MÉTIS CULTURALLY-CENTERED RESEARCH

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Creating A Space of Safety & Dignity.

Li Bon Jeu, Not Createeur, li courage miyinauwn, paray chee itayhtamawk, kwayesh kapimouhayhk, marsee chee itwayak ka kishcheetaimoyak. Marsee d’twnana.

God, our Creator, give us courage, let us be of one mind, make us righteous, thankful and proud. Thank you and Amen!
I was born in 1962, in a white hospital in Snuneymeux.

When I was one, I couldn’t walk. I was sent to the Toronto Children’s Hospital where I got two hip replacements. Luckily, I wasn’t placed in the Nanaimo Indian hospital.

For two generations, all the girls in my family were born with congenital hip dysplasia.

I walk funny.
On April 20, 1863, the British naval gunboat *Forward* attacked a Native village on Kuper Island. The gunboat fired on the village and was repulsed with casualties after a fierce battle with a handful of warriors. Following this defeat, the colonial government responded with one of the largest military operations in the history of British Columbia, which took place on the east coast of Vancouver Island and extended throughout the waters and islands of Active Pass, Trincomalee Channel and Stuart Channel, on Saturna Island north to Comox.
Her name is Evelyn (Wylie) Oak. She is Métis. She was born in Ft. Chipewyan, as was her mother and her daughter. Her ancestors are Dene, Gwichin, Cree, and Orkney.

When she lived in Uranium City, she lined Her garden with radioactive uranium rocks. Her husband kept uranium in the basement. They were not warned that the rock was extremely dangerous.

By the time she was my age she had lost all her hair.
This is my friend Maurie

Maurie is from the Dene community of Déline, NWT. Do you know about Déline?
This is Uranium
Uranium from Déline for America’s Atomic War.

August 6, 1945
Dene Prophecy

“I saw people going into a big hole in the ground – strange people, not Dene. Their skin was white. They were going into a hole with all kinds of metal tools and machines and making a lot of noise, so I followed them. They were going back and forth into that hole. They were digging a great tunnel….

•[http://web.uvic.ca/~mharbell/final/prophecy.html](http://web.uvic.ca/~mharbell/final/prophecy.html)

George Blondin, p. 78, 79
When the World Was New
What is ADHD?

1. Toxic poisoning:
   - Prenatal methylmercury, postnatal lead exposure, and evidence of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder among Inuit children in Arctic Québec.

2. No ADHD in Switzerland: We wouldn’t let drug companies use that stuff on our kids…. So they moved to the US

3. Insignificant rates of ADHD in France…. “theory of containment and authoritative parenting”.

4. No child development theories that consider colonialism.
Then uranium, now oil.

Who can bear the waters of Lake Athabasca, Fort Chipewyuan?
My Research Interests

• Many
• Métis holistic well-being (and the relationship to justice…)
• Recovery from interpersonal and state violence
• Indigenous values and creating a clean, non-violent world for children and their parents
• Community safety & violence cessation
PhD Study
“Being and Becoming Métis: The Relationship Between the Métis Sense of Self and Cultural Stories” (2004)

- Question for Study: How did/do Métis families keep their culture alive while living underground?
- What roles do stories plan in strengthening culture and identity?
Process/Method

- Read all the literature I could find
- Conceptual Literature: Métis literature, Indigenous literature…. Couldn’t find child development theories that contemplated the relationship between colonialism and sense of self (only “benign world” theories)
- Later found theories of resistance (that fit) and response-based practice
  - (e.g. struggles between more dominant pathologizing and blame-laden theories of ‘internal oppression’…. “stay quiet”)
- 12 Research Participants
Findings

- Interviewees: “We don’t have Métis stories!”
- Researcher: “Is that a Métis story… not having stories?”
- Interviewees: “Yes, I guess that is a Métis story”
- “Being Métis means keeping your mouth shut!”
- “You aren’t welcome anywhere!”

Safety lies in Métis spaces…. Sitting around the kitchen table in a Métis home, on the porch, eating pemmican from your grandma’s pocket, talking with other Métis, sharing stories, laughing, humour, (Story of the girl and the bear on the porch). The “third space” (from post-colonial literature)… a Métis space
Conclusions

• Four themes: Being In-Between, Residence, Despair and Transcence

• Being Métis does not mean you are part this and part that…. You can have a holistic self that is “Métis”, made up of all the ancestors and cultural threads/teachings… but you are whole.

• “We celebrate both sides of our ancestry… our mother’s side and our father’s side, including our European heritage”.
My Learnings

• Stop blaming my grandmother
• Understanding the real intergenerational effects… why my family doesn’t have land, why my kids won’t inherit property, why my kids don’t speak multiple languages, why we live in BC and not Manitoba (Lot 42 Red River)
• Understanding that colonial violence was deliberate
• Understanding that Métis people need to spend time together and resist isolation
• Much more research needs to be done, such as studying the different needs of Métis girls and Métis boys, particularly in state care
• Knowing that Child welfare agencies must put in a concerted effort to identity and support Métis children & f.
Support Métis communities so we may live in them!
But what about the youth?
Métis youth, structural violence & health?
Canadian Institute of Health Research
National Study
Youth Voices Create Change

• Victoria-based study with Métis youth and their responses to structural violence

• Gained support from the Métis Nation of Greater Victoria
• Recruited fourteen Métis youth to participate in Arts-based Participatory Action Research
• Attended Métis youth leadership retreat at Tofino Eco-Lodge
Invited Elders

• Held Circle Conversations
  “What is structural violence?”

• (e.g. racism, Euro-Canadian supremacy, economic exclusion, separation from land, from family, the Indian Act, child welfare)

• “How have the Métis resisted and responded to structural violence?”

• (Stories of history, family life, grief, sadness, despair, home, efforts for justice, resistance, culture)

• Arts-based activity (painting pieces of a Métis flag, drawing a canoe with all of us in it, what do we need on this forward journey?)
Kate Elliot  MNBC Youth Rep & Researcher, Masters Student
Winner Aboriginal Off-Reserve Action Plan 15,000. Kate Elliot
Youth-generated Creations

• With the assistance of MNBC youth representative Kate Elliot, we created...
• A Métis literature review
• a PhotoVoice presentation
• Social Policy recommendations (also in progress)
Métis Elders
Elders
Findings
The Youth Said:

- Their families have been affected by sad and terrible forms of violence related to colonialism (such as land theft and racism). There has been much suffering.
- They have fallen between many cracks and the particular needs of Métis youth are over-looked.
- They are tired of teaching “Métis 101!”. It is time for Canadians to become pro-active in learning about Canadian history and the Métis role in it.
- Tired of explaining themselves and their ‘right to be’.
- Foster care has been devastating for those involved.
- We get hope from our elders and learning about our culture.
My Learnings

• Métis youth participations
• Had really astute social analysis
• Held much hope for the future
• Understood the power of the collective
• Loved the land and nurturing their relationship to it.
• Had environmental concerns & aspirations for eco-justice.

• Do not want to be assimilated; want to preserve their unique culture and identity
• Much more… too deep to articulate yet.
• I felt blessed to be respected & trusted by them.
We move forward with our culture!
Kakionewagemenuk! All our relations!
The Medicine Wheel of Responses

How did you respond? What did you do?

Dignity

Physical

Spiritual

Emotional

Intellectual/Mental

Cathy Richardson 2010