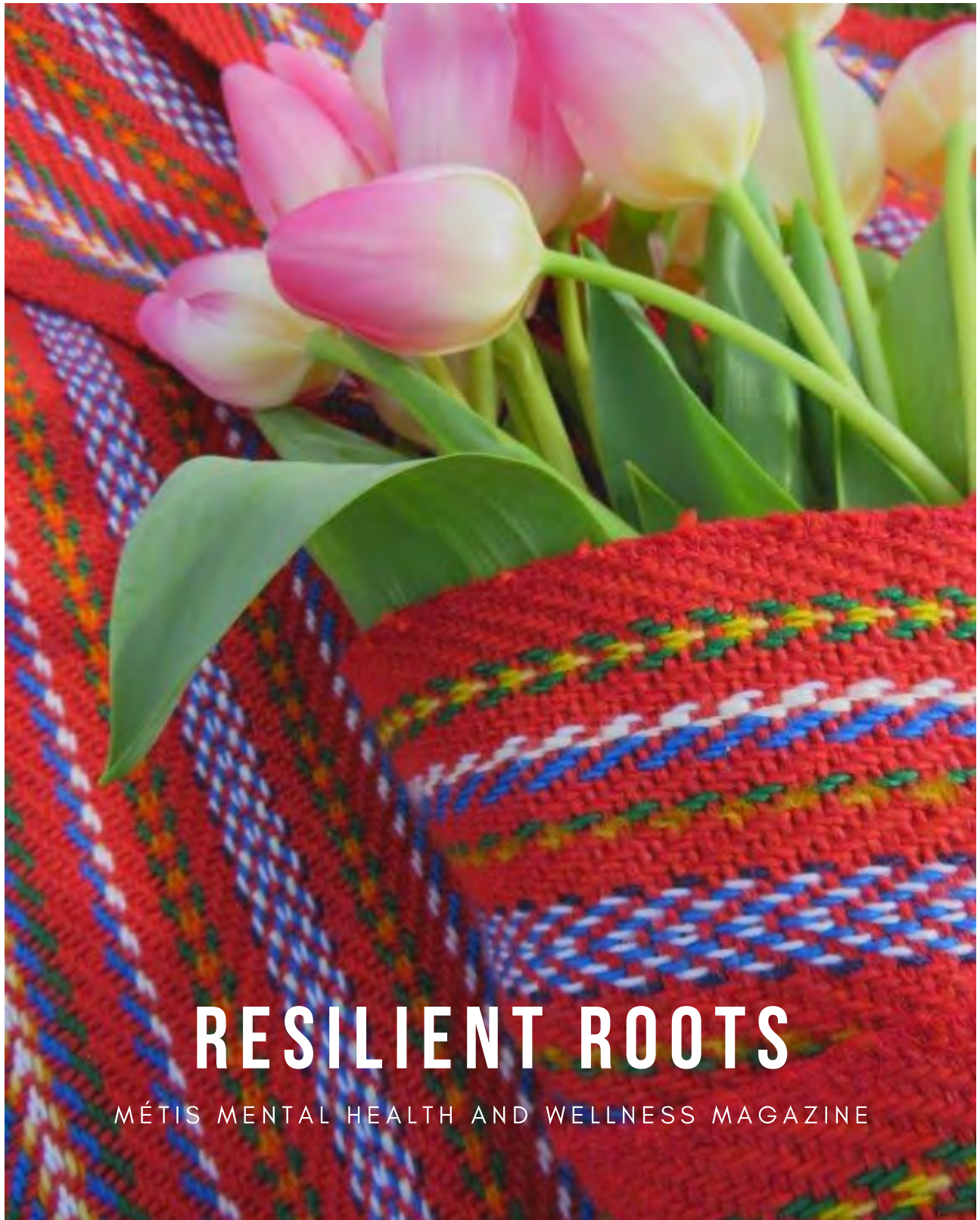


SPRING 2020 | ISSUE NO. 1



RESILIENT ROOTS

MÉTIS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS MAGAZINE

Are you Métis?

How has COVID-19 impacted you?

MNBC's Ministry of Health invites you to take part in a survey at:

<https://questionnaire.simplesurvey.com/s/mnbc-covid19>

Please share how COVID-19 has affected you personally.

It is our goal is to connect with Métis people from across the province and conduct a fulsome needs assessment.

COVID - 19 Survey



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

People are welcome to find the link on MNBC's webpage www.mnbc.ca or Facebook page. Email covid19@mnbc.ca for more info



We encourage you to complete the survey regardless - if you're doing well, we want to hear from you too!

We also want to help connect you to your local Métis Chartered Community

RESILIENT ROOTS
MARCH 2020

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Thank you for reading *Resilient Roots: Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine*. This magazine has been led by the members of the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative, and is the result of many months of discussions, brainstorming sessions, and hard work. Thank you to all Initiative members for your tireless efforts in working to make positive change in the world of mental health.

Everything you will read in this magazine comes from Community Members who have chosen to share their voice with us. We are so deeply grateful to all contributors for sharing their work with this publication. Your incredible contributions have allowed us to shine a light on Métis voices in our Communities.

In all the uncertainty that we are experiencing right now with COVID-19, we are proud to be sharing this work of hope with you. During this time, we will lean on the resilience that we as Métis are rooted in. Within these pages, you will see stories that are a reflection of the shining strength of our Métis Community Members.

May you find hope and inspiration within this publication.

Marsee, and be well.

Minister Susie Hooper
Minister of Health, Métis Nation British Columbia


For more information on *Resilient Roots*, including how to contribute to issue two, please email Jillian at jjones@mnbc.ca

WWW.MNBC.CA



T A W N S H I !

*THANK YOU FOR PICKING UP A COPY OF RESILIENT ROOTS:
MÉTIS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS MAGAZINE*



We are so excited to be sharing this work with you. The Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative has worked to create a publication that raises Métis perspectives, engaging in topics around mental health and wellness. This issue is possible because of the voices of our Métis Community Members.

There are many ways to share your voice, and what is shown between these pages has come in many different forms - including photo art, informational pieces, stories of personal experience, and poetry. It is powerful to see these unique forms of expression woven together into this publication.

Some topics around mental health can feel heavier – this doesn't mean that these stories shouldn't be told. Be mindful of your own boundaries as you are taking in this magazine. If you need to take a moment to practice self-care and connect with your supports, please do. If you find yourself needing crisis support, please connect with the Métis Crisis Line at 1-833-MÉTISBC (1-833-638-4722).

We hope you find something in this publication that you can connect with.

If you are interested in learning more about this publication, or how you can contribute to our next issue, please contact jjones@mnhc.ca.

Marsee.

Métis Crisis Line
1-833-MÉTISBC
(1-833-638-4722)

Want to learn more? Contact us!
jjones@mnhc.ca

DISCLAIMER:
Please note that the submissions in the magazine reflect the opinions of their authors, and may not necessarily reflect the views of Métis Nation BC.



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

A full-page photograph of a winter scene. A river flows through a dense forest of snow-laden evergreen trees. The trees and the sky are reflected in the calm water. The lighting is soft, suggesting a low sun, creating a peaceful and beautiful atmosphere.

**DESPITE ALL THE
UNCERTAINTY THAT
SURROUNDS US, IT
IS A BEAUTIFUL
WORLD.**

CORINNA STEVENSON

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19



As well as impacting our physical health, the impacts of COVID-19 can also influence our mental health and wellness. Feelings of anxiety, depression, or hopelessness may be heightened during this time. Taking steps to cultivate our mental wellness during this time is an important practice.

Recognize and acknowledge how you are feeling. Allow yourself permission to grieve, feel worried or frustrated. Be kind to yourself, and know that these feelings can be a normal reaction to the uncertainty of this experience. Recognize these thoughts for what they are, and find ways to move through them.

In times where things may feel out of control, focus your thoughts on the aspects that you are able to control - such as your own practices of social distancing, hand hygiene, pursuit of engaging activities at home, and your kindness and compassion towards yourself and others.

Be sure to take breaks and periodically step back from social media and the news cycle. While it is important to stay informed and aware, allowing yourself to become overwhelmed with news can deeply impact your own well-being.

Continue to cultivate connections with those you love through phone calls, video chats, messages, or even letters. Check-in with our Elders and see if there are ways you can offer support.

If possible, spend time in nature. Enjoy the sunshine and the feel of being outside, while also being mindful of practicing social distancing.

Engage in activities at home that bring you joy. Whether that is reading, playing music, beading, practicing yoga, or spending times with our pets.

Foster hope. Look for those that are helping, read stories of people coming together.

If you find yourself needing additional mental health support, call the Métis Crisis Line at 1-833-METISBC (1-833-638-4722)

Remember, Métis are rooted in resilience. We will move through this time together.



COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool

BC's Self-assessment tool: <https://covid19.thrive.health/>

Determine your risk with this online tool released March 17th, 2020

Mental Health and Wellness

Please see information from the Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Division on staying mentally well during this time period in regards to Covid-19: <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/covid-19-and-anxiety>. You can also register for free for Bounce Back, a self-directed course to help you manage low mood, anxiety and depression.

Visit the CDC's website for more information on managing stress and anxiety during this time: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

Download a free app like Mindshift on your phone, to help you relax, meditate and monitor your mood in an online private diary. Find out more here: <https://www.anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt/>

Helpful Resources for Kids

The importance of hand washing: <https://youtu.be/3TJJNsUmDQ0>. A paid advertisement by Lysol, using different coloured glitter shows how germs can be transmitted and the effectiveness of soap. A less messy option is the "pepper experiment".

There are many virtual field trip resources being shared online to keep kids entertained inside including:


- <https://thecanadianhomeschooler.com/a-virtual-field-trip-across-canada/>
- <https://blog.discoveryeducation.com/blog/category/virtual-field-trips-2/>

MNBC's Ministry of Health invites you to take part in a survey at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MNBC-COVID19>. Please share how COVID-19 has affected you personally. It is our goal is to connect with Métis people from across the province and conduct a fulsome needs assessment.



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a dense forest. The path is covered with fallen brown leaves. Tall, slender trees with green foliage form a canopy overhead, with sunlight filtering through the leaves. The overall mood is serene and natural.

MY STORY: A NEW FREEDOM

CONTENT WARNING: SUBSTANCE USE, SELF-HARM,
SUICIDAL IDEATION.

Thirteen years ago I was dying from a spiritual malady caused by an allergy to a drug: alcohol. When I would ingest the drug I would feel an immediate sense of relief and it would trigger an insatiable and uncontrollable craving for more. This is the physical aspect of the disease of alcoholism. I also suffered from the mental aspect of the disease; the pattern that led me to repeat over and over again the consumption of a drug that was slowly eroding my sense of self and destroying my life.

In order to recover, I needed to completely abstain from the drug. I needed to face, uncover, and deal with (heal) the true root cause of my suffering - which was my own distorted thinking, my own repressed and unfelt feelings that I was running from; my own instincts run amok.

I was a highly sensitive and intuitive child; something I now see as a good trait, but back then I was labeled critically as 'shy', 'too quiet', 'too sensitive'. I was born with a visible and painful vascular malformation on my right arm and chest that also added to my feelings of insecurity, self consciousness and being different. I set out on a path of feeling like I didn't fit in, like there was something terribly wrong with me and like it was quite possibly a huge mistake that I had been born at all.

Negative thoughts about myself took root at an early age. Fear and insecurity ran wild in my mind and manifested as stress and tension in my body. Eventually the discomfort was so great I began seeking relief. I recall beginning to consciously entertain negative thoughts about my appearance and weight as early as age twelve. By age fourteen I had begun running excessively and starving myself to alter how I felt. I had also discovered that by causing myself physical pain, I could induce a rush of adrenaline and endorphins that would momentarily bring relief to the mounting emotional pain and anxiety I was feeling inside, as well as give me a false sense of power and control over overwhelming circumstances in life that I felt powerless over.

I vividly recall the exact moment I took my first drink of alcohol. The euphoric, instant and powerful calm that washed over me ignited the idea that this substance was my salvation. I remember making an instant, gleeful plan to never be without some of this magic elixir that not only removed my anxiety and emotional discomfort but also filled me with confidence and self esteem such that I had never known! I had found what I thought was my solution.

Sadly, a chemical solution soon becomes its own undoing. Having a constant and steady supply of alcohol became my number one priority; as did hiding this need from everyone around me. For a time, I managed to live a double life. I performed well in school, I travelled, I worked. All the while servicing my addiction in the shadows and bathroom stalls. Every now and then, with growing frequency, I would indulge too much in the company of others and I would later chastise myself; and instead of seeking help for the problem I would commit to spending more time alone.

My entire existence revolved around the getting and consuming of alcohol and anyone or anything that threatened that would be pushed out of my life; avoided. Thus my world grew smaller and darker and lonelier. I needed more and more alcohol to maintain my sense of relief. I became more and more

careless about my safety and I sought out lower companions who would not question my appearance, lifestyle or excessive and near constant alcohol consumption.

After nine years of battling to fit into life and maintain the right balance of functioning and drunkenness, I gave up on controlling my addiction. I made a conscious decision to stop trying to control and limit the amount of alcohol I took. I surrendered and gave myself completely to my addiction - beginning my yearlong free fall to my rock bottom.

I had already been consuming an inordinate amount of hard alcohol on a semi daily basis but that changed to a mind boggling average of 40 ounces of vodka per day for one year straight. In that year, I maintained a service position in the food industry that allowed me to consume at least one meal a day. I maintained an apartment and kept my cat fed and looked after. At that point my cat was the only sentient being I felt no shame around and who provided a sense of unconditional love. He, along with my lingering and persistent aspirations as an artist, were what eventually became my true saving graces.

On the morning of September 6, 2006 I had a stark realization that exactly one year had passed since giving up the reins to my addiction. I also became aware that on that day, one year prior, I had promised myself that if I were to live through that inebriated year I would simply end my life to end the torment. And there I was, unable to even get drunk and find relief with any amount of alcohol; I was left with myself and a choice to make. I could end my life and find peace. Or? As I sat with that thought a second option presented itself to me; instead of surrendering to my addiction I could surrender to the pain.

I picked up the phone and called for an ambulance; telling them I was about to end my life and I needed help. In that moment of stepping out in faith, into the void, in complete surrender to my reality, my addiction was miraculously and inexplicably lifted. The craving vanished in an instant. I felt I was carried in loving arms to the hospital, to my parents house to detox, to a residential treatment centre, and home again a few months later; sober and reborn.

Notably I had shocked myself when I phoned a detox centre for help in selecting a treatment centre, and upon learning how much I had been drinking the man on the line suggested that I go out for a beer, lest I suffer delirium tremens. I hung up on him with the words "No, I've had enough."

I had always secretly believed that there was some kind of direction or guiding force in life; be it intuition, energetic, synchronicity- just something. I was delighted to be able to speak about this 'higher power' in treatment and look back on all the ways I had been directed in life even through some of the most terrible experiences. Because I had reached such a pure surrender, having tried so hard and so long on my own strength to utter exhaustion and collapse, I felt excited and relieved to tap into a loving and helpful source of power. Every experience is unique. For me, I felt that the minute I truly chose from my heart to seek for my own healing and redemption the universe orchestrated the right people, situations, and conversations to assist me.

When I returned home from treatment I was guided to attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings and met a friend who introduced me to a Big Book Study. I attended twice a week for three years, in addition to other meetings. In that time, I learned the course of action as laid out in the text book of AA. I went to a few meetings and spoke to several different people before meeting my first real sponsor. As I went through the steps thoroughly I experienced real and tangible results. I began to change inside. My reactions began to change, my thinking began to change. As a result, my outer life began to grow and change in new and healthy ways. Slowly, slowly - sometimes agonizingly slowly - my path unfolded.

My capacity to express myself increased, my confidence grew. My relationships with my family improved. My experience of recovery is that it is serious and hard work on a daily sometimes minute by minute basis. I felt I was rewiring my brain from the inside out. Special care and dedication was required. A softness and compassion for myself that I had never exhibited had to be learned and applied as I relearned how to live life in a new way. I felt like a child. I felt like I was seeing and experiencing things for the first time, with new eyes. I felt like I was rising from the ashes of my former self.

As I grew stronger in my understanding of the steps by practicing them over and over, I began to seek out new forms of spiritual and self development that called to me. I began sensing the new freedom that comes from applying the steps and with caution and courage. I explored activities like singing, dance, music, art and sport that had always interested me but I had been too afraid or too drunk to try. All of these things were whispers of my soul that were there all along. Now that I could hear and respond, my spirit soared. Opportunities, friendships and growth poured in. Having to learn to feel and release negative painful emotions built up from the past became more and more supplemented with having to learn how to manage and process influxes of sheer joy, peace and happiness!

I was in my addiction for ten years. I got sober in 2006 and have remained sober since. I remind myself often that every single moment on this path is precious and not to be taken for granted. Sobriety in a world saturated by the horrors and rampant normalization of drug use (including the drug; alcohol) requires diligence and daily maintenance.

I have known countless people who have begun the path of recovery and then relapsed, some have died. I have had to make the terrible choice to walk away from friendships because I was growing and developing healthy behaviours while the other person was not. I have had to call crisis lines in the middle of the night; making myself vulnerable and using every ounce of courage and humility I could muster to hang on and work through a rough patch of emotions. I have had to find strength and courage to vocalize and articulate boundaries in my life; self care has to be a priority every single day. I have had to face fears and be rigorously honest with myself and others in spite of fear of what others will think.

Bottom line is my sobriety has to come first in my life. Along with alcoholism. I had also suffered from severe anorexia, depression and self mutilation. Self care has to be practiced and I found support with this through help from a psychotherapist. Addiction is often a symptom of deeper underlying issues and it takes time, patience and practice to heal and develop new neurological pathways in the brain.

If I can offer advice I would say work hard but be patient with yourself. Be patient with others. Recovery is a lifelong commitment and any amount of time living a life in recovery is a monumental achievement. Enjoy the journey, look for things to be grateful for, take time to get to know yourself and find out what brings you joy and most of all reach out for support when you need it knowing that you deserve it; you matter.

I believe that like ripples on a pond, a person can influence countless people simply by 'being', by shining their light and walking their path and with opportunities like these to share with raw honesty their story the web that connects us grows stronger and more people's light grows brighter. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't close my eyes, get still and silently honour every person that has touched my life and supported me on this path and the miraculous unfolding that has led me to where I now am. Sobriety truly is Heaven on Earth and I am eternally grateful.

By Vicki Lynn Rae

A NEW FREEDOM



ART BY VICKI LYNN RAE
WWW.VICKIRAE.COM

A SPIRITUAL PATH

I want to walk a truly spiritual path
Take the long road never looking back
Life left me in such a shallow place
With so many of my demons to face
Want to go where cold winds don't blow
Walk where the endless river flows
For so long I've been seeking a home
Take my heart where the buffalo roam
Seems so long I've been living below
Lost all of the friends I came to know
I want to try to lead a spirited life
One free from hardship and strife
Like a soaring eagle I want to fly
Kiss all of my grief and sadness goodbye
May have had loss but never gave up hope
It was that very hope that helped me to cope
Like a small boat in a storm I was lost
and loneliness and depression where the cost
Used to dream and never want to wake
When I had all of the sadness I could take
At times my life was like a runaway train
I tried in vain but I couldn't escape the pain
My tears used to flow like a river to the sea
One day I found it in my heart to just believe
Want to ride a wild horse on the sandy shore
I have tasted love and my heart wants more
Heaven please bless me with your golden love
May the spirit reign down upon me from above

BY GARY EDWARD ALLEN

TO THE GIRL I WAS THEN - I FORGIVE YOU

”

MY MOTHER ONCE TOLD ME THAT ONE DAY, I WOULD BLOW, AND SHE HOPED TO BE PRESENT WHEN IT HAPPENED — TOO MANY YEARS SPENT REPRESSING AND AVOIDING. I DID MY BEST TO APPEASE, AND THAT WAY I HOPED TO BECOME INVISIBLE, PRETENDING THAT ONE DAY IT WOULD TURN ME INTO AN APPARITION.

MY BROTHER ONCE TOLD ME THAT I HAD BACK PROBLEMS BECAUSE I HAD NO SPINE. THESE WORDS WERE FOLLOWED WITH A RESIDUAL SPEECHLESSNESS. IF IT WERE TRUE, I WOULD HAVE DISSOLVED INTO SOME CURRENT OF AIR, SOME CONVERSATION. BUT I DIDN'T. I REMAINED, OSCILLATING BETWEEN STATES OF WELLNESS WHILE I CONTINUED STRIVING TO BE WHO I THOUGHT I NEEDED TO BE.

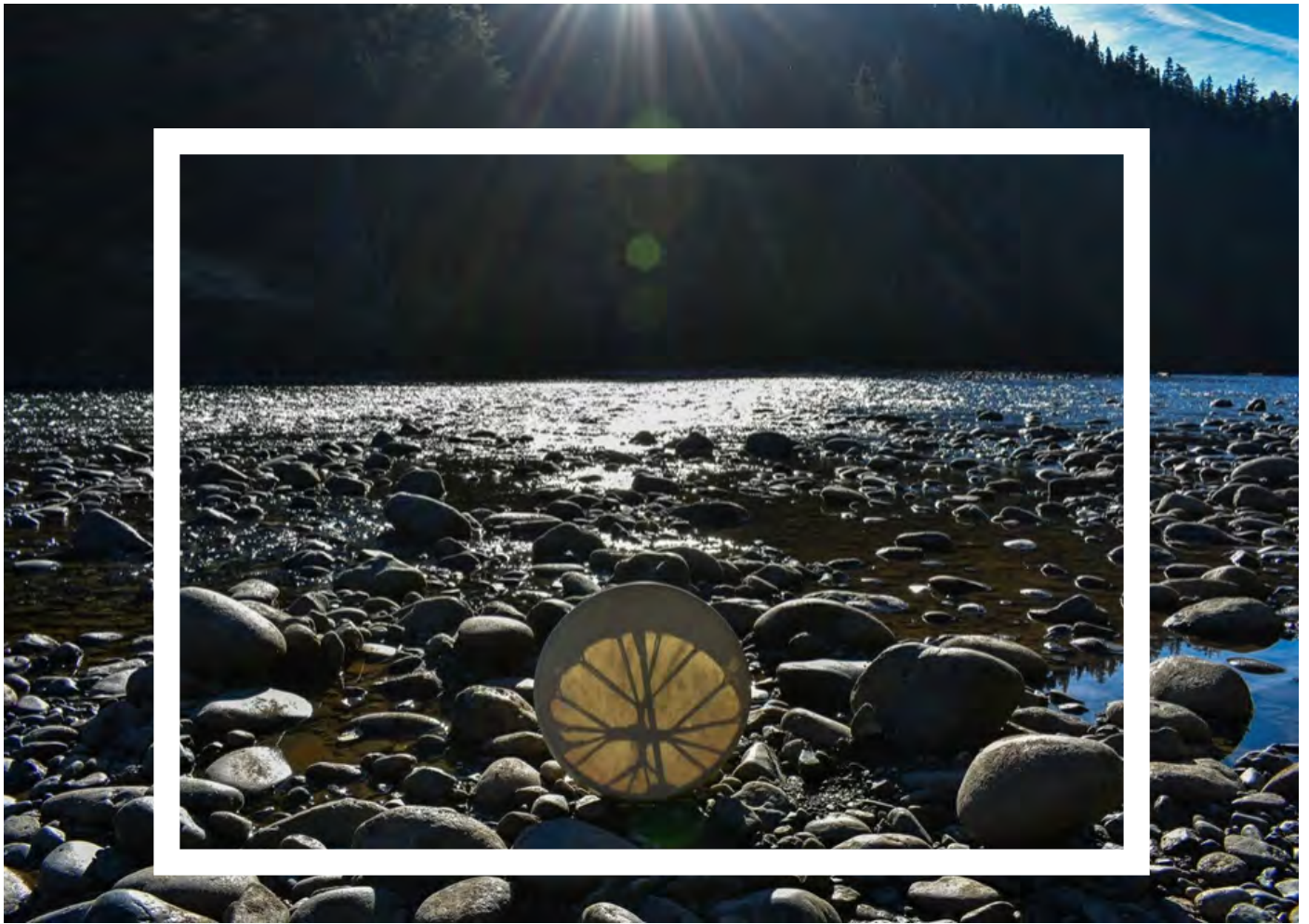
I WORKED HARD TO BREAK DOWN THE HARD EXTERIOR I HOPED WOULD PROTECT MYSELF, RETURNING MYSELF TO MYSELF. REMEMBERING THAT IT ALL COMES IN WAVES, BECOMING, AND UNBECOMING. CHEST ASCENDING, MY HEART BEATS 61 BEATS PER MINUTE AS I BREATHE INTO THE DISCOMFORT AND UNCERTAINTY. I AM RELEASING EXPECTATIONS, MY HEART AS OPEN AS THE SEA, AWAITING THE NEXT WAVE.

ONE DAY, I LOOKED IN THE MIRROR, AND SOMEWHERE, EMERGING AS A CURRENT RUSHING BY, I LOOKED AT MYSELF WITH ADMIRATION. THE DEFINITION OF SHAPE AND ITS CONVEXITIES, WITH SKIN AS UNPREDICTABLE AS VANCOUVER RAIN, AND HIPS THAT WOULD CONCAVE LIKE THE CANADIAN ROCKIES, I WAS HOME. THE ROOMS IN MY BODY THAT WERE ONCE BLUEPRINTED EMPTY WERE NOW FULL.

“

KAYLA MACINNIS

AWAKEN



Once, all people lived with close relationships to nature. Time and history have withered the bond between the human and the other-than-human world. Despite this, the Earth and All Our Relations continue to generously give everything we need. In my heart, I believe that if we are to heal ourselves and this beautiful planet, we must dissolve the illusion that we are separate from each other and from nature. Spending time in nature fosters awareness and interconnection to the world around us, providing the space for inward reflection and the potential for transformation. The way we encounter and interpret the natural world creates a personal narrative that gives meaning to experiences and emotions, allowing us to develop new ways of understanding ourselves and feeling fully integrated in our lives. Through connection with the natural world, we ultimately become connected to our 'inner nature'. Personal distress can be alleviated by developing the mutual connection between inside and outside.

Nature-based ceremony is a way of giving something back; it doesn't have to be complicated. A song of gratitude may seem like an insignificant gesture, but it isn't. It is a meaningful way of acknowledging the gifts we receive. It is also a way of recognizing that as humans we have something to learn from an other-than-human intelligence. The simple act of offering gratitude to the natural world helps to restore the bond between humans and nature. As that bond grows stronger, we can no longer ignore the fact that we are connected to everything else and that we have an important role to play in caring for the other-than-human world. Our ancestors who lived close to the land knew this and it is time for us to remember. Go to River, touch Earth, look deeply into Sky, then express your gratitude through your words, your laughter, your tears, through song or silence, or whatever way helps you feel alive. Express your gratitude, and don't keep it a secret due to fear of how you will look or sound. Share it with the world so that others will notice. Then, in their noticing, a curiosity will blossom. Something will awaken.

Corinna Stevenson





LORD GRANT ME

To the rugged mountain top I climbed
To take back the love that was once mine
Lord please bless my forgotten soul
And heal me and make me feel whole
My demons would like to watch me drown
But I will put up a fight before going down
My path has been barbed and so very long
Struggle to get to a place where I belong
My tears a winding river to the sea
When all I have to do is just to believe
Let me walk in the refreshing sea breeze
While putting all of my tensions at ease
Lord may you give me wings so I can fly
While kissing all of my worries goodbye
I struggle to get my boat onto the shore
Some seem to have it all but still want more
In the darkness there burns an eternal flame
I ask you to lift me up in your Holy name
They say where there's a flame there's fire
Lord grant me all of the freedom I desire

BY GARY EDWARD ALLEN (2019)

LISTEN TO YOUR HEART, MY GIRL

Content warning: talk of
suicide, PTSD.

By Vanessa Prescott, CHT,
RHT

In 2016, my dad was hospitalized after a suicide attempt. If he genuinely wanted to end his life, I believe he would have. His strength to persevere means everything to me. Every single day I am grateful to have the gift of his love, his life, and his physical presence alongside mine.

After he was released from the hospital I took him out for the best burgers in town. We sat across from each other, drinking coffee. Mine black (the most handsome way), and his with cream and sugar. A life as onerous as his deserves a little sweetness, less darkness, I suppose. I took him to buy a journal — and a lock he needed in order to keep his belongings safe, while he stayed in short-term transitional housing at Our Place Society. In true humble Papa fashion, he insisted that both items come from The Great Canadian Dollar Store.

One day, he hands me a black journal and says, “Here’s some things I’ve been writing. Stuff from when I was a kid. Things that have hurt me.”



Cree Grandmother of my Dad, eighty-years-old. Pictured beside her granddaughter who holds her great grandson.

was French. I am Metis.
 When I was a kid,
 white people would call
 us dirty INDIANS, half BREED.
 my mom would tell us ^(Hurt)
 your not INDIAN. you are
 French. she was embarrassed
 to be CREE Indian.
 to day I am proud to be Metis.
 Lies from mom (Hurt)

"Lies from mom (Hurt)".

The shame his mother felt about being Indigenous was something deeply ingrained in her. So deeply ingrained that she chose to actively lie to her children. My dad's grandmother, an old Cree woman, lived with them. It didn't take much for my dad, one of ten children, to see that he was indeed "an Indian".

Something that stood out to me about my dad's writing was his unique use of parenthesis. He would name his emotions, name the type of pain that he was feeling. In this case, "(hurt)".

Sometimes he would list resentment, guilt or fear. It occurred to me how mindful and empowering this simple exercise is – the naming of one's emotions.

I found it admirable, the way my dad was able to look back on his childhood, with such clarity – recalling these memories, identifying with the hurt he felt as early as four years old. His ability to acknowledge the ways in which these hurts still cause him anguish.

My dad's generation is the first in his bloodline with the ability to read and write. When I think about how much I value the written word it feels nearly unimaginable to think about oral societies not writing things down. I feel incredibly privileged to have the ability to share and preserve my thoughts through the written word. Something about it feels so concrete. Like if I match my intentions with the perfect words, I can encapsulate the meaning just so. I can convey something to someone else, without much chance that my words will be bent, altered, or skewed – misinterpreted maybe.

While I could have simply quoted my dad's words, including his actual penmanship feels more personal to me. To see his left-handed printing, his mix of capitalization and lowercase, the spelling, all of it – it has more character and meaning this way.

My dad has this amazing ability to have gratitude in seemingly most of his moments. He can be relentless in the way he doesn't give up hope. I take after him on this one (for better and for worse).

He spends most of his days helping other people. His disposition is joyful and positive. One wouldn't guess the hardships that his poor heart of gold has endured.

His stories of abuse are some of the most painful I have heard. And yet, he is still here. He is one of the most resilient people I know, and I am reminded of my own resilience, the resilience of our Indigenous people, just knowing his bloodline is in my bones.

DATE/FECHA

That was our heat for
long winters. Fall, months.
We had no running
water, or toilet. We
had a outhouse.
real primitive. but
we had my hand working
DAD. even his brothers
came to try to take
my DAD away. They
said, Leave these
Indian kids here.
come home with us
Romeo forgot about
these Indians. My DAD
got really angry and
told them to leave
and never EVER

Here he recalls a childhood memory: his uncles rolling up to his home in a brand-new black Cadillac telling his dad, "Leave these Indian kids here! Come home with us, Romeo – forget these Indians!"

DATE/FECHA

come to my DAD's
home again. EVEN my
uncle did not want us
as family. ^{hurt} but my DAD
Love, was strong, for us
kids. (A TRUE MAN
A Father his kids
his life his LOVE.
THANKS DAD.

my uncles drove away
in their Big Black NEW
car. asshole's pig shots
cry later. we didn't have
a car. my poor DAD
could not read or write.
But he knew Love, for his
children. That was DAD's
richness in life.

"Even my uncle did not want us as family. Hurt. But my Dad's love for us kids was strong...poor
Dad could not read or write. But he knew love for his children. That was Dad's richness in life."

I hope he knows, that I accept him, exactly as he is, and that my heart has forgiveness to offer him, in any place which he may need it.

It can be strange navigating the world as a “white-presenting” Métis person. Not white enough, not brown enough. Sometimes, I fear that First Nations people might think that I’m “Not native enough”. Or that people are afraid that I am appropriating my own culture. I guess these looming feelings of inadequacy are kind of like imposter syndrome. The feeling that somehow, someone somewhere is more adequate than you, more equipped.

More equipped with what, a more direct connection to an Indigenous bloodline? Well, yeah actually. That someone has more Native blood than I do, and therefore more rights to champion their culture. It’s all part of some separatist illusion that apparently my lower self gets fooled into sometimes. In my heart, I know we are all one.

Papa tells me, “Listen to your heart, my girl. The mind can say a lot of things. Always listen to your heart.” These words came to me in one of those anxious hypothetical situations, where you might need to defend yourself, “your hate doesn’t make me any less Indigenous”.

It’s revealing how many of these situations I have saved myself from in my mind. The mental affliction I create, only to better equip myself in case of actual danger. It’s something a lot of us with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) do.

Even referring to myself as having PTSD when it hasn’t been medically diagnosed makes me feel like an imposter, as if my trauma is not enough.

I know the trauma I’ve been through, better than anyone else. I know how deeply encoded it is in my nervous system. The violence, the murder, the abuse, the loss – I know how it sometimes haunts me, hurts me, triggers me, keeps me in an active state of fight-or-flight, and at times upheaves my perceived sense of safety.

I feel pain deep inside my soul. I have felt the plunging depths that only trauma can take you. I have felt it when the trauma was fresh and I have re-lived it decades and years later – alone, again and again. And yet as I write this, there is a sense of peace. A sense of twisted gratitude, for the ways that life has carved itself into me. I wholeheartedly feel that I am a deep person. The way I relate to life and others around me is deep and meaningful.



My dad's father, Roméo Napoléon Prescott, 1958. Beside him is my dad's mother, Margret Desjarlais. She holds her daughter. This is the only photo my dad has of his parents. Note the difference in facial expression between the two of them.

I am proud of who I am. Like my dad, I am proud to be Métis. I am proud of the level-headed way in which I carry myself. I am proud of how far I have come. I am proud of my achievements. And I am proud of my courage to face the deepest shadows in my own psyche, with love and acceptance.

“My mind goes there, but I am not there now.” These words are what I sometimes tell myself, when the pain creeps in. If my five-year-old self was brave back then, imagine my courage now. If my eight-year-old self had that kind of tenacity, imagine the fortitude of my spirit now, nearly two decades later.

I can tell myself that I am safe because my wit, adrenaline and course of action will protect me and others — just as it has in the past. I don’t have to keep saving myself from hypothetical situations in my mind anymore, as a form of training. My whole life has been training, for things that may never come. All I need to do is trust, and trusting is more peaceful.

When I think about my dad I am in awe. I am in awe of his integrity amidst adversity. I am in awe of his ability to show up for me. When I think about all of the pain that my heart holds, it seems but a freckle in comparison to his.

When I think about his pain, I think about the Pacific Ocean, something that is vast, deep, blue and all-encompassing. Something that is always there. And when I think about his pain, I think about the pain of his mother and his father, and all of the pain of our ancestors, the pain in our Indigenous blood-lines.

I think of my dad’s mother, my grandmother, and how I wish I could tell her, “It’s okay. It’s okay to be Indigenous. It’s powerful to be Indigenous. You can wear your skin, your culture, your heritage, with pride. You don’t have to hide your identity anymore. We will carry forth the blood they taught you to resent, and we will do so with pride. We are resilient, we carry your medicine and we will not be erased.”

I think of our pain, as Indigenous people. I think of our pain connecting us, just as each drop of water is connected in the ocean.

I was a little nervous to read this to my dad since it has sensitive content. I of course, needed his consent before sharing.

“I love it. That lifted me right up. I love you so much, my girl,” He said. “You know, an elder told me, ‘you never worry if you’re native enough, if you have native blood in you, you’re always native’.”

I said to my dad, “It’s so healing to acknowledge your pain, to not run from it, to identify with it, to not let it oppress you.”

My dad didn’t say a word about shame, or being afraid of how others would perceive him, knowing these pieces of his story. That is empowerment. He knows who he is. He doesn’t need anyone else to tell him. It is empowerment that I can openly admit for the first time to having PTSD. I am familiar with the DSM-5 criteria (the Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).

Our exposure to traumatic events does not define who we are as people. Admitting our hurts and identifying our pain, acknowledging our mental health, does not make us “mental,” it makes us human; it connects us. Cor is the Latin word for heart and when you tell your story, you embody courage; you speak from your heart.

Vanessa Prescott, CHT, RHT
info@vanessaprescott.com

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL- BEING IN A CLIMATE CHANGING WORLD

MS. ROMY PRITCHARD, BA, BFA



Mental health and wellbeing can be increasingly hard to maintain in a world that is being impacted by climate change. Our world has more loss, stress, disconnection, division, crisis, and pollution; so much so that my friends and family members are not planning very much after the next 10 years. While great spiritual leaders and teachings have shared that being present in the moment is all that we have anyway, it can still be difficult to silence the mind, calm the heart, foster hope and faith for our spirit, and feed our bodies with deliberate goodness.

Our Elders and Teachers have shared with us Medicine Wheel teachings. These teachings are more relevant today than ever before. They are simple teachings and truths that span space and time and provide guidance. The Medicine Wheel is a tool to help us know ourselves and how to walk in balance on our Red Road.

The Medicine Wheel is graphically represented by a circle divided into four quadrants. These quadrants represent the four aspects of ourselves - spirit, mind, emotions, and body. The Medicine Wheel has many other sacred teachings such as how humans develop, how we can relate to our community and humanity, how to understand the seasons, how we are to relate to Mother Earth and all her children and to the star beings.

I have been taught Medicine Wheel teachings by many Elders and healers throughout my life. Each time a new aspect of the Medicine Wheel is illuminated. This sacred circle teaching remains timeless and more meaningful in an out of balance world.

I have found that by remembering, acknowledging, and learning about myself in each quadrant of the circle that I am able to stay more in harmony with myself and others. I have more consciousness about caring for Mother Earth. Each aspect of myself is equally important. Learning to listen to my thoughts, to my emotions, to my body, acknowledging and allow spiritual development every day is a good way to walk mindfully. The more I have dedicated myself to this daily discovery, the more I have learned about what to do with my critical or overwhelming thoughts and feelings. I have more love and compassion for my fears or despondence. I have learned to eat better and exercise more so that my body works well and supports my life. I actively seek out medicines and teachings to clear and balance my body, thoughts, and emotions.

Using the Medicine Wheel for my own wellbeing and for gaining insight on my journey has also helped me be open to asking for help when I need guidance in particularly difficult times. I have found healers and teachers to help me along my path. These people have greater insight into the various aspects of our mind, body, spirit, and emotions. These teachings and support have helped me understand myself more, helped me overcome what seemed to be insurmountable difficulties, and helped bring awareness to the places where I get stuck. Without these healers and teachers, I would not have been able to walk my path.

The Medicine Wheel is a simple tool that our ancestors gave us. It helped them through difficult times to survive and thrive. It continues to be valid today to shed light in our inner world as well as in our outer world. May you have balance today.

Ms. Romy Pritchard, BA, BFA

MY ROAD TO MENTAL WELLNESS

**CONTENT WARNING:
DEPRESSION, SELF-HARM**

When I was 18, I struggled a lot with comparing myself to others and negative self-talk; which led to increased anxiety, isolation, and self-harm. I am 21 now, and have a mental health support team. I have made progress that I and others have noticed.

For a while, it seemed that every person in my life was only there to monitor or support my mental health issues.

One small but important part of my healing journey was to join a choir. It is not a Métis choir, but it is a multi-cultural, no-audition-choir, and I am positive there are other Métis people in the choir. Still, I'm too shy to ask, and it's not really important to know anyhow.

Choirs, in general, do not cost a lot of money, and each week there were kind people who said encouraging things to me and others. No one in the choir asked about my mental health or coping because no one knew that I struggled with anxiety and negative self-talk. This welcoming choir offered me one evening per week, where I could be with others in a healthy way. No one asked intrusive questions; mostly, we chatted about the cool parts of each new song.

At first, I did not want to attend this choir group. I made excuses and felt overwhelmed at the idea of being in a group where I did not know anyone. Eventually, staying home and isolating became more painful than joining this new choir group. Plus, my mom was totally using every trick she knew to get me to try choir "just once". I finally did, and I'm glad I did.

My encouragement to other Métis youth or young adults who might be struggling with a mental health challenge is to join a choir, a sport, jig dancing, language classes, beading workshops, a club, something, anything, where there are emotionally healthy people who enjoy your participation.

In a quirky way, it is like I have sung my way out of depression and back to stable mental health.

I wish the same for you.

Anonymous





1-833-MÉTISBC
(1 - 8 3 3 - 6 3 8 - 4 7 2 2)

SERVICE AREAS:

Crisis line workers assist with problem solving, establishing support services, developing safety plans, conducting suicide risk assessments, offering referrals and safety monitoring for at-risk individuals. These services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for Métis people throughout the province of British Columbia.



WHY CALL?

- Mental Wellness
- Abuse
- Relationships
- Bullying
- Addictions
- Suicide & Ideation
- Depression
- Grief & Loss
- Self-harm
- Peer pressure
- Anxiety
- Financial issues
- Culture
- and many more

MÉTIS CRISIS LINE

24 HOUR PHONE SUPPORT:

In collaboration with KUU-US Crisis Services, the Métis Crisis Line handles calls from individuals concerned about themselves, or from family or agencies concerned about others. Once the crisis issue has been identified, the level of severity for call handling is determined, with the goal of providing a non-judgemental approach to listening and problem solving. A support system is put into place where the caller is brought back to a pre-crisis state. Debriefing is also provided to any frontline worker who works in the field. The staff maintain an in-depth referral database.

RISK ASSESSMENT:

For situations that pose a risk to the caller or others, the Métis Crisis Line is able to respond by way of mediating, de-escalating or intervening. As an accredited agency of the American Association of Suicidology, workers conduct suicide risk assessments and act accordingly. The Métis Crisis Line staff take suicide ideation, attempts in progress and 3rd party reporting seriously. When a person at risk is identified, Métis Crisis Line staff will reach out by phone to the individual. This contact will also include providing phone support and establishing coping mechanisms.

SAFETY MONITORING:

In order to assist individuals that: (1) are unable to access referrals due to geographic location, (2) are on a wait list, (3) have been intervened upon and released from hospital, and/or (4) lack support systems, the Métis Crisis Line staff create a safety plan. This includes establishing a "gatekeeper approach" which involves monitoring "at risk" individuals. Daily phone contact with the individual continues until there is a confirmed link to a referral agency and/or the individual is deemed no longer "at risk". Service providers frequently call upon the Crisis Line staff to initiate this model for individuals they are concerned about.



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

in collaboration with
KUU-US Crisis Services





PARTY STACKER (NEGATIVES)

LEVIS GLASS



PARTY STACKER (NEGATIVES) IS A SERIES OF PRINTS THAT UTILIZE DIY TECHNOLOGY WITH PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY TO REFLECT UPON SUBSTANCE ABUSE. THIS SERIES WAS CREATED BY CONVERTING A PARTY STACKER COLEMAN BEER COOLER INTO BOTH AN OPAQUE PROJECTOR & DARKROOM ENLARGER CAPABLE OF PROJECTING ACTUAL OBJECTS ONTO A SCREEN OR, IN THIS CASE, LIGHT-SENSITIVE PAPER. THESE PHOTOGRAPHIC NEGATIVES DEPICT AND CONTRAST THE APPEALING AND COLOURFUL CONSUMER PRODUCTS.



Sheepall



Odorless Paint Thinner
Diluant pour peinture sans odeur



DANGER ATTENTION

COMBUSTIBLE. VAPOR HARMFUL.
HARMFUL OR FATAL IF SWALLOWED.
MAY CAUSE EYE IRRITATION.
ASPIRATION HAZARD. CAN ENTER
LUNGS AND CAUSE DAMAGE.
EXPOSURE MAY CAUSE LIVER,
KIDNEY, CNS DAMAGE.
PEUT CAUSER DES DOMMAGES AU FOIE,
REINS ET AU SNC.
LES POUMONS ET CAUSER DES
D'ASPIRATION PEUT PÉNÉTRER DANS
L'ASPIRATION DES YEUX. DANGER
MORTEL, S'IL EST AVALÉ. PEUT CAUSER
CE PRODUIT EST DANGEREUX. VOIRE
COMBUSTIBLE. VAPEURS DANGEREUSES.

(contient)
ASTM D-4236
52.12%
(90.5% vol)

zhang laosun zshobdo d'001
1000 ml (33.8 fl. oz.)
Net Wt. 1000 g (35.27 oz.)
Heavy Duty Solvent Resistant
with an Extraordinary Low Vapor Pressure

NPN 05081933

trissions extrêmes*
menthe
mint
extreme chill*



gomme
gum

nicorette®

NICOTINE POLACRILEX GUM USP
GOMME DE POLACRILEX DE NICOTINE USP

25 cigarettes ou moins par jour
si vous fumez
25 cigarettes or less a day
for those who smoke

2mg

25 morceaux
25 pieces
AIDE POUR CESSER DE FUMER
STOP SMOKING AID

2mg
25 pieces
25 morceaux
AIDE POUR CESSER DE FUMER
STOP SMOKING AID
25 cigarettes or less a day
if you smoke
25 cigarettes or less per day













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MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

OPTIONS

FOR
SEXUAL
HEALTH



**BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

Supported by the Province of British Columbia

Vaping

Submitted by: "E" Division Indigenous Policing Services and Crime Prevention Services

Vaping is popular and although it may seem like everyone vapes, approximately 20% of youth in BC report vaping. Vaping is still new and the long-term health impacts are not known. If you're around people who are vaping, keep in mind that second-hand vapour is not harmless but it does have fewer chemicals than second-hand cigarette smoke.

Vaping is not harmless. Vape e-juices may contain flavours, zero to high amounts of nicotine, and/or cannabis. In young people, vaping nicotine-containing e-juices may alter brain development and lead to addiction. Vaping can expose users to harmful chemicals (volatile organic compounds, carbonyls, tiny particles) and toxic heavy metals (chromium, nickel, lead) which may cause lung damage. In BC, tobacco, vapour and cannabis products can't be sold to minors under the age of 19.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESOURCE

Foundry

Offers young people ages 12-24 health and wellness resources, services and supports – online and through integrated service centres in select BC communities.

foundrybc.ca

SUBSTANCE USE RESOURCES

BC Lung Association

Features information on vaping

bc.lung.ca

Centre for Youth Crime Prevention

Information from substance use, healthy relationships to distracted driving.

rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cycp-cpcj

Quit Now

Vaping cessation support through behavioural counselling

www.quitnow.ca/quitting/e-cigarettes-and-vaping/i-want-help-to-stop-vaping

NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO?

Kids Help Phone 24/7

Live chat: kidshelpline.ca

Ph: 1-800-668-6868

Text: 686868

Métis Crisis Line

1-833-METISBC (1-833-638-4722)

The BC RCMP's youth advisors across the province shared some of the reasons why youth vape, including:

It is the new hype and youth are jumping on the trend.

They experience peer pressure to try it and it helps them fit in.

The flavour choices and packaging makes the product appealing.

Celebrities and influencers are using it and make vaping look like fun.

It is easy to buy vape products, compared to cannabis or cigarettes.

It is convenient to use anywhere including at school, and it is easy to hide from teachers and parents.

They use it as a tool to quit smoking cigarettes and feel that it's less harmful than cigarettes.

“

RESILIENCE

DAD TAKES PHOTOS OF THE MOON, GRAIN CYLINDERS, AND OLD CARS. ALL I KNOW ABOUT HIM IS WHAT HE SHARES ON SOCIAL MEDIA. THINGS WE HAVE IN COMMON: A LOVE FOR LED ZEPPELIN ("I PLAYED IT FOR YOU IN THE WOMB," HE ONCE TOLD ME), ALWAYS NOTICING THE CLOCK WHEN IT READS 5:55, AND A REVERENCE FOR THINGS LOST TO HISTORY.

THE INHERITANCE OF SADNESS, A PAIN PASSED DOWN THROUGH AN ABORIGINAL BLOODLINE THAT TRACES BACK TO BEFORE THE 1700S. AS THE LINE CONTINUES, EACH MEMBER CARRIES THE WEIGHT OF NOT QUITE FITTING IN. TRANSIENT. WEAVING LIKE GHOSTS BETWEEN CITIES, SUBURBS, AND THE COUNTRY, NEVER PUTTING DOWN ROOTS.

I RARELY KNOW WHERE MY DAD IS. HAFFORD? THE ROAD? I COULDN'T TELL YOU, BUT I REMEMBER THE STORIES OF 20TH STREET IN SASKATOON. HIS OLD NEIGHBOURHOOD AND PLACE OF MY BIRTH, A STREET DIVIDED — EQUAL PARTS VIOLENCE AND COMPASSION. THERE IS A HARDNESS TO HIM THAT SOME FEAR, BUT I RESPECT IT BECAUSE I KNOW THAT ONE MUST HAVE SUFFERED TO BUILD THAT KIND OF RESILIENCE.

Kayla MacInnis

”



TEENAGE MENTAL HEALTH AND ACUPUNCTURE

CHRIS JEFFREY R.AC. (REGISTERED ACUPUNCTURIST)

Parents may often feel at a loss as to where to seek help when they start to see unwanted changes in their teen's behaviour, and the youth themselves may also feel too confused and frustrated by what they are experiencing to know how to manage the symptoms. Some signs of teenage depression are changes in appetite, insomnia, agitation/anger, withdrawal, and thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

Mental health concerns can impact everyone in different ways; the roots of which may feel complex or mysterious - as such the ways to navigate one's mental health journey can be as unique as the individual experiencing them.

For some, pursuing the support of a physician or a psychiatrist to explore medication options may be the best path. For others, it may include connecting with a psychologist to explore topics such as healthy boundaries, relationships, or difficult experiences. Perhaps for some it may be connecting with a variety of practitioners around lifestyle adaptations such as nutrition or physical activity.

Acupuncture is one possible option that some may explore to help in managing their mental health. Acupuncture, the practise of moving energy in the body with fine needles, has been helping people to manage depression, anxiety and other forms of mental health for over 2000 years. The reason that it works so well in teenagers is threefold.

First of all, for the most part, teens are young and healthy. Acupuncture tends to be far more effective for someone who is healthy and able to heal quickly, as opposed to someone in their seventies or eighties or someone who has been ill for a long time. Chinese medical theory says that children are considered to be pure Yang energy, which is warm, active, and transformative. And kids are always transforming; they are growing and changing almost daily, from babies to toddlers and then on to teenagers. This is a good thing from a healing perspective.

Secondly, as youth go through adolescence, the change in their hormones may cause a wide variety of physical, emotional and mental health symptoms. In Chinese medicine, every person is viewed as unique, and therefore a personal treatment plan is necessary to assist them in what they are experiencing, rather than offering a broad spectrum approach to healing.

Finally, because acupuncture targets the nervous system and impacts brain chemistry, it can produce positive effects for teens on several different levels, including increasing production of endorphins, alleviating severe symptoms of anxiety and stress, and producing a calming effect. Some scientific studies (Ref 1 and 2) also suggest that acupuncture combined with opioid agonists can effectively be used to manage the withdrawal symptoms from alcohol and drugs.

Although the concept of the needles can be intimidating at first, acupuncture is non-invasive and for the most part painless, and the benefits for teens who are suffering from any form of mental health issues can be far reaching.

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TALKING CIRCLES

HEALING THROUGH THE POWER OF THE WORD,
PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE FOR KEEPING US
MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY

Silence. Serenity. Reverie. Respect. Talking stick passed to me. I take it in my hands, observe the uniqueness of it. My turn to be heard. My turn to share while no one else utters a word. My turn to be held as a sentient being within a safe and healing space. My words allowed to be spoken, slowly at first, then gaining momentum until the floodgates of what I have been carrying flow from me in coalescing words - lifting burden off of me and placing them in the lap of The Creator, the Source of Life. No one here tries to fix me or my problems, they just support, with silence, with respect, honouring that the way through my problems will come to me. I look around at my peers, their faces full of a knowing, empathy, kindness, love. My words are not alien. They have struck a chord with others. I am not alone with the challenges I am facing. My words, now spoken, are creating healing ripple effects through others.

There is power in the telling of my story, a healing, as there is healing and power in each person's sharing of their story/my story/we are all connected, our experiences perhaps appearing different yet are the same. We do not have to feel alone. This talking circle shows me this, more than anything, that this human experience, the journeys we weave our way through have similar cores. I feel profoundly moved. People tear up at my telling, I tear up at theirs. We support each other without offering solutions. I feel valued. I am being vulnerable, therefore: STRONG. I feel loved. This is community.

A sense of renewal and rejuvenation fill me. A sense of relief. I will make it through. Others have before me, others are now, I will as well. I have helped create a reverie, just by being me and sharing my story. Though I may feel fragmented,

broken, I realize I am whole. We all are. In our imperfections we are perfect. We are where we are supposed to be and in perfect timing, we will move into the next space we occupy, with its perfect imperfections, nudging us to grow. We will make it through that as well. And so, the wheel turns, the circle spins, I am ready for the next frame, and will have my talking circle to hold me once more as I walk through the next step. I am ready, I say my prayer of handing my issues over to The Creator, staying open to The Creator's whisperings of where to go from here, and I pass the talking stick to the next in the circle and I support this sentient being beside me.

This has been my healing experience participating in a Talking Circle. We all need to feel we have truly been heard, to feel we have truly been seen. Having a Talking Circle for sharing what is going on in our lives has long been a way of our aboriginal ancestors, it is an exceptional way to give people an uninterrupted voice, and a place to safely lighten the burdens carried on their shoulders. Having peers and mentors who will give you the space to share, without judgment while keeping your issues discrete, goes a long way toward mental health. What is shared in a circle stays in the circle. Having outlets is vital. challenges, having others that you can trust and know will listen, can go a long way to feeling valued. It is also valuable to learn how to actively, empathetically listen to others, to be the support to others you wish to have for yourself. Indigenous communities did this in talking circles. We can re-cultivate this in our homes, families, Métis Communities, among trusted friends, and in our schools. We can be the voice of change bringing back the ways that traditionally worked for our people.

Kids need healthy outlets, and Talking Circles implemented in childhood can help the next generation be better equipped to identify their feelings, share and communicate, and become better at navigating mental health. Talking Circles can support children to learn empathy through listening to the experiences of peers and gain an understanding that everyone may struggle with something. Talking Circles offer us the opportunity to make impactful relations with others – another hallmark in keeping us mentally healthy. Denmark is implementing sharing circle time in school and it is not by chance that they have been considered to be one of the happiest nations – maintaining mental wellbeing is a large part of that (link below). In North America we must forge our own circles, bring that tradition back, bring awareness to our homes, communities and schools of the value of these ways. Let's encourage our local Métis Associations, school principals, teachers and Aboriginal support persons to help our schools get there too.

Authors note: Here is the Danish article to inspire us to re-cultivate this valuable ceremony in our communities, and share it within our schools.

<https://www.google.ca/amp/s/amp.theatlantic.com/amp/article/494975/>

By Laura Meikle

Copyright Feb. 20, 2020

WE COULD ALL DO WITH A LITTLE HELP

BY KEVIN STEWART

CONTENT WARNING: TALK OF SUICIDE, DEPRESSION



I wish I could take a light hearted approach to my voyage into mental health over the last two years. Unfortunately, there is just not a lot of light heartedness to it. It is absolutely better than it was but I am not out the woods - something that most likely keeps me grounded on the issue. In the last two years, there have also been warm moments and more than one epiphany; I'll try to share those.

My depression and subsequent trips to the darker side started over a sudden divorce and the estrangement of my kids. I try not judge how, why, or when a person ended up where they are at. I have found there are a myriad of reasons why someone becomes depressed but I am confident they have to be addressed or we may wind up with a conclusion we wish we saw coming.

"Psychological resilience is the ability to mentally or emotionally cope with a crisis and return to pre-crisis status quickly. Resilience exists when the person uses mental processes and behaviours in promoting personal assets and protecting self from the potential negative effects of stressors." (1)

Oh my. Quickly? It's been two years since I have seen my kids and if I sit down with a sad song on, I can still get emotional within minutes. Is that resilience? By way of perspective, I suggest it is.

In the very beginning, I was so sad, I made myself physically sick. Often. While I most likely think of my kids every day, I can go through weeks without being emotionally disabled. I don't think I am going to get any medals for "quick resilience" but I feel I have bounced back significantly and I continue to look for ways to be more resilient. We all should; if you twist your ankle, you are going to research ways to make it better, go to a professional, and put in the work with rehab. Please do the same with mental health - put in the work.

Takeaway? Be gentle on yourself and give yourself time. This was / is a big deal...it will take time and it WILL get better. Please, please...look for help and support.

What did I mean by "darker side"? You can probably guess. Interestingly but perhaps not surprising, it's not depression per se that is the strong indicator of suicidal intent, it's hopelessness (2). From my experience, this makes a great deal of sense. I had been depressed for some time and had happily gone on medication to help me with the diagnosis. When I couldn't see my kids and then was told by the courts that they did not "have" to see me, I was an emotional wreck. At the time, I was not in counselling and did not know where to turn for information on the subject. Isolated, overwhelmed, depressed, confused and now hopeless.

It was a slope I don't like to think about; I am not sure where it would have gone if not for an odd intersection with fate.

Takeaway? Look out for friends that are showing signs of hopelessness. Find ways to show you care and promote mental health education by having them see a professional. (3) If they won't organize it for themselves, you do it. You go with them. You talk with them after. I doubt you can turn around in the grocery store without bumping into five people that suffer from depression. Three of them may be extremely high functioning; oodles of money, great partner, super house, etc. It's the one that has lost hope you need to worry about most. Brad Pitt has suffered from depression and so has Bruce Springsteen. I know, I know...really? Depression doesn't care who you are and you are certainly not alone.

Anthony Bourdain died by suicide after a night out with a dear friend, sharing a wonderful meal. His friend would later report Anthony as being "off" but at no time did he appear to be in a suicidal state (in the friend's opinion). He left behind a 14 year old daughter that he adored and a movie star girlfriend. She reported nothing out of the norm lately, but dear friends said he struggled with depression his whole life. Obviously I didn't know Bourdain and I enjoyed his shows as much as any TV enthusiast, but I was not a die-hard fan. But his death shocked me in a profound way; it cemented the notion that we don't know how people are dealing with their issues, their haunting demons, what coulda, shoulda, woulda in their life. In another epiphany, Bourdain's death immediately made me focus on how I wanted to confront the issue I was in, that I wanted my story to continue.

Shortly after the loss of their colleague, CNN presented an excellent documentary on the subject hosted by Anderson Cooper (whose brother also died by suicide). This was the start of me pursuing information on the subject. Mental health was a huge deal for me as soon as I recognized I was overwhelmed. Anthony Bourdain may have saved my life.

Takeaway? I can't imagine anyone who has lost hope having the wherewithal to start to pick themselves up. Don't wait for them...help. I completely lucked out having to make meaning from Anthony Bourdain's suicide. Don't wait...get them help in any capacity you can. Immediate help can be found here <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/> (4).

Suicidal ideation ("thinking" about it) is much more common than you would think. Personally, I can't ever recall a time in my life when I had suicidal ideation but at the same time, I was living a pretty blessed existence.

My kids were doing well in school and sports and seemed well adjusted socially. We were in a big house in the most desirable neighborhood in the city; Disneyworld, ski trips...what more could I want? I would say it took me two months to go from a happy, adjusted and functional person with no apparent outward signs of mental health concerns, to someone who would have welcomed a stay in a psychiatric unit.

After Bourdain's suicide, I started to talk to professionals and then friends about these issues. It changed everything; people were understanding and showed compassion that made me feel heard and understood, strings of hope started to appear. You guessed right; I may have still been depressed but I was starting to see hope, light, the future.

Personally, it was not any one thing I started to be hopeful for. I just started to feel like the future could be better. I could travel, save money for things, and pursue experiences I still wanted to have. After all, I was ALIVE. I started thinking about going back to school and was surprised on how many people supported me in this thinking. Nobody said it was "too late", a constant fear I had.

DON'T GIVE UP – you have been happy and you will be again; continue to work to find a way to navigate depression. It most likely means getting up, getting out. Don't encourage loneliness.

If people ignore or reject you, find new friends. Don't let anyone add to your misery. If it's better not to see someone right now, use that option.

Connect with upbeat people and those that support your journey.

Watch your thoughts! Do this when you feel you are going back to the ol' blues highway. Acknowledge that you are in the middle of an old memory, and stop it! For me, it was a case of actually telling myself to STOP IT. Substitute the memory with a positive image of the future. Look at the image it creates...be brave enough to stop; you deserve better.

My Friends, Cousins, Fellow Humans. We are going to get some stuff we don't want in this life. That's life. The chance of it overwhelming us from time to time is pretty good. Let's keep the discussion alive; let's reach out when events are obviously upsetting and let's stay strong as a community by learning more about mental health. Tawnshi and Marsee, best wishes for 2020.

References

1. Psychological Resilience: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_resilience
2. Hopelessness, Depressions, and Attempted Suicide: <https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/abs/10.1176/ajp.130.4.455>
3. When Should You Worry About Suicidal Thoughts?: <https://www.rewire.org/living/worry-suicidal-thoughts/>
4. Crisis Centre BC: <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/>

The background of the cover features a misty, mountainous landscape. A vertical grey bar runs down the right side of the image. The title is written in large, bold, black capital letters, centered over the right side of the image.

THE HARDEST STORIES ARE THE TRUEST

BREE B. BALASKI

CONTENT WARNING: DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE, SENSITIVE LANGUAGE,
SUBSTANCE USE

The hardest stories are the truest. I have struggled to write this piece for ten years, only a handful of people know my story. By the time you have read this, you will have only known a brief fragment of narrative.

What was adoration, turned into isolation, masked by precise manipulation. It wasn't only emotional, it was violent. It was not being able to talk to my own mother and father. It was not being able to wear the lovely clothes that I owned. It was being full of fear to speak, to think, to wake, to sleep.

I remember being afraid of getting out of bed because he was sleeping on the couch from a long night out again. Bottles and blow littered the kitchen counter, the coffee table. At least this time he didn't wake me by smashing picture frames into a thousand pieces. It was a relief there was no glass to meet my feet at the bedroom door that morning. I had moved away from my friends and close family. I had one true pillar of support in my life during this time, he is sorrowfully missed as he is now deceased. He was my boss, Blair. He saw the tears, the fear, the bruises, the anxiety, the depression. He sincerely knew my pain. He would let me sit in our network storage room and cry. I was a young professional, working in tech - employed by a Health Authority as a liaison between a well-known electronic medical record vendor and their IT Department. I kept my shit together for the two-year negotiated roll out, by the end only a grain of my identity remained.

I knew my life had taken a turn and the only focus now was the escape. You see, when you're leaving an abusive partner, there is no closure. There is no "have a nice day, I wish you well". There is one thought and one thought only, a question more or less. I would often ask myself this question and it saddens me to this day that I would ever have to ask myself this, but I did. I would ask myself if I was going to make it out alive.

It was near the tail end of my employment contract that my spouse wished death upon me. I informed my employer, and that's when my mother came with a truck and trailer and we cleared out my belongings in the wee hours of the night while he was out. I was going home. I felt numb. I was weightlessly paralyzed with shock that I was free.

I still question how it all happened, but in the end, it was just the nonsensical puzzle piece of my life. It was a broken mirror that distorts your view to only see slivers of yourself. It's what built me up. It was a stepping stone, which at the time felt like a boulder the size of a monstrosity.

It doesn't matter how long ago, or if the wounds are still fresh, you need to hear this.

It doesn't matter if it was a him or a her, or if it was words or a fist, you need to hear this.

It doesn't matter if you said the right or wrong thing, or if your expressions were authentic or mistaken, you need to hear this.

YOU NEED TO HEAR THIS.

You can. You will.

I did. I have.

I have turned pain into power and one day, you will too.

For anyone who has been affected by domestic abuse, whether mental or physical I encourage you to talk, to reach out.

You are not alone.

MÉTIS CRISIS LINE

1-833-METISBC (1-833-638-4722)

VICTIMLINKBC

1-800-563-0808 [HTTPS://WWW.HEALTHLINKBC.CA/MENTAL-HEALTH-SUBSTANCE-USE/RESOURCES/VICTIMLINKBC](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/mental-health-substance-use/resources/victimlinkbc)

ENDING VIOLENCE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

604-633-2506

[HTTPS://ENDINGVIOLENCE.ORG/NEED-HELP/](https://endingviolence.org/need-help/)

BC GOVERNMENT: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

[HTTPS://WWW2.GOV.BC.CA/GOV/CONTENT/SAFETY/PUBLIC-SAFETY/DOMESTIC-VIOLENCE](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/domestic-violence)



RESILIENT ROOTS: CONTRIBUTORS

We are so deeply grateful for all contributors who have chosen to share their work with Resilient Roots: Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine. Your incredible contributions have allowed us to shine a light on Métis voices in our Communities.

If you are interested in contributing to a future issue of Resilient Roots, please email Jillian at jjones@mnbc.ca.



Levi Glass, BFA, MFA

Levi Glass is a Canadian artist of Métis and German descent. He has exhibited internationally at venues in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, UK, and frequently across Canada. He is based in Victoria, British Columbia, and holds a BFA degree from Thompson Rivers University and an MFA degree from the University of Victoria. Glass' research practice focuses on the mediation between images and objects that often result in new technologies in familiar forms. His artistic practice utilizes a wide range of mediums including sculpture, installation, photography, and new media to experiment with a similar wide range of contemporary issues from self-representation to politics to phenomenology. In addition to his own research and artistic practice, Glass has been an assistant preparator at the Kamloops Art Gallery, a member of the programming committee at Arnica Artist-Run Centre, a research assistant to The Camera Obscura Project, an artist assistant to Donald Lawrence, Kevin Schmidt and Cedric Bomford, and a sessional instructor at the University of Victoria. Website: leviglass.ca



Bree B. Balaski

Bree Balaski is a Kelowna based Technical Analyst in Health Care and Solopreneur. Born and raised in The Pas, Manitoba, she graduated from The University College of The North with a Computer Programmer Analyst Diploma. Bree broadened her education by acquiring her BSc. in Applied Computer Science at The University of Winnipeg and has accumulated over 10 years of experience in various technical roles throughout the Health Care Sector. In addition to her daytime grind she has utilized her creativity to develop a Leisure Apparel Brand, Hardbody Hippie, and has earned an International Gold Medal for Canada in Women's Competitive Figure Bodybuilding.



Vanessa Prescott, CHT, RHT

Vanessa Prescott is a 28 year old Métis Clinical Herbal Therapist who practices on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen peoples. As one of her patients has worded it, “In her clinical work, Vanessa embodies the factual analysis of a scientist, the heart of a poet, the wisdom of a therapist, and the spirits of her ancestors”. She can be reached via her website info@vanessaprescott.com or via Instagram [@vanessaprescott](https://www.instagram.com/vanessaprescott)



Vicki Lynn Rae

Vicki Lynn Rae is an artist who currently resides and works in her studio loft in New Westminster, BC. She works in acrylic paint on canvas. In 2001 Vicki received formal training at the Lorenzo de Medici Art Institute in Florence, Italy. Three years later she was accepted into the IDEA design program at Capilano University and ultimately pursued her painting career through self-directed study and experimentation. Honouring her Native Canadian and South African roots, Vicki has explored various themes such as African and North American wildlife and landscape subjects as well as dance, spirituality and psychology. In addition to her Safari and Canada Wild Series, Vicki explores deeper themes of addiction and recovery

“Employing intuition as a guide and raw emotion as fuel, I give all of myself to my Art. I engage with each piece, as if in a dance. Allowing the painting to lead me I aim to reveal its unique energy, its voice and the story it has to tell.”

Website: www.vickirae.com



Kayla MacInnis

Kayla MacInnis is a Cree-Ojibwe Métis, Polish/Ukrainian, and Scottish artist who was born in the prairies but raised by the sea. Her passion is to share stories of people through photography and the written word.



Laura Meikle

Avoiding the usual amnesia coming into this lifetime, Laura has retained memories of being in spirit. Her Spiritual Awakening at 18 brought the realization We Are All One and the illumination that God is Love/Light, So Are We and All are deeply interconnected. It put her on the path of helping facilitate such Spiritual Awakenings in others: She plans to open a Healing Retreat to further this work and presently works as a Massage Therapist and Healer in Vernon, BC. Learning she is Métis, of Indigenous origins, resonates immensely with her — knowing the interconnectedness of it all — as Indigenous have known so deeply for a very long time.



Corinna Stevenson

For over 24 years Corinna has taught and guided people through personal transformation, first as a high school teacher and then as a therapeutic wilderness guide. An exceptionally talented teacher and facilitator, Corinna brings much heart, humour, and integrity to her work. Her immense respect for the natural world and her well-founded belief in the unlimited potential of humans are themes that characterize all her work.



Ms. Romy Pritchard, BA, BFA

Ms. Romy Pritchard is a Red River Métis woman. She lives in Mill Bay, BC. She enjoys creating edible landscapes, producing art, and supporting people in fulfilling their highest potential. Ms. Pritchard is a Health and Wellness Coach and can be contacted at medicinewheelhealingcentre.com.



Gary Edward Allen



Chris Jeffrey, R.Ac.



Kevin Stewart

Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative Members

The Métis Youth (MY) Mental Health and Wellness Initiative works to raise awareness, to empower Métis Youth and Communities, and to make a difference in mental health within the Métis Community through actioning projects, fostering education, reducing stigma, and providing opportunity for Community discussion and engagement. The Initiative is made up of seventeen core members, and is further broken down into four subcommittees, to allow members to focus their efforts into the areas that they are most passionate about.

Please note, not all members of the Initiative have chosen to be acknowledged in this magazine.



Hailey Howse

Hailey is a Métis citizen originally from Alberta, but has been a resident of beautiful BC for 12 years now. She is currently completing her undergrad majoring in psychology at the University of Victoria. Her goal is to become a Family and Marriage Counsellor - with a specific interest in empowering teen girls. Aiming to connect and contribute to her Métis community, Hailey has joined the MY MHW initiative, contributing to the Magazine, Branding & Social Media, and Community Engagement subcommittees of the initiative.



Jamie Scott

Jamie is currently a third year Psychology student at Simon Fraser University. She is on the Magazine and Research and Education subcommittees for the MY Mental Health and Wellness Initiative. Jamie is passionate about mental health and well-being, and believes that everyone should feel like they have somewhere they can go when life gets difficult.

**Quinn Basso**

Quinn is the youth rep, and manages the social media and web presence, for the Prince Rupert & District Métis Society. He grew up in Prince Rupert until he moved to Victoria a few years ago to attend UVic, where he recently graduated with a Bachelor of Science with Distinction.

Quinn is now working at the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions as part of the Indigenous Youth Internship Program with the BC Government. He was thrilled to join the MY Mental Health and Wellness Initiative this year, as well as the MNBC Data Governance Committee where he is the representative for Region 6. He is applying to medical schools this year, in hopes of attending in the near future.

**Jillian Jones**

Jillian is a Mental Health Policy Analyst with the Métis Nation of BC. Graduating with a degree in education, Jillian has worked in mental health for the past seven years, and is a passionate advocate for mental wellness. In her spare time, Jillian likes to engage in various mental health initiatives, attend as many concerts as possible, explore BC, and spend time with her family. She is profoundly grateful for the opportunity to work as the facilitator for the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative. If you are interested in learning more about the Initiative, please email Jillian at jjones@mnbc.ca



Logan Burd



Ripley Burd



Elle Aikema



Tom Willman



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA