

SUMMATIVE REPORT

Project Title – Secwepemc Knowledge

File Number: ICWRN-SG-10-0001

Abstract:

Colonization negatively affected Indigenous individuals and communities' sense of self, sense of belonging and sense of community. This caused family life and kinship qualities to rupture, invoking intergenerational physical, mental and emotional struggles. The struggles became barriers and challenges which invoked less than desirable socio-economic conditions fuelled by suicide, alcohol, drug and solvent abuse issues along with physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. The disparaging effects negatively influenced the cultural identity of the Secwepemc people in the interior of British Columbia. The purpose of this holistic health project is to examine how the community can restore a stronger sense of identity and community. The main clusters of identities to be considered are: genealogy; legal determinants (i.e. *Indian Act*); social or cultural (i.e. language and traditions), and self-located identity. A strong connection to culture supports the deterrence of high risk behaviours like chemical abuse, injury and emotional.

My study is supported by Indigenous Knowledge principles and my lived experience as a member of this community. In collaboration with community leadership and membership and through the guidance of Elders, this project will address the loss of identity and its relevance to proactive health. The community recently identified how the lack of financial resources to support mental health for members leads to a depressed sense of self. This is only one health issue, there are many more. The community working group is providing oversight in respect to ways research can promote improved health and well-being in a community context.

Grant Impacts:

Without the grant, I would have had difficulty exercising the most important part of my work which is relationship and trust building. The monies I received supported my community engagement work. I have met in the community with leadership and community members to inform the people about my research intent on identity and seek their input and ideas. This was done by hosting five (5) sessions over the past two years, half of which was supported by this grant. I am beginning to work more closely with a working group who provides me with information and advice on what would most potentially benefit the community. I have a dedicated Elder who reinforces my research from the community's perspective. She is extremely knowledgeable about Secwepemc traditions and adds a rich cultural perspective in addition to advising on appropriate protocols. Without the support, I would have been challenged to complete this most important phase of open communication, partnership, relationship and trust building. I remained consistently engaged in providing the context of my research ideas and made strong efforts to ensure that the community recognizes that the research can be positive

and will provide valuable information for the community. I completed a short community mental health report and literature search to reciprocate for the community's involvement.

Purpose and Goals of the Research Study

Strengthening cultural identity is a positive response for improved health because it builds an individual's confidence and self-esteem. This fits with the holistic model of health, balancing the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical. If one lives with a lost sense of self, their spirit is broken and it leads to break down in multiple areas of health. My topic, "Drumming my way home: A Secwepemc perspective" is totally relevant for my research project. I am learning and connecting to the hand drum which is a vital component of Secwepemc culture. I am also adding to my lived experience narrative by finding out more and reclaiming parts of my own identity while helping others reclaim theirs. I will be a participant in my own research study as I narrate the importance of connection to identity from storytelling and lived experience of three T'exelc community members.

Benefits and current status:

I am thankful that I have been able to exercise the principles of community-based research by investing the time to work along with the community to build relationships. The time investment is crucial for Indigenous scholars who apply Indigenous Knowledge values. I appreciate that the Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network understands the importance of this because the collaboration with community promotes the value of positive research.

From ongoing dialogue with the community I have utilized ideas regarding piecing together the puzzle about Secwepemc identities. My dialogues with community initially began when I was accepted into the PhD program at UBC in 2008, it moved into the articulation of my comprehensive exams and recently cumulated with the completion of my research proposal and ethics application. This process would have taken much longer if I had not been in contact with the community to reduce the trepidation about research.

The incremental phases kept me in contact with community membership and the next step is to collect my study data within the next six months. The monies I received were mainly used to support my travel between Vancouver and Williams Lake to meet with key community players.

Respectfully submitted,

Georgina Martin
PhD candidate (abd)