary sources were key considerations throughout the research process. Resources were selected based on established criteria, including peer-review status for academic publications, official endorsement for government reports, and recognized authority within the industry. This systematic approach, enhanced by recommendations from Indigenous tourism experts and academics, aimed to ensure the inclusion of diverse, relevant, and credible perspectives while actively seeking to identify and avoid biased or uncorroborated information.

Data Analysis

The collected secondary data was analyzed using a comparative analysis framework. This involved systematically identifying and categorizing key themes, claims, and supporting evidence across the collected materials. The core analytical categories included authenticity, cultural revitalization, economic benefits, power dynamics, and specific case studies from both Canada and

Aotearoa. This approach facilitated the organization of information into a coherent narrative that directly addresses the paper's central focus on cross-national comparisons within Indigenous tourism.

Positionality Statement

Drawing from nearly two decades in the Indigenous tourism field across Canada, including a decade of work in five different national parks spanning three provinces, the author has had the privilege of facilitating cultural tours and experiences. These experiences aim to deepen visitors' understanding of diverse Indigenous histories and counteract pan-Indigenous stereotypes. This hands-on background, combined with academic studies and research in adventure tourism, natural resource management, and environmental science, has enabled the author to integrate a broad spectrum of disciplines with Traditional Ecological Knowledge from their own First Nation heritage.

These experiences have also informed the author's, admittedly limited, understanding of Māori representation in New Zealand. There, the author has visited numerous national parks, including Te Urewera (formerly Te Urewera National Park), and engaged in Māori cultural experiences over the past five years, including Whakarewarewa, The Living Māori Village. The author's work with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada and professional collaborations with New Zealand Māori tourism have further enriched their perspective, providing a profound and nuanced context to the industry as a whole.

Defining Indigenous Peoples

To fully understand Indigenous tourism, it is necessary to first define Indigenous peoples within this paper's context. The term Indigenous, as defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2025), means "of, relating to, or descended from the earliest known inhabitants of a place and especially of a place that was colonized". While there are numerous ways to define and use the word "Indigenous" around the world, this paper will use the word as a general term for the original, pre-colonial inhabitants of Canada and Aotearoa. Understanding the specific groups within these nations and their unique histories is essential.

Indigenous Peoples of Canada

In Canada, Indigenous is an umbrella term used in Canada to refer to 3 groups of people - First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (Crown – Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2025). While not a major focus in this paper, a basic understanding of these three groups is provided in a Canadian context.

"Métis" are a distinct people with both First Nations and European ancestry, specifically descendants of French or Scottish fur traders who married Cree or Ojibway women (Helweg, 2024). Unlike First Nations and Inuit peoples, who have lived in what is now Canada for tens of thousands of years, the Métis culture originated much more recently, as a direct result of European colonization. Métis settlements began to appear as recently as the 1750's (Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, n.d.). While the Métis have a unique and important place in Canada's history, their cultural presence does not extend as far back as that of the First Nations and Inuit, whose histories are rooted in the land since time immemorial.

"Inuit", meaning "the people" in the Inuit language of Inuktut, are the Indigenous people of the Arctic regions of Canada, who are also neither First Nation or Métis (Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2025b). As with First Nations, there are contrasting views over the chronology of Inuit presence in North America. Archaeological evidence shows human (Inuit) settling of the arctic in Canada around 4,000 years ago (Koabel, 2023).

"First Nation" is a term used to describe the original peoples of what is now Canada who are neither Inuit nor Métis (Indigenous Foundations, 2009). First Nations people have been in North America since time immemorial. Numerous studies have been carried out over the years which try to establish a scientific timeline for this "time immemorial", including carbon dating and archaeological research. While there are varying estimations and interpretations among researchers and First Nations people, there is definitive evidence to show that First Nations people have been in North America for more than 30,000 years

(University of Oxford, 2020). The term "First Nations" came into common usage to replace the offensive term "Indian" in the 1970s (Government of Canada, 2024), a term with no connection to the country or people from India, but rather associated with the barbaric, colonial expedition of Christopher Columbus (Campbell, 1991). This diverse group, defined as "Indians" in the Indian Act and the Constitution Act of 1982, encompasses more than 600 distinct First Nations (including Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, Ahousaht First Nation, Neskonlith Indian Band, and Wiikwemkong First Nation) and over 50 languages (including Anishinaabemowin, Secwepemctsin, Mi'kmawi'simk, and Nuuchah-nulth). According to the 2016 Canadian Census, 977,230 individuals identified specifically as First Nations people (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, n.d.).

The name "Canada" itself likely originated from the Huron-Iroquois word "kanata", meaning "village". That name was misunderstood and co-opted by French explorer Jacques Cartier in 1593, eventually leading to "Canada" being used as the name for the entire country officially in 1791 (Natural Resources Canada, 2025). As Canada is home to many diverse Nations and more distinct language groups (Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2025a), there was and is not a single Indigenous name for the whole of what is now Canada.

Indigenous Peoples of Aotearoa (New Zealand)

Māori are the "tangata whenua", the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa (New Zealand, 2025a). They are the descendants of Polynesian peoples who arrived in the land now known as Aotearoa via ocean-faring waka (canoes) sometime in the late 1200's (Royal, 2012), or even earlier. The first Polynesian to reach Aotearoa was Kupe. According to the people of Ngāpuhi (tribe of the Far North), Kupe used the stars and ocean currents to guide his waka hourua (voyaging canoe) to Northland (Aotearoa) approximately 1,000 years ago (New Zealand, 2025b).

More Polynesian migrations occurred over the next few hundred years. Numerous waka hourua made return journeys between Aotearoa and Hawaiki. Hawaiki is "the traditional Māori place of origin." The supreme being Io created Hawaiki, according to some Māori traditions. The location has not been confirmed, and it is uncertain if it is a physical island or a mythical place, but it is said to be home to the gods, including the trickster demigod Māui (Royal, 2015).

Polynesian is a term used to refer to New Zealand (Māori), Hawaii (Native Hawaiian), Samoa (Samoan), American Samoa (Samoan), Tokelau (Tokelauan), Tahiti (Tahitian), and Tonga (Tongan) (California State University San Marcos, Cross-Cultural Center, n.d.). Polynesian as an umbrella term can be viewed by those under that umbrella as a way of being grouped together and having their true identities ignored, following many colonial practices. Samoan poet Albert Wendt explained that "While the umbrella term Pacific is useful when making global comparisons, it's futile when applied to actual people and groups of people who consider themselves not Pacific or Polynesian, but Samoan, Tongans, Fijians, Cook Islanders and so on" (McRae, 2021). Māori are part of iwi (tribes), with each iwi having their own hapū (sub-tribes). Iwi are groups of people who can trace their origins and whakapapa (ancestry) back to specific waka hourua and are associated with certain regions of Aotearoa. The seven waka hourua that arrived to Aotearoa were Tainui, Te Arawa, Mātaatua, Kurahaupō, Tokomaru, Aotea and Tākitimu (New Zealand, 2025b).

Similarly to Canada, the name "New Zealand", was not a name bestowed on the land by any Māori people. Abel Tasman, a Dutch explorer, was leading the expedition that "sighted" (not discovered) the southern Alps an landmass unknown to them in 1692. By 1693, this landmass had been officially named "Nieuw Zeeland" after a province of the Netherlands by the Dutch East India Company (Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, 2009), which was anglicized to "New Zealand" in 1769 (Joseph, Breen, & Gillespie, 2021). The original name is "Aotearoa," the Māori name for New Zealand, which means "Land of the Long White Cloud" (Joseph et al., 2021).

Indigenous Tourism

Indigenous Tourism in Canada

Indigenous tourism in Canada encompasses experiences that are distinctly owned, operated, or led by Indigenous peoples, reflecting their diverse cultures, unique perspectives, and profound connections to ancestral lands. The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) defines "authentic Indigenous tourism" as ventures that are "Indigenous-owned and -controlled and contributes directly to Indigenous communities" (ITAC, 2025). This foundational principle emphasizes the critical importance of self-determination and cultural integrity, ensuring that Indigenous communities maintain agency over how their stories, traditions, and ways of life are shared with visitors. This approach moves beyond mere representation to active empowerment, fostering experiences that are deeply rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems and community values.

The sector's growth is significantly driven by Indigenous leadership, with over 2,750 Indigenous-led businesses contributing to a vibrant mix of cultural, adventure, and hospitality experiences across Canada (Landry & Heschl, 2025). These businesses are predominantly owned or controlled by First Nations, Métis, or Inuit peoples, demonstrating a direct connection and responsibility to their local Indigenous communities and traditional territories. Organizations such as ITAC and its provincial and territorial Indigenous tourism partners play a crucial role in providing Indigenous-led solutions, including economic development advisory services, professional development, and strategic marketing, to support the sector's recovery and growth (ITAC, 2025). This collaborative framework ensures that the development of Indigenous tourism is guided by the voices and priorities of Indigenous peoples themselves.

The importance of Indigenous tourism in Canada extends beyond its economic impact, serving as a powerful vehicle for cultural preservation, reconciliation, and community well-being. As of 2023, there were 2,757 Indigenous-owned and operated tourism businesses, directly employing 34,711 people in Indigenous tourism in Canada, with ITAC aiming for this number to reach 60,000 jobs by 2030 (ITAC, 2025). ITAC's ambitious 2030 vision aims to establish Canada as a global leader in Indigenous tourism, not only through business expansion but by demonstrating how tourism can be authentically rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, foster genuine cultural engagement, and promote respectful collaboration (ITAC, 2025). Through showcasing authentic Indigenous experiences, the sector contributes to building public awareness among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences, challenging stereotypes, and fostering a deeper understanding of Canada's rich Indigenous heritage. This emphasis on authenticity and community benefit ensures that Indigenous tourism is a force for positive social and cultural change.

Māori Tourism in Aotearoa (New Zealand)

New Zealand Māori tourism in Aotearoa is a distinct and vital part of the nation's tourism industry, emphasizing the deep connection between Māori, manuhiri (visitors), and whenua (the land). This sector is characterized by unique, holistic experiences that embody the principles of manaakitanga (hospitality) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) (BERL, 2025). From its origins, Māori tourism has been rooted in traditional hospitality, with Māori communities welcoming early European explorers and showcasing their land and cultural narratives. Over time, Māori control diminished, leading to concerns about inauthenticity and exploitation. This prompted a movement towards self-determination and a reclaiming of how Māori culture is presented to the world (Business and Economic Research Ltd [BERL], 2025). Today, Māori-owned and operated businesses and collectives play a pivotal role in leading and shaping the Māori tourism landscape. As of 2023, there were 3,595 Māori tourism businesses operating in core and general tourism industries, employing over 15,000 people (BERL, 2025). These businesses infuse every aspect of their strategy and operations with cultural values and practices, ensuring that their cultural heritage is at the forefront of decision-making. Māori collectives, including incorporations, trusts, and post-settlement governance entities, have enabled many Iwi and hapū to establish

tourism ventures that intertwine unique cultural heritage into their offerings (BERL, 2025).

This Māori-led approach fosters a unique blend of cultural immersion, economic empowerment, and environmental awareness, enriching the tourism offerings through practices like guided tours delving into history, language, and customs, vibrant cultural performances, and access to sacred sites. The importance of Māori tourism extends beyond economic contributions, significantly contributing to cultural preservation, revitalization, and community well-being. By incorporating tikanga Māori (customs and protocols), pūrākau (legends and myths), and toi Māori (Māori arts) into tourism experiences, these organizations actively keep Māori culture alive and relevant (BERL, 2025; Toi Māori Aotearoa, 2025). This also incentivizes rangatahi (youth) to learn and maintain traditions, leading to a resurgence of interest in te reo Māori (the Māori language) and traditional arts. Māori tourism approaches development with a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability, often incorporating eco-friendly practices and minimizing environmental impact, positioning them as leaders in sustainable tourism (BERL, 2025).

Indigenous Tourism Economy

The economic revitalization of Indigenous communities through tourism development has become a significant feature of reconciliation and self-determination in Canada. In 2023, the Indigenous tourism sector in Canada generated an estimated $3.7 billion in total GDP. It directly contributed $1.6 billion to GDP and supported approximately 34,700 direct jobs , with total employment of nearly 54,700 full-year jobs across the country, while contributing nearly $1.3 billion in government revenue.(Landry & Heschl, 2025). This recovery, while still 24% short of pre-pandemic figures, reflects the sector's resilience and its deep cultural value. More than 2,750 Indigenous-led businesses operate across the country, from cultural centers and interpretive tours to accommodations and culinary ventures, many of which emphasize local employment and language revitalization (Landry & Heschl, 2025). These businesses, such as Cape Croker Park, Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, and Elsipogtog Cultural Centre not only generate income but also foster community pride and cultural continuity, aligning with the goals of Indigenous-led development and cultural resurgence. Still, challenges such as inflation, workforce retention, and remote access persist, especially in rural regions (Landry & Heschl, 2025).

In Aotearoa (New Zealand), Māori tourism plays an equally pivotal role in the national tourism landscape. In 2023, Māori tourism contributed $1.2 billion to the Māori economy, a 23% increase from 2018, despite ongoing recovery from pandemic-related disruptions (BERL, 2025). Māori tourism is structured around principles of manaakitanga (hospitality) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship), offering immersive cultural experiences that center Indigenous values and land relationships. The success of ventures such as Whale Watch Kaikōura and Kohutapu Lodge demonstrates that tourism can provide sustainable employment while advancing cultural revitalization (BERL, 2025). Māori collectives are instrumental in this growth, supporting intergenerational wealth and cultural integrity (BERL, 2025). Importantly, Māori tourism enterprises have shown a commitment to reinvesting profits into language preservation, land care, and youth mentorship.

Comparatively, both countries demonstrate the potential of Indigenous tourism as a mechanism for economic development and cultural resurgence. In Canada, national strategies aim to expand the sector to $6 billion GDP annually by 2030 (Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada [ITAC], 2025a), while in Aotearoa, a values-based approach has elevated Māori tourism as central to national identity and sustainability (BERL, 2025). Both countries see tourism being utilized as a means to address historical injustices.

Authenticity, Authority, and Indigenous Voices

Having defined Indigenous tourism above, it becomes equally important to understand what falls outside this definition, such as Indigenous-inspired or Indigenous-themed experiences that are not Indigenous-led. There are many tourism businesses that offer Indigenous-inspired or Indigenous-themed experiences. Some even claim to teach

about Indigenous peoples, their histories, languages, or cultures. Often, these stories are told from a non-Indigenous perspective, which is often a Eurocentric one (Johnston and Mason, 2020a). This becomes problematic when people who are not Indigenous and not from the specific culture being represented are the ones delivering the message. When non-Indigenous guides or organizations present these "Indigenous-themed" experiences, they can unintentionally perpetuate false information, reinforce negative stereotypes, or promote pan-Indigenous narratives that erase important details and distinctions between distinct Indigenous peoples (Johnston, 2018). The result is that visitors leave with misinformation, believing it to be true because it was delivered through what appear to be reputable sources, including well-known tour companies, museums, or government bodies like Parks Canada or New Zealand's Department of Conservation.

Within any Indigenous community, there are diverse perspectives shaped by personal experiences and histories passed down through generations. These are not just facts you can read in a book, they are ways of understanding the world that are deeply contextual and culturally grounded. Indigenous tourism must be led by Indigenous peoples because only they carry the lived experiences necessary to authentically represent their own cultures (Whitney-Squire, Wright, & Alsop, 2018). When non-Indigenous guides or companies attempt to share Indigenous stories, they often rely on second- or third-hand information. That content can lack specifics or key cultural context, leading to misunderstandings. And when those guides try to fill in the gaps, they may unintentionally invent or distort information, build off of stereotypes, or use generalized and inaccurate portrayals of Indigenous peoples.

True Indigenous-led tourism does not mean just having Indigenous guides recite a script. It means Indigenous peoples are the ones creating and shaping the content, deciding what stories are told, and how they are shared. Some cultural knowledge, such as sacred sites or traditional teachings, is not meant to be shared outside the community (Hollinshead, 2020). When non-Indigenous peoples take control, there is a risk that this knowledge could be misrepresented or shared inappropriately. Authenticity also requires meaningful collaborations. Government bodies like Parks Canada or New Zealand's Department of Conservation, and even large tour companies, can play a role, by working in genuine partnership with Indigenous communities. That means listening, supporting, and giving space for Indigenous voices to lead, not simply adding a few words about culture for show to give the illusion of support (Johnston and Mason, 2020b). Authentic Indigenous tourism must be more than a symbolic gesture. It must be rooted in Indigenous authority and sovereignty over how Indigenous peoples choose to represent themselves (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2022). Authenticity and misrepresentation are long-standing and ongoing challenges in tourism. Many of the tourism experiences available to visitors are controlled by non-Indigenous organizations, such as national parks systems or large tour operators, that hold monopolies over access to certain lands and narratives. In places like Canada, and to some extent in New Zealand, these experiences are often shaped through a Eurocentric or colonial lens, whether intentionally or not.

When "authenticity" is talked about in Indigenous tourism, it is necessary to recognize that authenticity is not a fixed or universal concept. Authenticity is something that can only be defined by the people whose culture is being represented. Too often, authenticity is judged through a static, historical lens, with an expectation that "real" Indigenous culture must look and feel like it did before colonization. This perspective locks Indigenous peoples in the past and denies them the right to evolve like every other society (Hollinshead, 2020). All cultures change with time as they adapt to new technologies, shifting environments, and evolving social conditions. For example, if a traditional food source becomes unavailable due to climate change or extinction, and a community shifts to another practice or resource, it does not make a culture any less authentic. It simply reflects resilience and adaptation, which are qualities that have always been vital to human survival (Park, Hongu & Daily, 2016).

Authenticity is not about rigidly preserving the past. Authenticity is about staying true to a culture's values, worldviews, and lived experiences, even as the practices evolve. Others can have opinions, but they cannot impose definitions of authenticity on cultures that are not their own. Only Indigenous peoples themselves have the right to determine what that means for their own communities (Johnston and Mason, 2020a).

Indigenous Cultural Representation and Revitalization through Tourism

Colonialism was not just a historical event, it was a systematic effort to disconnect Indigenous peoples from their lands, cultures, languages, and identities. In Canada, this meant Indigenous peoples were often legally prohibited from practicing their traditions, speaking their languages, or accessing their traditional territories for things like hunting, gathering, or ceremony. These colonial policies did not just harm communities at the time, they created structural imbalances, particularly concerning land and narrative control, that continue today (Johnston and Mason, 2020a). Many of the lands that are now marketed as protected parks or tourist destinations were taken through forced removal. That dispossession, backed by federal governments, laid the foundation for non-Indigenous control over how those lands, and the stories tied to them, are presented to visitors (Johnston and Mason, 2020b). So when tourism narratives are told without Indigenous voices, they often erase this history. They gloss over the impacts of colonization and fail to represent Indigenous peoples as living, present, and diverse.This is why authenticity in Indigenous tourism matters so much. Indigenous peoples must have the space and authority to share their own stories, from their own perspectives (Jennings, 2023). It is about correcting the record, reclaiming voice, and reasserting cultural sovereignty over how their histories and identities are understood.

Cultural revitalization is a crucial part of Indigenous resurgence, especially in the wake of colonial systems that deliberately targeted Indigenous identities. In Canada, as in other colonized nations, policies and practices were designed to remove Indigenous peoples, especially children, from their families, communities, and cultures, such as through Canadian Residential Schools (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2025). These actions resulted in generations of people growing up without access to their languages, teachings, and traditional knowledge. The official goal was to erase Indigenous cultures and replace them with the dominant colonial one (Jennings, 2023). Indigenous tourism, while not the only pathway, offers a powerful tool for cultural revitalization. It creates space for communities to reclaim their stories, traditions, and languages through intentional and community-led engagement with visitors. But it also goes beyond storytelling. Indigenous tourism opens the door to economic development and self-sufficiency (Jennings, 2023). Whether it is through cultural guiding, culinary experiences, hospitality, or heritage interpretation, tourism can support community members in building skills, reconnecting with their traditions, and sustaining themselves and their families.

Cultural revitalization is especially important for Indigenous youth who may not have had the opportunity to grow up in their communities or learn about their cultures and languages. In many cases, their parents, grandparents, or even earlier generations were forcibly removed or disconnected from their cultural roots due to colonial government policies. Indigenous tourism can create valuable spaces for youth to reconnect, learning their language, participating in traditions, and developing a sense of pride and purpose (Jennings, 2023). "One of the most significant contributions of Māori collectives to tourism is the preservation and revitalisation of te ao Māori" (BERL, 2025). In today's digital world, youth across all cultures face challenges when it comes to maintaining strong connections to their heritage. Globalization and technology offer access to a wide range of ideas and outside influences. That is not inherently negative, as being open-minded and informed is always preferable to the alternative, but there needs to be balance. Indigenous tourism helps strike that balance. It provides youth with meaningful cultural engagement while also offering training, education, and employment opportunities that support long-term community well-being (Colton and Whitney-Squire,

2010; Jennings, 2023).

National institutions like Parks Canada and New Zealand's Department of Conservation have an important role in shaping how Indigenous tourism is developed and represented (Department of Conservation, 2024). These agencies manage vast areas of land that sit on the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples (Johnston and Mason, 2020b). While they may not always be legally obligated to support Indigenous tourism directly, they do have responsibilities under national and international frameworks, such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to engage with and uphold Indigenous rights, including self-governance, self-sufficiency, and equitable access to economic opportunities like tourism. The leadership in Indigenous tourism must come from Indigenous organizations themselves. In Canada, groups like the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) and its provincial and territorial partners (PTITOs), such as Indigenous Tourism Alberta, Indigenous Destinations Saskatchewan, Indigenous Tourism Quebec, and others, are at the forefront of supporting Indigenous-led tourism initiatives (Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, 2025a). Similarly, in Aotearoa, New Zealand Māori Tourism "promotes, guides, and supports the Māori tourism sector (New Zealand Māori Tourism, 2025). These bodies offer training, business development support, and advocacy, ensuring that Indigenous tourism businesses not only launch but thrive.

While Indigenous organizations are best positioned to guide this work, collaboration with government agencies is essential. Institutions like Parks Canada and the Department of Conservation carry influence and public trust as tourists often take their content as credible. If these institutions present information from a Eurocentric or colonial perspective, they risk perpetuating outdated narratives and misleading visitors about the very cultures whose lands they operate on (Johnston and Mason, 2020a). Through partnerships guided by Indigenous leadership, these organizations can help uplift authentic Indigenous tourism experiences. This includes co-creating interpretive materials, hiring Indigenous guides, and ensuring that content reflects the values and perspectives of local communities (Lemelin, Hurst, and Grimwood, 2024).

There is a growing demand in Canada from visitors for experiences that are real and respectful, and supporting Indigenous tourism meets that demand while also generating meaningful economic benefits (Landry & Heschl, 2025). In Aotearoa, visitors are increasingly seeking real, authentic Māori tourism experiences that deeply connect them with Māori, whenua (the land), and cultural values like manaakitanga (hospitality) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship). This sector makes a significant economic contribution to the Māori economy and fosters cultural preservation and self-determination (BERL, 2025). Just as importantly, it contributes to broader reconciliation efforts, building better relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and correcting historical imbalances in how stories and lands are shared.

National Parks

Through detailed case studies of national parks in Canada and Aotearoa, this section explores Indigenous tourism initiatives. It highlights the profound impact of colonial government policies and forced removals in shaping these landscapes, and how current Indigenous-led tourism endeavors aim to address these historical challenges and foster transformative change.

Jasper National Park – Canada

Jasper National Park (JNP), established in 1907, was shaped by settler-colonial ideologies that promoted tourism and resource development while systematically excluding Indigenous peoples from the land (Johnston & Mason, 2020a). The park was created without consultation or consent from the diverse Indigenous nations with ancestral connections to the area. Communities such as the Simpcw and Nakoda were forcibly removed, and their traditional land use practices were criminalized. The foundational myth of JNP as "untouched wilderness" persists in interpretive content, which largely frames Indigenous histories through a Eurocentric lens, contributing to the erasure and stereotyping of Indigenous presence and culture in the park (Johnston, 2018). Since its inception, tourism

has been central to JNP's function and identity, initially driven by the Canadian Pacific Railway's campaigns that romanticized the park as a pristine and uninhabited landscape (Johnston & Mason, 2020b).

Figure 1 Jasper National Park Maligne Valley

Today, the park plays a prominent role in Canada's tourism economy, drawing millions of visitors annually with its alpine scenery, wildlife, and iconic landscapes (Parks Canada, 2022). These promotional narratives excluded and commodified Indigenous presence, framing Indigenous cultures as historical rather than contemporary. Despite recent efforts to involve Indigenous communities in interpretive programming, tourism in JNP continues to operate largely within colonial frameworks that privilege Eurocentric representations and visitor expectations (Johnston & Mason, 2020a). Initiatives such as storytelling, guided walks, and totem pole installations provide symbolic inclusion but often fall short of enabling structural change or economic equity (Johnston & Mason, 2020c). To address these historic and ongoing issues, the Jasper Indigenous Forum (JIF) was formed in 2005 (Parks Canada, 2023) as a non-legally binding advisory group comprising 26 Indigenous communities with traditional ties to the park (Johnston & Mason, 2020a). While JIF has no formal governance authority, it provides an important platform for Indigenous voices and consultation with Parks Canada. Research highlights persistent challenges, including limited influence in decision-making, tokenistic representation, and the continued dominance of non-Indigenous narratives in programming and interpretation (Johnston & Mason, 2020c). Although cooperative projects have been introduced, meaningful reconciliation remains elusive and depends on long-term commitments to Indigenous-led approaches and the dismantling of colonial management structures (Johnston, 2018).

The Jasper National Park Management Plan (Parks Canada, 2022) emphasizes strengthening Indigenous relationships and facilitating reconnection with traditional lands. This includes incorporating Indigenous knowledges into park management, such as fire management and conservation of species at risk. The plan aims to increase Indigenous participation in park initiatives and celebrate their contributions through opportunities for Indigenous-led storytelling and the inclusion of Indigenous languages in programs, signage, and place names. Specific examples of Indigenous inclusion highlighted in the plan include the ongoing Jasper Indigenous Forum, the development of a designated area for traditional activities , free park entry for partner communities , and the issuance of cultural use permits for harvesting plants and medicines. The plan also seeks to increase Indigenous employment and economic opportunities within the park, with targets for increased contracting, procurement, and Indigenous staff recruitment.

Building on these stated intentions, a significant gap remains. While the Management Plan outlines broad goals for "strengthening Indigenous relationships" and "increasing Indigenous employment and economic opportunities", it offers a vague overview of relationship building, notably omitting specific First Nations by name (Parks Canada, 2022). This perpetuates the colonial tendency to minimize the distinct and diverse identities of First Nations, treating them as a homogenous group rather than distinct entities with individual histories and connections to the land. This lack of specificity is underscored by the limited economic integration of Indigenous peoples in park tourism, with only two Indigenous tourism businesses, Warrior Women and Jasper Tour Company, currently operating in Jasper National Park (Destination Indigenous, 2025). This disparity highlights that despite stated commitments to reconciliation and economic equity, the park's operational realities continue to fall short of truly decolonizing its management and visitor experience.

Te Urewera (Formerly Te Urewera

National Park) – Aotearoa (New Zealand)

The foundational relationship between the Crown and Māori in New Zealand was irrevocably altered by the New Zealand Settlements Act of 1863, a legislative instrument that, while ostensibly enacted to ensure "permanent protection and security" for all inhabitants and to uphold "Her Majesty's authority and of Law and Order throughout the colony," served as a deceptive means of systematic dispossession of Māori land (Te Kotahitanga o Te Ātiawa, 2021). This act permitted the Governor in Council to declare land belonging to any Māori tribe deemed to be in "rebellion" since January 1, 1863, as a "district," subsequently designating these areas as "eligible sites for settlements for colonization." Such declarations effectively converted traditional Māori territories into Crown property, highlighting a period of Indigenous displacement and setting the groundwork for future land dispossessions (Te Kotahitanga o Te Ātiawa, 2021).

Figure 2 Te Urewera Lake Waikaremoana

Following an initial period (1894-1912) where a seemingly benevolent Crown policy led to the establishment of the Urewera District Native Reserve (UDNR) and a system of nearly complete self-governance for the Māori iwi (tribe), Tūhoe, under the 1896 Act, this seemingly friendly policy turned into a "predatory" strategy by 1908. Between 1915 and 1926, the Crown systematically subverted the original intentions of the 1896 Act through an aggressive campaign. This culminated in the 1921 Urewera Consolidation Scheme (UCS), which seized 70% of the Tūhoe's land through coercive purchases and forced their relocation onto fragmented, often unviable, land blocks. This expropriation and displacement ultimately led to the formation of the Urewera National Park by 1954. The park's creation primarily served the colonial government's interests in tourism and conservation, systematically excluding Tūhoe from decision-making and perpetuating what Webster (2019) describes as "predatory rather than benevolent colonial policies". The transformation of Te Urewera from an Indigenous-governed territory into a national park showcases the colonial displacement and the resilience of Tūhoe culture.

A groundbreaking shift in protected area governance occurred in 2014, when Te Urewera was delisted as a national park and granted legal personhood through the Te Urewera Act (Bataille, Luke, Kruger, Malinen, Allen, Whitehead, and Lyver, 2020). This innovative legal recognition, under the co-management of the Tūhoe-led board Te Uru Taumatua and the New Zealand government, fundamentally redefined Te Urewera not as property to be owned, but as an entity possessing intrinsic value and agency (Tūhoe Te Uru Taumatua, 2025b). This co-governance structure ensures that stewardship is guided by both Tūhoe cultural principles and broader conservation objectives (Tūhoe Te Uru Taumatua, 2025a). Non-statutory stakeholders, including recreational users and local conservation groups, generally support Tūhoe's leadership. This clearly shows the importance of maintaining collaborative relationships and shared decision-making in future management (Bataille et al., 2020). Tūhoe's governance actively rejects over commodified tourism, instead focusing on experiences deeply rooted in connection to place and identity. This reshapes the role of tourism into one of cultural sharing rather than purely economic exploitation (Barraclough, 2020).

Today, Māori tourism within Te Urewera serves as a powerful example of a reconciliation process. Tūhoe-led initiatives offer authentic guided hikes, engaging storytelling sessions, and immersive cultural programming that prioritize reciprocity, environmental care, and a genuine connection to the land (Barraclough, 2020). As a place now governed by Māori values, Te Urewera is an example where tourism not only educates visitors about ecological systems but also about the profound colonial legacy of displacement. This innovative approach challenges conventional tourism and conservation models by asserting

Māori self-determination while inviting public engagement with Tūhoe history and their worldview. The transformation of Te Urewera from a colonial park to a living example of Māori governance offers a global model for how Indigenous-led tourism can help heal past injustices and build a more equitable future. (Bataille et al., 2020).

Tourism Businesses

Indigenous-owned and operated businesses are crucial for providing authentic cultural tourism experiences, extending far beyond what national parks offer. This section briefly presents two such examples: Cape Croker Park in Canada and Whakarewarewa Village in Aotearoa.

Cape Croker Park – Canada

Figure 3 Cape Croker Park Smudging

Cape Croker Park, an Indigenous tourism destination and family campground in Ontario's Bruce Peninsula, is wholly owned and operated by the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation (Cape Croker Park, 2025). Its primary purpose is to offer camping and outdoor adventures, alongside genuine Anishinaabe Cultural Experiences where visitors can connect with the land, traditional teachings, and stories of the Anishinaabek people (Cape Croker Park, 2025). This commitment to authenticity is validated by its "Original Original" accreditation from the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), assuring guests they will receive an authentic Indigenous-owned and -controlled tourism experience (Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada [ITAC], 2025b). The park serves a diverse clientele, including families, environmental groups, and educational institutions, providing tailored programs and utilizing its Interpretive Centre to share Anishinaabe culture and history (Cape Croker Park, 2025).

Central to Cape Croker Park's operations is the revitalization and education of Anishinaabe culture. All programs seamlessly integrate Anishinaabemowin, the traditional language, teaching visitors key greetings, place names, and terms for flora and fauna. Through experiences like "The Land is Our Teacher," "Traditional Fire and Wilderness Skills," and "Ginebek Miikaans - The Living Path," the park actively shares traditional practices, creation stories, and the profound connection between the Anishinaabek people and their ancestral territory. Visitors receive comprehensive education on Indigenous culture, history, and language through guided hikes, hands-on learning, and interactive exhibits, directly supporting cultural preservation and understanding (Cape Croker Park, 2025).

Figure 4 The Original Original

Whakarewarewa Village – Aotearoa (New Zealand)

Whakarewarewa, The Living Māori Village in Rotorua, Aotearoa (New Zealand), is a cultural landmark operated by the Tūhourangi Ngāti Wāhiao people, whose ancestry traces back to the Te Arawa, the first people to occupy this valley in 1325. Its core purpose is to share their unique way of life and ensure the preservation of their traditions for future generations. This commitment to their heritage is evident in their global outreach, having shared their culture with visitors for over two centuries (Whakarewarewa, 2018).

Figure 5 Traditional Food (Our kai)

Whakarewarewa is deeply committed to Indigenous cultural revitalization and visitor education. They actively preserve Tūhourangi Ngāti Wāhiao Māori culture through the continued practice of utilizing geothermal resources for cooking, bathing, and heating, alongside showcasing traditional Māori performing arts like song, dance, and the powerful Haka. Guided tours are central to their educational mission, offering visitors profound insights into Māori culture, history, and the resilient traditions that have allowed the Tūhourangi Ngāti Wāhiao people to thrive in their geothermal environment (Whakarewarewa, 2018).

Conclusion

This paper has offered an introductory overview of the Indigenous tourism industry and highlighted the critical importance of authenticity and Indigenous leadership within the Indigenous tourism sectors of Canada and Aotearoa (New Zealand). Authentic Indigenous tourism, defined and led by Indigenous peoples themselves, differs greatly from commodified or Eurocentric versions that often perpetuate stereotypes and misinformation. Examples like Jasper National Park's ongoing challenges, where non-Indigenous narratives still dominate the tourism content, and Te Urewera's groundbreaking governance, its legal personhood, and Tūhoe-led stewardship, highlight the varying degrees of progress in acknowledging colonial legacies and contemporary realities. By prioritizing Indigenous voices and traditional knowledge, authentic Indigenous tourism fosters genuine cross-cultural understanding and respect among visitors, and within non-Indigenous tourism entities. This shift promotes a deeper appreciation for diverse Indigenous histories and cultures, moving away from a static, frozen-in-time view of Indigenous identity. It also directly supports cultural revitalization, providing spaces for Indigenous youth to reconnect with their heritage and fostering community well-being. As Indigenous tourism continues to grow, it will offer visitors, governments, and non-Indigenous tourism entities expanded opportunities to learn more about the diversity, histories, and contemporary lives of Indigenous peoples. Future research, building on this introductory comparative analysis, should delve deeper into evolving tourism trends towards more authentic experiences, government policies around Indigenous land rights, specific tourism initiatives, and cooperative management models within protected areas like national parks.

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Figures

Figure 1 – The Original Original. (2025). The Original Original [Logo]. https://theoriginaloriginal.ca/

Figure 2 –Parks Canada. (2025). Explore Points of Interest Jasper National Park, Maligne Valley [Photograph]. https://parks.canada.ca/pn-np/ab/jasper/activ/itineraires-itineraries

Figure 3 – Department of Conservation. (n.d.). Te Urewera [Photograph]. https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/east-coast/places/te-urewera/

Figure 4 – Zelinski, M. (2022). Cape Croker Park Smudging [Photograph]. https://www.markzelinski.com/

Figure 5 – Whakarewarewa Village. (2018). Traditional Food (Our kai) [Photograph]. https://whakarewarewa.com/experiences/

Author Declaration Statement on use of Artificial Intelligence

All primary research, including searching, compiling, and review of all sources was completed solely by the author. Additionally, the paper's structure, including headings, subheadings, and main focus was solely developed by the author. The author prudently utilized Google Gemini Pro 2.5 Flash large language model as an assistant tool, specifically to organize content for improved logical flow and clarity, identify areas of repetition, redundancy, and passages lacking clarity, and to suggest refined wording and phrasing to enhance impact and readability.

Google Gemini was selected over other publicly available Artificial Intelligence software (e.g., ChatGPT and Microsoft CoPilot) because in author-conducted tests, Google Gemini showed fewer instances of fabricated information and a more direct adherence of author prompts, ensuring greater author control over the generated output.

Crucially, no facts, sources, or references were created by Artificial Intelligence. The author found, reviewed, and manually verified every source at each stage of the research and writing process.

Google. (2025). Gemini (2.0 Flash) [Large language model]. https://gemini.google.com/

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MY EPIGENETICS REMEMBER: THE STORY OF MY GREAT-GREAT-GREAT GRANDPARENTS

My great-great-great Ojibwa, Chippawa, Cree and French grandfather Pierre Parenteau who served as Chairman of Louis Riel's sixteen-man Council and his Cree and French wife Josephte Dolorme were Métis humans. I am proud of these ancestors. They and subsequent ancestors endured the effects of behaviors produced within racist colonial systemic frameworks, resulting in intergenerational soul ache. Much soul ache in my family has existed from this ancestors' period forward. I feel the ache from ancestors I have never met, yet I know them; my DNA remembers them, stored in the deepest confines of my very soul (Linklater, 2014). However, there is also a deep resilient knowing, creativity, and pride from my ancestors.

My great-great-great grandfather Pierre Parenteau lived on the homestead of Louis Riel in Batoche, Saskatchewan. He and his brother, my other great-great-great grandfather St. Pierre Parenteau fought alongside Louis Riel in the Battle of Batoche in the 1885 Great Northwest Resistance. The fight started with the Métis taking control of a church and hostages on March 18 and ended with the surrender of Mistahimaskwa's Cree Nation July 3, 1885 (University of Saskatchewan, n.d.). For their participation, St. Pierre was murdered by soldiers with a gunshot to his face, and Pierre was charged with treason, and Louis Riel was hung in November of that year in the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) Barracks. My great-great-great grandfather Pierre was stripped of his possessions, land, and livestock and sentenced to seven years in prison at Stoney Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba. I speak of this not only with a heavy heart, but also with great pride in my ancestor's ability to do what was right despite colonial consequence. My great-great grandmother Marie Parenteau had a son, Napoleon Jean Martin, and he had a daughter, my mother, Della who grew up in Churchill Manitoba.

Love in Action

For any human, an ancestorial legacy comes with great responsibility. Do I choose to perpetuate intergenerational ache onto and into humanity, or do I choose to be love in action? I chose love. My ancestor's legacy speaks to me; I hear their voices and feel their hearts in my bones. My voice is powerful because they lend me theirs, and they continue to live through me. I am a collection of voices for Truth and Reconciliation. Life is not static, and power is not unchanged; it is either received or given, used to empower yourself and others, or control. Knowledge is the vehicle in which I further my understanding of empowerment, and I am particularly interested in finding ways to empower humanity in a good way.

Colonial structures of power have succeeded in incarcerating humanity through division. (Mullaly & West, 2018) states that

the struggle of white privilege to uphold the dominant culture plays a significant role in marginalizing culturally diverse demographics, and in undoing this power imbalance, social workers must work in partnership with others to address systemic inequalities. Typically, the oppressed being controlled by the oppressors has had a trickle-down effect along the interconnected web of humanity. To the detriment of humanity, fanatical theft of natural resources to facilitate the upward movement of wealth has caused reproable harm to the natural environment. An example of this is rising global temperature, raging forest fires and drought. The disconnect has caused the elite to look at water, minerals, and foliage as dollar bills. By recognizing the inherent worth and dignity of all people, from the oppressed to the oppressors, including those who wield their power through their unnoticed and unaddressed weakness to control others, true power will be realized. I recognize my internal struggle of accepting all people where they are, but I try to do so, I advocate by inviting others to do the same.

Through the politicization of everything thought, said, and done within a socially and institutionally constructed world, it has infiltrated every aspect of my identity. Through my connection with all of creation, I maintain a sense of inherent worth and dignity for myself and others despite what the world demands of us. My reliance on mimicking nature and being my authentic self despite personal colonial consequences is where I find my worth and value as a human. As I write this paper, I am sharing my experience with you. Therefore, it becomes a collective experience; this is social work practice at its finest. Through interconnection to you, self, and others, human experiences are shared and developed in vibration to the universal fundamental force that guides us all. My purpose and my passion in social work practice is collective empowerment.

My ancestors collectively traveled on foot and paddled canoes to get to where they were going, but this time has come and gone. Humanity is in crisis and the end could be near. The tasks at hand are monumental, and my goals are many, but if I can collectively assist in alleviating some of the ache from humanity then I will have had a successful practice. For this I look to evidence to address the toxic drug crisis, because of my own lived experience that realized the devastating consequences of the crisis.

Given the complexities of the toxic drug and the resulting and epic failure to address it, I argue that it is imperative we break away from the domination of western systems. I look to an analogy of Indigenous ways of knowing and being to holism as the foundation of my Loud Voice Healing Community framework. The Two-Eyed Seeing framework, suggests viewing the world by integration of Indigenous and Western lenses (Hatcher et al., 2009). First, I rely on western knowledge and research to base my argument for urgently needed changes to oppressive systems of care. In oppressive, I mean the enormous death count of people who use drugs. Second, for my inclusive framework I rely on the Indigenous term of “place” and all that it means about reconciliation, community, inclusion, reciprocity wholeness, and healing.

Evidence Informed and Cultural Inclusion for a Full Continuum of Care

In British Columbia (BC), 225,000 people are at risk of overdose today (First Nations Health Authority, personal communication, Nov 1, 2023). Evidence shows that current systems of care do not provide acceptable, appropriate, or adequate access or services to address the toxic drug crisis in BC (BC Government News. 2023). This critical situation and the steady increase of toxic drug poisonings in BC since 2016 is at a crisis state. This project gives voice to the people lost and amplifies the multiple voices of social workers, stakeholders, health care professionals, coroners, and people who use substances with the call to decolonize and innovate treatment frameworks as a foundational step to address the crisis. Although no centralized research data bank exists on the success rates of treatments based on my lived experience, I argue that the current success rate for recovery capital retention within the first year after accessing treatments is 3 to 5% for people who have experienced complex trauma.

Information obtained on a BC

Government website, (BC Gov News, 2024) shows that BC has 3596 publicly funded treatment beds, and another loose estimation (Jamie Walters Personal Communication January 1, 2024) suggests another 17,000 private treatment and recovery beds exist within the province. Based on the treatment beds that exist, if everyone needing treatment received it, an additional 200,404 beds would be needed to accommodate everyone at risk of overdose today. An astronomical amount of capital investment would be needed to build enough treatment and recovery spaces. This would cost over $3.6 billion to $6.6 billion per year for operating budgets that would only provide limited services (Jamie Walters Personal Communication January 1, 2024). According to a Union of (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2023), the BC Government has committed 215 million dollars in BC to treatment, recovery, harm reduction, and mental health for 2024, with no additional funding for expansion. The Federal Government transfers 900 million dollars annually to provinces and territories for mental health and substance use (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2025). It is unrealistic to expect the significant additional funding required to expand services offered under two of the four pillars of harm reduction and recovery considering the significant funding shortfall. Therefore, governments must create innovative solutions.

Current systems of care are silos, operating in relative isolation. Silo frameworks contribute to significant systemic gaps in the continuum of care, contributing ominously to stigma, discrimination, marginalization, oppression, and isolation for individuals affected by substance use disorder (SUD). I conducted-with the support of the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia and collected data from forty survey participants within Kamloops. The data shows participants accessing five systems of care: harm-reduction, detox, intensive treatment, supportive recovery, and social housing a total of 3815 times. After accessing the five systems of care the forty participants were homeless 2762 times. Our research isolated the number of times participants lost a bed in one of the five systems of care for reasons of conflict and the findings showed 16%. The only reason a loss of a bed would occur within my full continuum of care project would be for threat of harm to self or another person, and this shows an 84% potential reduction of homelessness. Considering the previously mentioned 95% to 97 % attrition rates of people with SUD within current isolated systems of care, if every one of the 225,000 people at risk of overdose today within the province of BC received treatment, an estimation is 6750 to 12,500 remain abstinent for one year. The previous evidence supports the Canadian Drug Policy's Coalition (2023) findings that there is no one size fits all, therefore, systems must weave together siloed frameworks to match people structurally where they are at in their continuum of recovery process.

Given my estimation of three to five percent success rate of abstinence from substances within current silo systems of care that operate in relative isolation, the Loud Voice Decolonizing, innovative healing community inclusive framework is developed in the spirit of "we-ness. "We-ness is a term that represents social construction as a form of togetherness and co-creation of the human spirit while maintaining relational ethics, relational responsibility, and relational respect (McKinnon. K, personal communication, June 2024). Recognizing all stages of the recovery journey, the community weaves five phases of harm¬ reduction, detox, intensive treatment, supportive recovery, and social housing into one full continuum of care. The Loud Voice framework aims to implement a residential healing community located on one physical site, a community place separated by floors, wings, and buildings. This community is about monumental and meaningful change. In recognition of the failures associated with current services operating in relative isolation, a five-phase framework will invite people to transition through levels based on abstinence readiness and behaviors conducive to well-being, inviting people the time needed to heal. This holistic, multifaceted framework was developed based on five adapted evidence-based models to treat substance use disorder (SUD) and co¬-occurring mental health disorders, from harm reduction, detox, treatment, supportive recovery, and supportive housing

(Recovery services and treatment and support, 2024). The framework accomplishes a course of action forward that uproots exclusion, discrimination, marginalization, oppression, and stigma by acknowledging SUD as a chronic relapsing disorder and fosters meeting people where they are to improve outcomes of optimal holistic wellness. A long-term continuum of care increases individual recovery capital, inviting individual strengths and self-determination to overcome trauma.

The framework I developed is different. It understands that SUD is not a moral failure, acknowledging treatment expectations are unique, and setbacks are not failure narratives (McKinnon, K. Personal Communication June 2024) This is all part of people's unique recovery processes. Traditionally, removing people experiencing setbacks in treatment programs significantly contributes to homelessness, failure, exclusion, stigma, marginalization, discrimination, and oppression. A traditional treatment framework does not address the lack of support before, during, and after treatment and reduces engagement for most people (Stanojlović & Davidson, 2021). This is discouraging for peoples' respective healing journeys. This framework offers trauma-resiliency-informed, strengthen-based, self-determined healing while providing a high level of accountability to both staff and residents within the one-site programing.

The Loud Voice framework facilitates a sense of agency within land and community for the most vulnerable and disempowered demographics within our society and recognizes all peoples as an inherent part of their natural environment. Cultural inclusion within an inclusive full continuum of care will foster a sense of safety from exclusion, stigma, marginalization, oppression, and discrimination. The incorporation of culture from diverse staffing that includes leadership roles for people with lived and living experience will create a horizontal approach rather than a vertical one and recognizes the inherent worth and dignity of all people, embracing self-determined strength and meaningful goals. Understanding the intersecting factors of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and ethnicity will help identify traumas experienced by all demographics.

The full continuum of care invites people to explore and recognize both abstinence and harm reduction goals while remaining within one centralized location. The Indigenous term "place" is adopted from an Indigenous way of knowing and being that recognizes place is key to community building and healing (Montgomery,2022). This enables people to build and strengthen relationships, therefore, facilitating social connection and long-term recovery capital. A full continuum of care on one site will provide meeting people where they are at structurally, which is a significant step forward considering SUD is recognized as a chronic relapsing disorder.

By providing resiliency-informed practice, person-centered engagement, and Indigenous knowing and ways of being, all while ensuring individuals remain under the same umbrella of care will address obstacles that impede people from thriving in all stages of the continuum of the care process. Effective recovery capital-building includes a range of choices around healing options that reflect self-determination while being adequately supported in one location. No one model of recovery meets the needs of all people, and holistic support would offer a spectrum of five separate phases and supports to address the diverse needs and person¬ centered goals while remaining withinx one tight-knit community, therefore limiting the effects of exclusion, stigma, marginalization, oppression, and discrimination.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

Having Elders present in the healing framework, and incorporating Indigenous teachings and language into programing, architecture and landscape would be a step toward Call to Action #13: calling upon the federal government to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights (TRC, 2012). The healing framework would start to address Call to Action #22: by incorporating diverse Indigenous world views of Elders, interweaving this knowledge into Western approaches, and having those Elders readily available within this system of healthcare (TRC, 2012). Incorporating Elders and Indigenous organizations into this framework

would be a step forward in implementing Call Action 23: We call upon all levels of government to: Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the healthcare field; ensure the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities; provide cultural competency training for all healthcare professionals. (TRC 2012).

This framework could be included in restorative justice programs and would help address a number of Calls to action: 34: provinces and territories to undertake reforms to the criminal justice system to better address the needs of offenders with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), #37: to provide more supports for Aboriginal programming in halfway houses and parole services, #38: federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in custody over the next decade (TRC, 2012). For the community healing framework to be implemented community stakeholders, individuals, and groups must advocate for Call to Action # 21: the federal government to provide sustainable funding for existing and new Aboriginal healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of Indigenous Peoples.

Talk has gone on for over a decade and we are not much closer to implementing the 94 Calls to action. Change is slow, and a robust unified approach to address systemic failures and implement this healing framework is needed across sectors, governments, individuals, groups and communities (TRC 2012). Locating an intersecting system of care in one "Place" that incorporates a full continuum of supports to meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable citizens will create the culture necessary to focus on making the system changes needed to make the TRC a reality. Clearly systems used to treat the crisis are lacking, and creating one holism system has the tremendous potential to substantially increase well-being outcomes.

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COMPARING THE CANADIAN WESTERN EDUCATION SYSTEM WITH INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING AND TEACHING

This paper is a proposal of important research I am hoping to conduct. Within it, I am comparing the Western education system in Canada with Indigenous (Nlaka'pamux) ways of teaching through oral storytelling. The questions I want to find answers to are: How do Indigenous, specifically Nlaka'pamux, oral stories function within the colonial education system? How can they work together?

Clashing Worldviews in Education

In Little Bear (2002)'s book "Reclaiming indigenous. voice and vision" he states

Aboriginal and Eurocentric worldviews clash; we need to understand how the philosophy, values, and customs of Aboriginal cultures differ from those of Eurocentric cultures. Understanding the differences in worldviews, in turn, gives us a starting point for understanding the paradox that colonialism poses for social control (p.77).

Indigenous peoples teach their children through language and oral teachings. These teachings encompass everything as holistic and interconnected, so you can't take one thing away from the other; otherwise, it is not whole. "In Aboriginal philosophy, existence consists of energy; all things are animate, imbued spiritually, and in constant motion…one can summarize that value system of Western European concept as being the linear and singular, static, and objective" (Little Bear, pp.78-82)."

I will begin by discussing how the Western education system has been designed to assimilate Indigenous Peoples since its inception. I will briefly cover residential schools, integration into the public school system, and the current state of the Western education system. The next point I will address is how we, as Indigenous Peoples, navigate Western education. The final subject I will explore is storytelling. I will do this by discussing two types of storytelling that my Yeye (Grandmothers) and ski-the (Mothers and Aunties) shared with me. Then I will choose two stories that I have been told orally and discuss what they mean to me. As Indigenous Peoples, our languages and storytelling are interconnected, and they have served as a tool for educating our children for generations. If our languages die, our ways of knowing will change drastically. Indigenous Peoples have transmitted knowledge orally for generations and will continue to do so with future generations. "The Okanogan are the "people of story" and if through storytelling and relationship building – by renewing the extended family learning and teaching relationship, the Sqilxwlcawt, continues, and vision are realized (Cohen, p.2)."

Historical Context

The Canadian government and church used the residential school as a tool of genocide to assimilate Indigenous children

and eradicate their own beliefs, cultures, and languages. Therefore, breaking down Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching. It is evident in the statement by Duncan Campbell Scott when he said: "I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I don't think, as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. That is my whole point. Our objective is to continue until there is no single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and in no Indian Department" (Titley, 1986, p.50). The government created residential schools to assimilate Indigenous children, which made it easier to steal our resources and land. The last Canadian residential school closed in 1996. In the early 1960s, Indigenous children started being integrated into the public school system. Integration was the new form of assimilation. I talked with a former residential school survivor about this, and he said, "Integration was just as bad as residential school, but in different ways," (Personal Communication, Dunstan, 2000). The Western school system had never been set up for Indigenous students. "Over the same timeframe, graduation rates for Indigenous learners across British Columbia increased from 54% to 62%, a substantial growth, but nowhere near parity of the provincial average for non-Indigenous learners of 84% (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2021; Louie& Prince, 2023, pp.7-8). It was intended for white privileged males; because of this, the school system has failed us as Indigenous Peoples. This is evident in the lack of cultural understanding, inadequate resources for on reserve schools, lower statistical academic achievement and higher drop out rates for Indigenous learners. The last accumulated data from Statistics Canada emphasizes this with high-school completion rates of Indigenous students at 63% in comparison to 91% of all non-Indigenous students (Layton, 2023).

The third point I would like to discuss is the current state of Western education. The current system continues to set Indigenous children up to fail. The Truth and Reconciliation Report and the 94 Calls to Action were released in 2015, calling for reconciliatory actions in education; however, the Canadian education system remains reluctant to Indigenize the curriculum. "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: Calls to Action, 2015, p. 1) The Western education system is like a square peg, while our Indigenous children are like a round hole; they cannot fit together. The Canadian government has done little to address the challenges facing Indigenous communities and to promote Reconciliation.

Navigating Western Education as Indigenous Peoples

Robert William Sterling Sr. (1984) said that "every school system must answer three questions for its learners…The first question is … "Who am I?" … The second question … is "where do I come from?" … the third question… is "Where am I going? … (17)." (Sterling,1997, p.28). The first question I will answer is, 'Who am I?' I instantly think of my ancestors, family, and my Yeye and Ski-the. I recall that I never discussed my family at school, keeping my school life and family life separate. In textbooks from the 1980s, during my schooling, we were still portrayed as savages. The education system lacked a curriculum that accurately represented Indigenous Peoples. The second question I will answer is, "Where do I come from?" I still struggle to see myself represented as an Indigenous person in 2025, either in books or on TV. In 2025, the education system still addresses the second question: Where do I come from? Teachers are just beginning to Indigenize their curriculum. Many teachers feel uncomfortable with this process, leading them to refrain from Indigenizing their teaching. I have worked in the K-12 system, and I have seen non-Indigenous teachers refer to an Aboriginal Education Worker who is support staff when they get uncomfortable with Indigenizing. The third question I want to answer is, where am I going? How will the education system benefit my family and community? The Western school system does not resonate with Indigenous students.

The next point I would like to discuss is how we can work within the colonized

system to revitalize our Indigenous languages and teaching methods.

As Little Bear (2002) states:

Colonization created a fragmentary worldview among Aboriginal peoples. By force, terror, and educational policy, it attempted to destroy the Aboriginal worldview – but failed. Instead, colonization left a heritage of jagged worldviews among indigenous peoples. They no longer had an Aboriginal worldview, nor did they adopt a Eurocentric worldview. Their consciousness became a random puzzle, a jigsaw puzzle that each person has to attempt to understand (pp. 84-85).

We, as Indigenous Peoples, are resilient. We need to determine how the Western system can work for us rather than against us. For this to happen, we need to shift our mindset.

Like Hingangaroa (2009) said,

Colonization has not gone away – in many instances it has just changed its form. This is the point – many of us still look through the old critical lens and fail to see the new formations of colonization and, subsequently, how the new blockages are formed in the face of Indigenous aspirations. We need to develop new 'critical literacies' that enable us to analyze various scenarios and then develop the appropriate response or intervention. If we continue to misread the situation, we will continue to produce ill-fitting responses and interventions (p.5).

One example that illustrates this is Indian bands that begin taking control of the limited resources they must generate profit, which allows them to be less dependent on the Canadian federal government for funding. This also means that the government does not control the entirety of their funding, and these bands can start using their profits to support initiatives that matter to their community, like language revitalization and education. The Government of Canada does not and will never care about Indigenous Peoples. We must collaborate to seize control of our future for change to occur. We need to stop fighting against each other as Indigenous Peoples.

Freire (2012) states that

At a certain point in their existential experience, the oppressed feel an irresistible attraction toward the oppressor and his way of life. Sharing this way of life becomes an overpowering aspiration. In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, imitate them, and follow them (p.62).

The Canadian government knew exactly what they were doing when they attempted to assimilate us. They set us up to fail and divide and conquer our people. We can rise above and work together as Indigenous Peoples to revitalize our languages and ways of knowing and teaching.

My final points focus on language and ways of knowing in teaching revitalization through storytelling. My Yeye (grandmothers), Ski-the (mother and aunties), and family teach children through storytelling, and we continue to pass on this tradition. The traditional pedagogical experiences of grandmothers and their relationships with their own grandmothers are essential. "Wholistic learning that addressed their physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental development was exemplified… I have woven the concepts, the teachings, and learnings together to demonstrate a theoretical way of understanding and using them. The Nlakapmux concept of Cautstem—our use of them (pedagogy and praxis)—helped me create an "Nlakapmux Developing Wisdom Theory (NDWT)" (Anderson, 2011, p. 103). When Anderson described NDWT, I felt at home. I learned how to do this from my Yeye; we would be outside on the land picking berries, gardening, and tanning hides. She would always tell a story, sometimes funny and other times serious, to teach us. My Yeye was intelligent, strong, and a proud Nlakapamux woman. Her knowledge was vast and revered. My Ski-thes are cut from the same cloth as their mother, my Yeye. As I grew older, my Yeye and my Ski-the often told me that when you hear a story multiple times, you will take away different lessons from it when you are ready to receive them (Personal Communication). Robert Mathew said, "…If you're ready, you'll get it. If not, then it will just be a story" (Archibald, 2009, p. 139).

There are two types of storytelling my

Yeye told me about, and my Ski-the recently reminded me of them. There is the Speta'kl, where animals could shapeshift into people, rocks, and plant beings. "The speta'kl (also spelled sptakakwelh) are stories which refer to events from the mythological age when characters like coyote still walked in human form" (Sterling, 1997, p.5). These stories were often creation stories. The other kind of storytelling is Spilaxem, the narrative story. "The Spilaxem (also spelled Spilaxam) are non-creation stories such as hunting stories, news stories, and personal narratives. "The oral tradition is common among the Nlaka'pamux people, but unlike the speta'kl, there are no major written stories about spilaxem and few collections of them" (Sterling, 1997, p.5). Personal narrative stories are what I heard growing up from my Yeye's and Ski-the's tales. Recently, at a family gathering, I was told my Yehe would tell speta'kl stories if she was asked to. I heard a few of her stories told by my Ski-the's.

The second part is that I will tell a specta'kl and a spilaxem story. I will reflect on the lesson I am ready to learn from each of the stories I tell. This legend is about the Grouse and the Duck, told by my Yeye (Cicyetkwu Mary Anderson) and interpreted by my Ski-the Mamie Henry.

> *In Walkem & Billy (1992)'s book there's a story about duck and grouse:*
> *The duck did not always swim like he does now. The duck just waddled. The duck's chest was like a chicken and the grouse had a flat chest. One day the duck said to the grouse, "Hey partner, I'm going to try your breast and see how that works in the water… I'm just going to try it for a while." The grouse said, "okay." So, grouse took his breast off and put the duck's breast on. The duck put the grouse breast on and got into the water and kept going. He never returned what he borrowed. The duck never returned the grouse's breast. He's still got it. That's why the duck has got a flat breast. I guess that may be a long story, but that's just the part I know. So, I said to myself, I guess sometimes when people borrow something from a friend, they never return it. Maybe that's what they copy, the duck(p.4).*

Several key lessons can be learned from this story. For me, the duck is the monster. The duck represents the Canadian government, while the grouse represents Indigenous Peoples of Canada. The government keeps betraying Indigenous Peoples. The government promises Reconciliation and to treat Indigenous Peoples as equals. Like the story, the government swims away and never look back unless forced to. We, as Indigenous peoples, trusted the government to follow through with their promises, but they do not.

The next is a personal narrative that my Ski-the told me when I needed to hear it. This story took place when my mother was a young girl; her mother had asked her and her siblings to do their chores. My mother didn't want to listen. Her mother kept asking her to help out, but instead, my mother hid under the bed to avoid doing her chores. Hours passed, and her mother never came to get her from beneath the bed. She realized she was in trouble. Her dad came in from working outside, went directly upstairs, pulled my mother from under the bed, and then lifted her up. He was silent but not angry as he carried her downstairs and outside, dropped her into the horse water trough, and walked away without saying a word. My younger daughter is very strong-willed and assertive. She was about three years old when my mother shared this story with me. At that time, I was having a tough time with my daughter. The lesson I learned from this story is that I should not react negatively to my daughter when she is having a fit. I realized from the story that I could have become the oppressor if I had responded negatively to her instead of positively. Additionally, the story highlighted that the Western approach to parenting is not our own.

Conclusion

While comparing Canada's education system to the ways of knowing and teaching of Indigenous Peoples, I realized that Canadian education conflicts with Indigenous knowledge and learning methods. As Indigenous people, we must navigate both worlds. "Colonization has created a fragmentary worldview among Aboriginal peoples. "By force, terror, and educational policy, it attempted

to destroy the Aboriginal worldview – but failed. (Little Bear, 2002, p.84)." I have learned about the legacy of the government's actions toward Indigenous Peoples through storytelling, as Indigenous communities draw from our history that was partially erased by colonization over the years. My Indigenous ways of knowing include storytelling, which has greatly benefited me in Canada's educational system. My oral traditions have shaped who I am, and I have carried those traditions into the Canadian education system. Without this, I would not have been able to survive the education system. Our people continue to learn through storytelling, which remains a vital part of our education today. Our languages play a crucial role in our stories. Furthermore, our methods of learning through stories have a place in Western society and education.

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> Creator puts people in places to do things that are important for other people, not just for you.

~ Dr. Mukwa Musayett

The change will come from you, and it will be hard because we're stuck in a system that's hard to get out of, but we can do it. We're doing it now.

~ Uncle Mike Arnouse

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