

RESILIENT ROOTS

Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine



ISSUE TWO, SPRING 2021

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Minister's Message



Tawnshi,

We are so happy to share with you the second issue of *Resilient Roots: Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine*. The magazine in front of you today has been made possible by the inspired and dedicated efforts of the members of the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative. Thank you, to this incredible group of Métis youth, for your continued passion in working to uplift Métis mental health and wellness.

Since launching issue one last spring, we all have faced an unprecedented year that has brought struggle, uncertainty, and challenge in ways that we could not have imagined. As we all worked to adapt to life during the COVID-19 pandemic, what has shone through so clearly is the strength and resilience of the Métis Community.

This magazine hopes to be a testament to that shining strength and resilience. Every part of this magazine – from the stories, to the art, to the poetry – comes from the powerful voices of our Métis Community Members. We are so deeply grateful to all contributors for sharing their incredible work with this publication.

To our readers, we hope that what you find within these pages will bring you inspiration, connection, and act as a reminder of the deep resilience that lives within us all.

Marsee,

Minister Kate Elliott

Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,

Métis Nation British Columbia



Tawnshi

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Tawnshi! We are so excited to be sharing with you our second issue of *Resilient Roots: Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine*.

As members of the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative, we have sought to continue 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 to. *Marsee*, and be well.

- *The Métis Youth Mental Health
and Wellness Initiative*





FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Métis Youth Mental Health and
Wellness Initiative is seeking new members!
To learn more, please connect with Jillian at
jjones@mnbc.ca

*Please note that the submissions in this magazine reflect the opinions of their
authors and may not necessarily reflect the views of the Métis Nation BC*

LIVING WITH: *Borderline Personality Disorder*

AVA HART



Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental illness, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those living with a mental illness. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather to provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

Content warning: this article includes information about suicidal ideation and self-harm

My name is Ava, and I was diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder when I was seventeen years old. I was a senior in high school and it was a big deal at the time. It was a big deal for my friends, family and myself. This is my story.

Let's start with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Living with BPD has been a challenge, as with all mental illnesses. It does not have a cure, but can be manageable. At the time of diagnosis it felt like a life sentence to suicidal ideation, sadness, and a guarantee of a really horrible existence. I now know

that is not the case. You can live with mental illness; you don't have to just survive but you can thrive.

Borderline Personality Disorder has very distinctive symptoms that show up in many ways. The biggest symptom that I deal with on a daily basis is the constant fear of abandonment. In my experience, I will do absolutely everything and anything to make a person or thing stay in my life. I need constant reassurance that I am not being annoying and that my friends and family still love me. I will fight to keep what I love in my life.

When I was a little kid I would throw fits so

This submission is a part of Métis Nation BC's Mental Illness Awareness Week Campaign. In support of this campaign, Métis participants have volunteered to share their stories of living with a mental illness. The goal of this is to work to promote understanding and reduce stigma through sharing lived-experiences. Thank you to our incredible volunteers for sharing with us these messages of hope, resilience, and understanding.

my parents wouldn't leave me home alone at night. Unstable relationships is another symptom of a person living with BPD. In my experience, this stems from the fears of abandonment. With someone who needs constant reassurance it can be damaging to relationships. Unstable emotions, impulsiveness and frequent mood swings are more symptoms of BPD.

When you tell someone you live with Borderline Personality Disorder, it can be scary to accept and can change how they look at you. A lot of times people can get BPD mixed up with other mental illnesses. As a person living with BPD, after telling people about my disorder, sometimes people will become afraid of me. This is the stigma around mental illness that can be very challenging to deal with on top of everything else you are going through.

I have always been very open on my own social media accounts with my friends and family about everything I am going through.

I was diagnosed after spending three months in an adolescent psychiatric facility. Getting the help that I needed was very challenging. After many attempts to take my own life, I had had several short trips to the hospital – but was always sent home after a day or so. I knew this wasn't enough. I also knew that I would never accept help while I was in a manic state; in those times, I just desperately wanted to go home.

I knew I needed help, but wouldn't accept it if I was in a manic state. So, while I was in a calm state, I made a plan for myself to get help. In order to get the help that I needed, I told the hospital workers that I was going to complete suicide if I couldn't get help.

I felt I needed to lie about how I was feeling in that moment in order to receive help. Though I felt good that day, I felt this was the only way to get in and get real help during a time where I was willing to receive

treatment. After talking to the psychiatrist and explaining what I had told the hospital

staff, I was put on an urgent bed-list for the psychiatric unit.

My time at the hospital was challenging, but it's what I needed. I made lifelong friendships and learned coping skills.

After my time in the hospital, I did everything I could so people didn't feel weird around me. I was in high

school at the time and being in a psychiatric facility doesn't really make you the coolest kid at school. Like I said, I was very open and honest with the people I knew and the people I went to school with. I explained to people that it's okay to ask me questions about my time there and anything they were wondering. I am an open book. All I wanted was for other kids to feel like they weren't outcasts for getting help and talking about it.

After sharing my story with the other people at school, I did have one bad experience. There was a day where I stayed home from school because I

*You can live with
mental illness; you don't
have to just survive but
you can thrive.*

RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Métis Crisis Line:

1-833-MétisBC (1-833-638-4722)

Canadian Mental Health Association BC:

<https://cmha.bc.ca/>

Here to Help BC:

<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/about-us>

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health:

<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/borderline-personality-disorder>

Borderline Personality Disorder - An

Information Guide for Families:

<https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/guides-and-publications/borderline-guide-en.pdf>

National Institute of Mental Illness (blogs):

<https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/October-2019/Borderline-Personality-Disorder-Myths-and-Facts>

BPD Myths and Facts:

<https://www.borderlineintheact.org.au/living-with-bpd/bpd-myths-and-facts/>

Six Common Myths About BPD:

<https://www.verywellmind.com/mythsborderline-personality-disorder-425499>



had a dentist appointment or something, and after the teacher asked if anyone knew where I was, a girl proceeded to tell the class that “she has a mental illness, I mean like she just got out of the institution a couple days ago”.

After that I knew that just sharing my story was something I had to continue doing. I will continue to share my story as long as I am able to. Thank you to MNBC for giving me a platform to continue to share my story to others and end the stigma around mental illness. 🌸

Take a moment to learn more about the symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder:

A Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) diagnosis requires a person to have 5 of the 9 following symptoms:

1. ***Intense fear of abandonment***
2. ***A pattern of unstable interpersonal relationships***
3. ***Unstable self-image or sense of self***
4. ***Impulsive behaviors that are potentially self damaging***
5. ***Suicidal or self-harming behavior***
6. ***Instability and mood swings***
7. ***Chronic feelings of emptiness***
8. ***Inappropriate anger or difficulty controlling anger***
9. ***Paranoid ideation, delusions or severe dissociation***

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

MYTH: *People with Borderline Personality Disorder do not complete suicide.*

FACT: Borderline Personality Disorder is associated with higher rates of attempted suicide and self-harm behaviours, but these symptoms can be managed by proper treatment.

MYTH: *Borderline Personality Disorder is rare and only found in women.*

FACT: 1-4% of the population is estimated to have BPD, making it more common than bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Those diagnosed with BPD are predominately female, however, this is likely due to different expression of symptoms among men leading to incorrect diagnoses. Women tend to experience mood shifts and feelings of emptiness, while men often have outward displays of emotional distress and behavioural impulsivity.

MYTH: *People with Borderline Personality Disorder are 'help-rejecting' and irresponsible. They are manipulative and attention-seeking.*

FACT: Media portrayal of Borderline Personality Disorder is laden with stigma, and has been incredibly destructive to the image and health of those who are living with this illness. The symptoms of BPD include impulsive behaviour and loud expressions of internal emotions; symptoms that are frequently portrayed as manipulative and angry outbursts by film and tv. In reality, people living with BPD are often struggling to express themselves in a calm manner and are genuinely seeking help and trying to communicate their needs.

From *"Five Things People Get Wrong About Borderline Personality Disorder"*: Behaviour displayed by people diagnosed with BPD is often viewed and labeled as being manipulative or attention-seeking in nature. However, this is not the case. The behaviour is often impulsive and a way for the person to try and meet their needs.

MYTH: *Borderline Personality Disorder is a character flaw.*

FACT: From *"Five Things People Get Wrong About Borderline Personality Disorder"*: Everyone has a unique personality with their own set of characteristics. These characteristics influence the way we think, feel, act and relate to the world around us. A personality disorder is a

long-standing pattern that influences the way people relate to the world. This can cause great distress and difficulties in relationships and reaching life goals. A diagnosis of BPD, or any other personality disorder, does not mean the person's personality is flawed, rather, it means the person has a different way of relating to the world. This can cause distress and impair functioning in different areas of life.

MYTH: *You cannot treat Borderline Personality Disorder*

FACT: While it used to be thought that people with Borderline Personality Disorder could not be treated, it is now known that Borderline Personality Disorder is indeed treatable. The thinking that it could not be treated was due to the misconception that this disorder is simply part of someone's personality, and that cannot be changed. We now know that this is not the case and that Borderline Personality Disorder can be effectively treated and managed; in fact, there is a wide range of psychological therapies that have been researched and shown to be effective in treating Borderline Personality Disorder.

Through therapy, such as dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) and trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), counselling, and medication, BPD symptoms can be managed and help you live a full life.

From *Here to Help BC*: One of the most harmful misconceptions about BPD is that it is a life sentence—that people with BPD will struggle with the disorder for their entire lives, and that little can be done about it. The term "personality disorder" does not help the situation, as it implies that there is something fundamentally flawed with an individual's personality, or who they are as a person.

In fact, there are many reasons for hope. First and foremost, studies have found that rates of recovery from BPD are much higher than previously thought. In one of the longest studies on BPD, Dr. Mary Zanarini and colleagues found that, over 10 years following hospitalization:

- 86% of people with BPD stopped meeting criteria for BPD for at least four years .
- 50% of people recovered completely (as shown by no longer meeting BPD criteria and having good social and work functioning).

Silence Can Be Fatal

Don't Stay Quiet About Bullying

LAURA MEIKLE

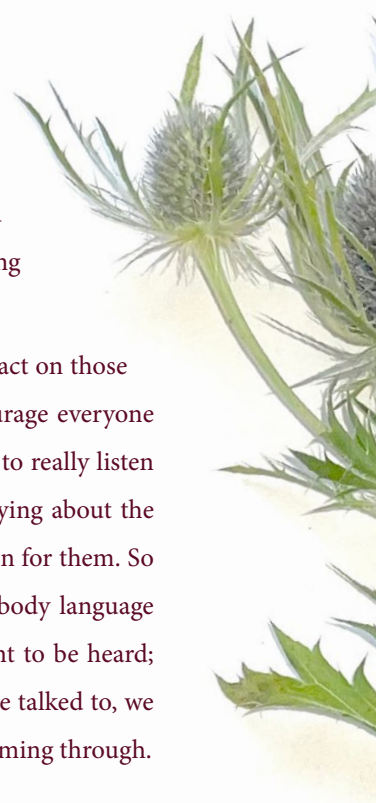
Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental illness, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those living with a mental illness. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather to provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

Content warning: this piece contains talk of bullying, depression, and suicide

Autumn a few years back reminded me of the importance of taking care of one's mental health. The story of a most unfortunate teen suicide hit the news in 2012 (Amanda Todd). She sadly took her own life after considerable bullying and cyber-bullying, and regrettably similar cases exist. When I talked over with my own teen (at-the-time) son how outrageous the taunting was from schoolmates, he told me that was what he saw go on in high school all the time. This was a regular occurrence. A sickening and disheartening feeling came over me. Where did the lesson go that words

cut deeper than a knife? And when did such aggressive and relentless bullying begin?

No amount of bullying, or its impact on those bullied, should go unnoticed. I encourage everyone to engage teens (their peers too), and to really listen to what language or tone could be saying about the teen's mental state and what is going on for them. So much can be hidden from view, but body language may help give clues. Most people want to be heard; if we listen with intention when we are talked to, we may hear stress or emotional issues coming through.



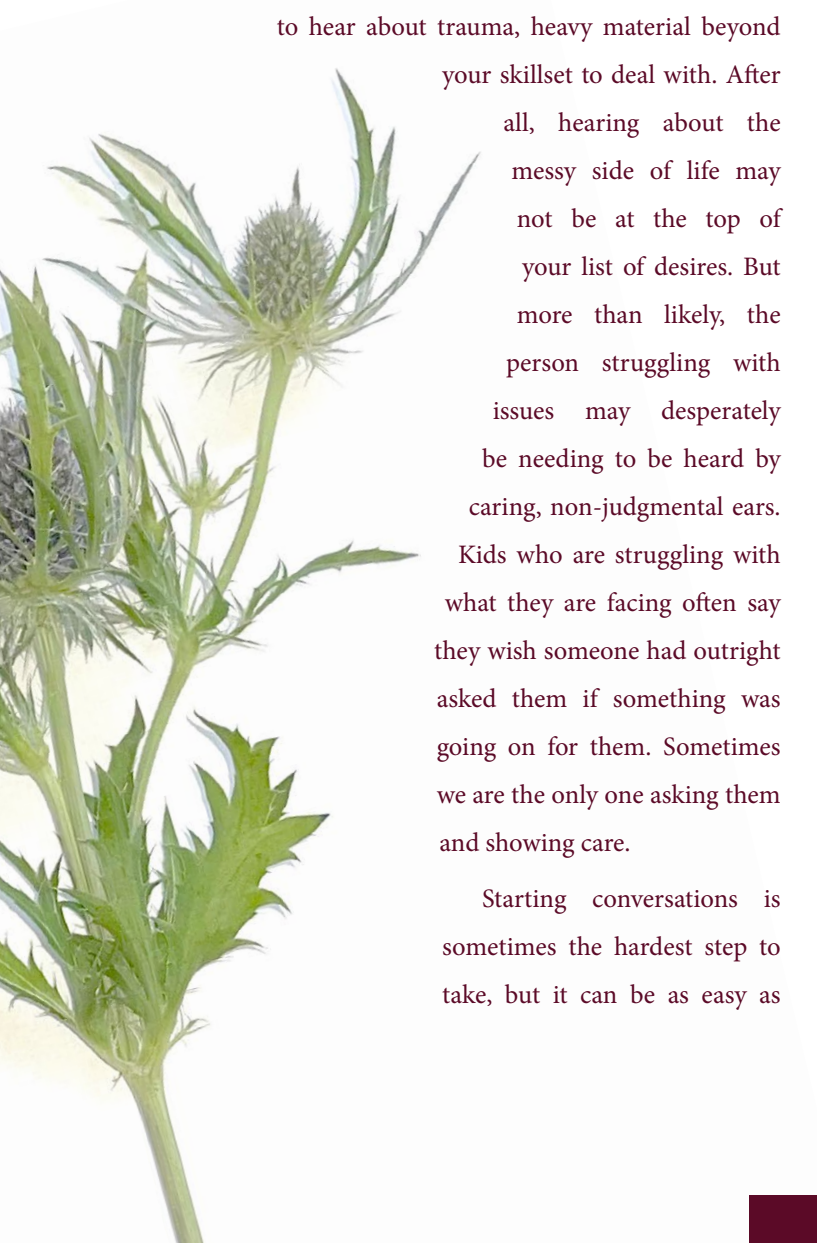
We do not need to be professionals to listen to others. We may need to direct one to professional help, such as if they are talking suicidally. When we see someone barely treading water, we may shy away. This can be a natural response: there is something to not wanting to get involved, some of us are raised to not be “nosy” or steer clear of “someone else’s business.” Hoping to stay clear of jumping in after a drowning victim can be a natural response. Self-preservation may be kicking in, perhaps not knowing what to say to start the conversation or not wanting to hear about trauma, heavy material beyond

your skillset to deal with. After all, hearing about the messy side of life may not be at the top of your list of desires. But more than likely, the person struggling with issues may desperately be needing to be heard by caring, non-judgmental ears. Kids who are struggling with what they are facing often say they wish someone had outright asked them if something was going on for them. Sometimes we are the only one asking them and showing care.

Starting conversations is sometimes the hardest step to take, but it can be as easy as

asking, “Hey, how are you doing? Really doing?” If there have been hints that someone is not doing well, we can say, “I sense you may not be doing alright.” If they aren’t ready to talk, we can say that we’re here for them when they are ready to talk. If they aren’t close to us, ask them if they have someone to talk to, if they have anyone to share their plights with? In these ways we can help take care of peers’ mental health.

Getting youth the right outlet channels for emotional issues is essential for mental health. Everyone can benefit from having a trustworthy confidant. When teen suicide tragedies occur, humanity is failing as a whole. We could all stand to be better listeners, to have compassion for fellow humans, to teach our children and live ourselves by the Golden Rule: treat others as we would like to be treated. Who could bully another implementing that rule? We all get wrapped up in our own soap operas, but sometimes stepping outside our busy lives to aid another gives us a healthy perspective on our own lives and what to be grateful for. If parents work to engage their children and don’t stop when they are teens, it could help bridge the gap as teens turn into adults. Teens, remember your parent/s or other trustworthy adults are there to help, you don’t have to figure this all out for yourself. There are others who care, don’t give up on sharing your plights: there is always hope for your situation, and when you share you find out there are others who care. Silence can be fatal, talking can make all the difference. ❁



Inspiring Activist Series

NEVADA CHRISTIANSON

About the art: I created a collection of digital images called the Inspiring Activist Series to shine a light on people who inspire.

Freda Huson is one of those people. She helped create a cultural healing centre on Wet'suwet'en territory where her people could heal by connecting with the land and traditional teachings. With deep understanding and fierce conviction, she became a defender of that territory and the Unist'ot'en people when mining and energy corporations moved in to extract her territory's natural resources. Watching protest footage, I was particularly moved by her strength and bravery.

The red dresses in the image mirror the Indigenous women who have gone missing, and the animals represent traditional totems in Indigenous culture and our companions on the land. The frog is of particular importance because frogs cannot exist in contaminated water.

Freda used a beautiful drum during the protests, and I superimposed the image on that drum onto her neck. Also, the black marks under her eyes are taken from images of her during the protests. My goal with this portrait was to create a likeness that would illustrate and celebrate Freda's unwavering inner strength.

As part of the Inspiring Activist series, this image of Gabriel Dumont brings new meaning to the notion of what an inspiring activist could be! Reading Métis history means learning about Dumont. A tenacious, multilingual, visionary leader, Dumont was a lifelong defender of Métis life, Métis families, and traditional Métis land. ❁





Inspiring Activist Series: Freda Huson



Inspiring Activist Series: Gabriel Dumont



“Waniska” (*Wake Up!*)

CORINNA STEVENSON

Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental health journeys, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those impacted by mental health concerns. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather share Métis voices that provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

Each March, I look and listen for Robin's return. Her presence a sure sign that Spring is near. First, a couple handsome red-breasted friends arrive. Then soon enough, flocks of them peck at the grass, hungrily looking for worms to eat. A common assumption is that Robin feels Worm's presence with her feet, but sight is her strongest sense. With a slight tilt of her head, she stands as still as Stone. She notices the slightest trembling of Soil. Then, with a foot-off-the-ground, enthusiastic, beak-first lunge into Earth, she skillfully catches and gulps

down her wriggling prey. Freeze frame the moment her orange bill contacts the ground, and you would see Robin in a graceful yogic beak stand.

On hard days, when thoughts of illness and death squirm their way into my mind, I still myself like Robin. I tilt my head, and with keen sight observe my thoughts. I bravely perform a yogic beak stand of my own. The Worms I capture are not from soil but from soul. They are unwelcome guests called Fear, Self-Doubt, and Self-Pity. Lovingly and compassionately, I acknowledge each disturbance. I remind them that I



am alive and

that I am strong, and that there is no room for them in my home. I tend to the garden that is my soul and remove the tendrils of Fear, Self-Doubt, and Self-Pity. I plant seeds called Grace. I feed them love, truth, compassion, creativity, courage, humility, and peace. The things Grace need to grow and thrive. I tend to my garden often.

The work of capturing, digesting, and composting Worms in the Soul are the practices we incorporate into our lives that help us recognize and deal with what needs releasing from within ourselves. I am certainly not as practiced or as skilled at hunting Worms as Robin but, with a satisfied smile on my beak, I am learning to get the job done. We do not always choose our fate, but we can choose to be grateful for the time we do have and for the many blessings of life. Living with cancer has shown me that each day is a gift.

My favourite way to wake up on Spring mornings is with the pre-dawn chorus of Songbirds. First, Varied Thrush's referee whistle-like companion call. Then, Robin's cheery greeting and Winter Wren's bubbling song coupled with the numerous chattering voices of their winged cousins. Last is Swainson's Thrush's upward spiraling melody. This brown-backed Thrush arrives later than other Spring Birds. His voice stops me in my tracks and fills me with an upwelling of emotion. There is no explanation why. It is one of his gifts to me.

I sleep with my bedroom door open to the forest so I can wake up to the voices of my Bird Kin. Their symphony is the miracle that sings Sun awake. Their voices praise the new day.

Winter Wren has taught me the most about expressing gratitude. He is tiny. A little brown ball that fits in the palm of your hand. Despite his diminutive size, no other bird matches his enthusiastic and impressive ability to loudly string together a series of chirps, trills, and tweets. Surviving the dark night for one so small and vulnerable is a great feat. No wonder his brave song is bright and strong as he praises life at dawn.

Gratitude is a wellspring of many wisdom traditions. Thankfulness, practiced with sincerity and love, invites us to shift our perspective and open our heart, no matter our circumstance. When Sun rises, I wipe sleep's dust from my eyes. I see ancient Tree Kin. I hear Raven's croak, and Eagle's cry. Never the same as the day before, yet constant and true. I feel my body, stiff and sore, but awake and alive. Sun's rays crest the tallest Tree Kin and I am blessed with the privilege of witnessing the rise of a new day. I invoke the medicine of my Winged Kin and praise life by signing a Cree sunrise song called *Waniska*¹. The lyrics of this gratitude song tell us to wake up. Sun is rising,

¹ This website has my favorite version of the song along with a translation:
<https://creeliteracy.org/2013/04/07/cree-sunrise-song/>



Bird
Kin are
singing, and the land
is beautiful. As Sun rises, I sing as loudly and clearly
as Winter Wren. I hear his voice and those of his
relatives, reminding me to wake up and remember
the miracle of life. I have lived a long time with
life-threatening illness. Like Winter Wren, I have
courageously survived many dark nights. Through
my voice, I express my gladness for the great privilege
of being able to draw breath for one more day. As I
sing and drum, Earth carries me, Wind moves me,
Sun's fire transforms me, and Water soothes me. I
find equanimity.

Offering gratitude at Sun's rise can help you to
be at peace with your circumstances too. Being with
nature, looking for deeper meaning, helps make
sense of things. Sitting quietly with our Other-Than-
Human Kin fosters the quiet mind. The Still Place
where you can hear the voice of nature or instinct as
it stirs in your internal world. Gratefulness humbly
offered to the Other-Than-Human world helps to
restore the bond between humans and nature. As that
bond strengthens, you can no longer ignore the fact
that you are connected to everything else. You begin
to see the Sacred in everything. Living with cancer

has shown me that the healing journey is not about a
cure. It is about love. The kind of love that is greater
than the love someone has for oneself or one's family.
It is about love for all things. Waking up to the love
I have for this world and to the gratitude I feel for
being here, for just one more day, gives me strength,
courage, and grace. Love for all my kin, human and
Other-Than-Human, gives me a sense of meaning,
belonging, and purpose.

The human healing journey is intertwined with
the health of All Our Relations. All of us are here only
for a short time. When we forget our place in the heart
of things, we are not fully alive. Symptoms of dis-ease
grow all around us and within us. Remembering that
we have an important role to play in tending to the
web of life, of which we are a strand, is sacred healing
work. Our ancestors who lived close to the land knew
this. It is time for us to remember. For the benefit
of all living things and the future generations, wake
up. Sun is rising, Bird Kin are singing, and the land
is beautiful. Go to River. Touch Earth. Look deeply
into Sky. Express your gratitude through your words,
your laughter, your tears, through song or silence, or
whatever way helps you to feel alive. Express your
gratitude and like Winter Wren on Spring morning,
give it to the world with your whole heart. Do not
keep your praise small for fear of how you look or
sound. Share it with the world so that others notice.
In their noticing, a curiosity will blossom. Something
will awaken. Healing will begin.

*I am grateful for the blessings of our Songbird Kin and
pray that the gifts of their wisdom be strong in my heart
as I move through the dance of life. ☼*

A Sunrise Ritual: Join in the Predawn Conversation

Predawn is the in-between time that marks the transition from night to the birth of a new day. Its liminality holds a spiritually dense numinous quality, where anyone can feel into the vibrations of an awakening world. Still dark with everything natural on the threshold of awakening. Being present during this time will stir and mirror what is naturally awakening inside you. All you need to do is wake up and pay attention.

To be part of the Predawn Conversation, wake up an hour before Sun's rise. Find a place outside or near an open window and witness the rising of Sun. Bring your awareness to the moment. Listen with your heart to the conversation that takes place in the still-dark but awakening world. Listen to what is stirring within you.

Have your journal handy so that you can write about any insights that arise with the new day.

A Sample Sunrise Ritual for you

This is a wonderful morning ritual connecting you to Sunrise and the rhythm of Earth.

Grounding you and bringing you into balance

Face East about fifteen minutes before Sun rises. When his first rays reach you, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe in the light and power of Rising Sun and all the potential of the new day. As Sun rises, raise your hands and face your palms out toward him. Absorb his energy. Then, draw in your hands, infused with Sun's light, to your heart. Notice how you feel.

Repeat this action as many times as you need to feel grounded and balanced.

Allow the new day to fill you up with its blessings.

If you can not physically witness the rising of Sun, you can do this same ceremony with a candle. Light a candle and hover your hand over the flame. Feel the warmth of Fire. Draw your hand to your heart. Repeat this simple gesture as many times as you need to feel grounded and balanced.

Whether you do this ceremony with Sun or a candle, or a campfire, you are taking in all that Sun represents—energy, light, inspiration, creation, vision, power, rebirth, and beginnings. Before you go, express your gratitude for the new day and for your eldest Fire-Brother, Sun. Do this in whichever way feels appropriate to you. Silence, words, song, gestures, the leaving of a gift, and dance are all appropriate.

Track Marks

LEVI GLASS

Collage 24" x 35" x 3"

Track Marks refers to the current opiate epidemic and depicts individual struggles with addiction.

This project was created from and is dedicated to my friends and family who have suffered from addiction.





LIVING WITH: *PTSD,* *Anxiety and* *Depression*

LISA MELTON



Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental illness, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those living with a mental illness. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather to provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

Content warning: this article includes information on suicidal ideation, abuse, and residential schools.

I have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), and depression.

What would you want people to know about living with PTSD, GAD, and depression?

I want people to know that I am not my diagnosis. Who I am as a human being inside this body does not depend on how I experience my illness day to day. Yes, there are days more challenging than others - but I am still a funny, kind-hearted, caring person who wants to feel like I belong somewhere just like everyone else.

What would you have wanted to know at the start of your journey?

I would have wanted to know two main things; silence makes everything so much worse and, with honesty and learned tools, life can brighten again. In the beginning everything feels insurmountable, daunting, and downright exhausting. In my experience, I had no idea where to begin and felt as though if I allowed myself to open up and start to cry, that I would lose control and not be able to stop. The 'start' can be awful... really awful. I had to take one thing at a time. One task. One day. One morning.

This submission is a part of Métis Nation BC's Mental Illness Awareness Week Campaign. In support of this campaign, Métis participants have volunteered to share their stories of living with a mental illness. The goal of this is to work to promote understanding and reduce stigma through sharing lived-experiences. Thank you to our incredible volunteers for sharing with us these messages of hope, resilience, and understanding.

One hour. And yes, even one minute at a time. It gets better.

What are your favourite self-care activities you like to engage in?

I'm a person who holds everything inside my body. Anger, fear, sadness, happiness, any emotion gets locked inside me. One way I have learned to let these feelings and energies out of me has been through martial arts. A martial artist is taught to move with the body and embrace the air inside your body. There have been times where physical contact has triggered me very badly. I ran out of the dojo sobbing for no reason at all. After a few moments, my sensei came outside, walked me back to breathing fully and helped me put my feet onto the dojo floor.

Martial arts has taught me so much about myself and it has helped me develop incredible relationships with others that are sincere and vulnerable. And let's be real, kicking and punching without getting in trouble feels pretty amazing!

I tend to dissociate from my body when I'm stressed or anxious. This leads to my becoming sick more often than normal. Most times I'm simply not aware that my body needs to rest. To combat this, I have been floating in a deprivation tank for a few years. It took a few attempts to get used to the silence, the sounds, and the darkness but once I began to trust my surroundings, floating was my saving grace. Some floats I will cry for 75 minutes and others I will simply sleep. Inside the tank is the one place on this

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT ANXIETY DISORDERS

MYTH: *Anxiety isn't a real illness. It's just being worried.*

FACT: Everybody experiences worry as a part of life. Stress and worry are common parts of everyday life, and these feelings often help people anticipate and prepare for potential problems. However, anxiety disorders are more than just feeling worried - anxiety disorders are real and valid mental illnesses that can seriously impact someone's life. For people living with an anxiety disorder, these feelings go beyond the experience of everyday life. Those who live with an anxiety disorder are not weak, but are living with an illness that must be taken seriously.

MYTH: *People with anxiety disorders should just get over it.*

FACT: As stated by the Canadian Mental Health Association: Many people who experience an anxiety disorder think that they should just be able to 'get over it' on their own. Others may need time to recognize how deeply anxiety affects

their life. However, anxiety disorders are real illnesses that affect a person's wellbeing. It's important to talk to a doctor about mental health concerns. Some physical health conditions cause symptoms of anxiety. A doctor will look at all possible causes of anxiety. It is important to extend compassion and understanding to those who are impacted by anxiety disorders; mental illnesses are real illnesses, and deserve to be understood and taken seriously. Stigma and discrimination towards those living with a mental illness can impact recovery.

MYTH: *Anxiety disorders cannot be treated.*

FACT: Anxiety disorders are one of the most treatable mental illnesses. Treatment most often includes a combination of counselling, development of coping strategies, and medication. With the proper support and treatment, those living with an anxiety disorder can and do recover.

earth that I am alone, with my body and my heart beat. I can be me in any capacity I choose to be. This is a true gift.

How has living with this illness shaped who you are today?

Living with this illness has shown me the degree to which I have held myself back from fully engaging in life. I have learned to hide emotions and physical pain so well that those around me would have no idea of my internal struggles. I've learned that my silence puts me closer to death than I want to be. Opening my mouth and speaking my life's experiences has helped me realize I'm not actually as alone as my silence would have me believe. Many people share my symptoms, my struggles, and my need to fit in somewhere. Without my illness, I may not have made such incredible connections with people who truly want to help me succeed in life, and people who show me that I am loved and worthy of that love.

What words of hope would you share with someone who has been newly diagnosed with your particular mental illness(es)?

You are not your illness. You are not broken. It's extremely hard to believe that life will get better but the tears you shed will eventually begin lowering the weight that sits on your shoulders. Use your voice. Please ask for help, even if all you do is call a crisis line and say 'I need help'. Those words are the most important words you will ever say in your life. Taking that massive first step shows you how much strength you have inside you. Asking for help is badass! 🌸



RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Métis Crisis Line:

1-833-MétisBC (1-833-638-4722)

Anxiety Canada:

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/disorders/generalized-anxiety-disorder/>

Canadian Mental Health Association BC:

<https://cmha.bc.ca/>

Centre For Addiction and Mental Health:

<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/anxiety-disorders>

Crisis Centre BC:

<https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/get-help/>

Here to Help BC:

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/generalized-anxiety-disorder>

Take a moment to learn more about anxiety disorders

From *Here to Help BC*:

Generalized anxiety disorder, or GAD, is a mental illness. It belongs to a group of illnesses called anxiety disorders. People living with GAD worry much more than other people. They often worry about many different activities of daily life, such as their home, work, finances, family, health and the future. People living with GAD also find it hard to control or stop worrying once they start to worry. Worrying all the time can be hard on your body. Most people living with GAD end up getting treatment for it only because the physical symptoms lead them to visit their doctors. GAD can leave you feeling tired, restless or irritable all the time. It can also make your muscles sore and make it hard for you to unwind, sleep or concentrate. GAD can also cause stomach problems, headaches and other physical health problems.

Day-to-day worries are a normal part of life. In fact, some worry is actually a good thing. Normal worry tells us when we might be in trouble or when something might be wrong. If we didn't worry at all, we'd probably have a hard time getting out of bed and off to work [or school]. It's also perfectly normal to feel more worried than usual if you're experiencing a stressful or difficult event like losing your job.

Worry becomes generalized anxiety disorder when it's an extreme reaction to daily life, when it's difficult to control, when it happen[s] most days for several months and when the constant worry affects your body and your life. Many people with GAD say they can't remember the last time they felt relaxed. The disorder can last for a long time, though symptoms may feel better or worse at times.

From *Anxiety Canada*:

Remember that it is normal to worry more when there is a lot of stress in your life, or if you are experiencing some significant changes or difficulties. It is NOT GAD if you notice yourself only worrying when you are experiencing major stresses in your life. Although people with GAD will worry more at those times, they still worry even when everything is going OK.

It is important to remember that anxiety disorders are one of the most treatable mental illnesses. People living with an anxiety disorder can and do recover, and can lead full, healthy lives.

Did you know? (*CMHA BC*):

Generalized anxiety disorder affects between 5% and 6% of people at some point in their life.

GAD often starts sometime between late childhood and early adulthood, though it's not uncommon for it to begin much later in life.

Children may also be diagnosed with GAD.

There are some groups of people at higher risk of getting the disorder:

- Women
- Older adults
- People with another mental illnesses or substance use disorder
- Family members (GAD seems to run in families, so you have a higher risk of developing the illness if a close family member also has GAD.)

Reflections on Taking Care of Our Mental Health

LAURA MEIKLE

Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental health journeys, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those impacted by mental health concerns. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather share Métis voices that provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

Content warning: this piece contains talk of depression, and suicide

Suicidal thoughts are a tough topic, one this magazine has already touched on. With my own suicidal depression flaring its ugly head in periods of my life, I have asked: "Is suicide really an answer?" It turns the lives of those left behind upside down; not that those who experience suicidal ideation aren't overwhelmed with their own emotional pain, but it can leave those left behind with such confusion and anger and hurt. It is so important to note that these emotions are likely not anything the suicidal person meant to create.

This is where having resources available to us can make a difference. Our minds can be our biggest

obstacle to overcome, making our lives hell where - emotions aside - our issues may be surmountable. Minds are powerful tools, and they can hold us captive prisoners in a world we sometimes make more terrifying than it is in reality. Sometimes we live in the future fearing what MAY come, not what IS. The mind, though most powerful, can be lethal. We can live in a hell we create for ourselves, and think our only way out is to end the situation.

Emotional hell is a real hell. I know for me, in the midst of depression, there have been times I haven't been able to see out of my contemplating ending it all to end the pain; not from a selfish standpoint

at all, but a need to stop emotional torment. Some win this battle, others fight it for years and come out ahead, still others sadly succumb. We have help available to any of us in that predicament; mental health professionals, groups, counseling, friends, help lines. In the distant past, I recall one particularly bad episode of depression I was battling—and I knew about suicide hotlines, but do you think I called ever once? I don't know who I thought was calling those hotlines for help, but I certainly failed to utilize that resource. I was not reachable, and I was not reaching out.

But given I've grown up a lot since then, and in light of losses and near losses from suicide I have seen touch my life, I have definitely changed my tune. Now, I implore you, if you or anyone you know struggles with these issues, why the heck NOT go for the help available? What do you have to lose by picking up the phone and making a call? We owe it to ourselves and our family (present and future) to make every attempt at getting all the help that we can.

Now, I think how fun would it be to take a course covering topics that mental health and depression groups cover (for instance: boundaries, criticism vs feedback, body language, changes, giving and receiving) - sounds like a sweet way to get to know yourself more! Talking to however many counselors and professionals in as many different modalities as you need to get yourself squared away is worth every

invested minute. Being a part of group therapy? That can be so empowering, you learn you are not alone with the issues you face, and you do not need to struggle alone with them. Choose to say, "No matter what predicament I feel I am in and can't change in my life, that is being shortsighted: There are always things I can do to change it." We often just need separation from being emotionally involved to see other options. Dealing with our feelings to get our heads clear is paramount. Mindfulness practices help with this, look some up! (<https://cmha.ca/documents/mindfulness>)

It's hard to ask for mental health help, but admitting we could use some help makes us stronger. It takes a LOT of courage to speak up and say, "Ya, I could really use some help here. I'm not doing so well." It shouldn't take a crisis or worse before we reach out to others who are there to help. Any



journey that has us get to know ourselves more is a worthwhile journey. Our mental health is a very worthwhile journey, through which we do get to know ourselves more.

In 2012 when I turned 40, it gave me the incentive to get moving on my goals – one of which was to quit delaying and stalling in my big life dreams. What would you be happy trying to achieve? How unhappy will you be never trying? Who cares whether you get there or if life takes you in a different direction? At least you reached for your dreams!

For me, mindfulness reflecting has been a helpful practice. If you are in a dark place in life, figure out what you're unhappy about, what is really lacking? Is your love tank full enough? How can you healthily get what's lacking filled? Who do you want to be?


Do you have enough excitement in your life? Are you getting enough exercise? We all need to feel productive, have healthy pleasures, feel rested, and maintain social connections. Take care of these every week for yourself. We have access to nature's pharmaceuticals when we get active in life, when we reach natural highs, they help sustain our moods. Are you eating foods or taking substances that temporarily make you feel better but then leave you crashing worse because they are not healthy choices? Take an account of what physically is

missing, emotionally, mentally, spiritually. Balance all of these. Even if you only commit to 10 minutes of something like exercise, it gets you started, and once we engage in healthy activities, be it ditching self-medicating substances, adding exercise or healthy eating, we start feeling better and can keep it up easier. What could you do that brings you a spark you need to feel involved in life and enjoying it? Our souls need this nourishment in ways that don't involve loss of integrity or defamed character, but there are

so many ways to healthily fulfill our emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual need. We need connection to The Creator, The Divine, Source. They say prayer is talking to God and meditating is listening for God to answer. We need both.

In talking to a friend with mental health issues recently about these topics, she was able to give valuable insights on how she has managed getting out of a funk.

Here are some gems from her experiences: Interact with others and communicate with them; get active and be physical; dance such as contact improv dance; get out of your own world and have contact with others; be social with lots of people; get into your body and into your heart and into joyous stuff, even if you don't feel like it. Start on little steps - that creates momentum and gets you out of a funk and gives you hope.



***It's hard to ask for
mental health help,
but admitting we could
use some help makes us
stronger.***

Sometimes it is hard to talk to others about issues that you think are too embarrassing: Dare to Share! Be humble enough to talk about things, all aspects of life and anything you are confused about, you need not feel like you should already know stuff. Empower yourself to ask questions, ask for clarification when people speak, ask questions about whatever issues you have questions about in life. Blocks to asking questions are unhealthy mindsets; take the leap and stay asking questions, it just empowers you as an individual. In times of troubleshooting, it is important to share what it is going on, determining is it anxiety perhaps within yourself? What thoughts and feelings are you having? Are you making friends? Are you struggling with shyness or feeling disliked? Getting the proper support can only be done when you identify what is going on for you individually. Talking to your doctor could lead to support suggestions and possibly trying medications, but to help your doctor know how to help you best, or what is the RIGHT medication to try, your doctor needs for you to express how you are feeling specifically. Try putting your thoughts together before talking to your doctor, or talk with someone you trust to help you figure out what your main struggles are so that you can articulate them when seeking help. Know things CAN improve and there is different help for the different issues that can come up for you.

Remember these roadblocks are common, and you can carry on from these life obstacles. Life can be hard, but these obstacles can be minor setbacks, and you can come out ahead, all the better for it.

No matter what you are going through, remember: you are not alone! You are a resourceful

being capable of solving, or getting help to solve, any of life's challenges: Métis are known to be resilient, resourceful people, draw from your heritage and call on our ancestors to help fill you with the courage they had to navigate this world so that you go forth and get the help you need. Never underplay that your issues are not 'serious' enough, or there are others in more need than you: Your issues and your mental health matters. You are a beautiful and unique being, sacred and loved beyond your wildest imagining. Take care of YOU as you would take care of a most beloved pet of yours. You can get through the tough parts, life has so much enjoyment awaiting you!

*Original writing, in part, taken from
Laura's Blog Nov 4, 2012. ❁*



Short Story Excerpt:

Hybrid

LISA MELTON

***Author's Note:** Recognizing and developing an identity and/or self image has been something I've struggled with my entire life. You see; God covered me with the white skin of my blonde haired, blue eyed, birth mother—but I was raised by my darker skinned Métis father. I was never certain what it meant to be 'Native' or 'Métis' but I knew my family was darker than me and I wanted, more than anything, to be accepted somewhere by someone. Finding myself is an ongoing journey and I have yet to be certain as to where I belong in this world.*

The short story excerpt below gives some perspective what it was like for me, growing up as a white-skinned half-breed - also known as:

Hybrid

CHAPTER 1

As a young girl, Savannah was curious about everything life had to offer. She was always outside as she loved the freedom the open air gave her. On this particular day, Savannah laid on her stomach with her chin pressed into the cement street as she watched a small caterpillar taking a daily stroll. Savannah let out a quick burst of air throwing her tangled red hair out of the way so she could focus

on the slow-moving bug. Savannah wondered where the caterpillar was going. Had he made plans to play with some bug friends? Or maybe he was going to visit his cousins! Her bright blue, inquisitive eyes blinked quickly taking in the beauty of her new, hairy bug friend. 'He' (she'd decided the bug's gender) was a strong young bug. The bug was covered with bright orange fur and small black dots that ran along the length of his

body. As he slowly meandered about his day, Savannah became absorbed in the confident, roller-coaster like walking. Up and down, up and down.

"You're kinda like a slinky, huh Mr. Bug?" she asked, her words blowing air against the tiny furs of the bug's body.

Just then, a strong bellow came from inside her home. "Savannah, time to come inside."

"Awwww Daaad! But it's not even dark out yet!"

Dad stood at the door of their small, humble home. "Don't make me say it again". Dad had a very stern voice that demanded obedience.

Savannah sighed heavily. "Have fun with your cousins Mr. Bug," she told her hairy new friend and slowly jogged towards the home. The young girl ran into the open door, throwing her shoes off towards a wall making a loud thud.

"But Dad, the streetlights aren't even on yet and I found the coolest caterpillar! He was going to visit his cousins!"

As she stood up, Savannah saw Dad pointing to the sky outside the still open door. Savannah turned to look at what Dad was pointing at and like magic, the streetlights came on. Savannah's jaw dropped open, "coooooo!" she said, shocked at the power of Dad's finger.

"When can I go see my cousins, Dad?" Savannah asked as she climbed onto a high barstool. She had a love/hate relationship with the barstool because it was so very high. She had to use the wooden siding to push herself onto her belly, and then use one knee and hand and the counter to pull herself up to the seated position. It really was quite the challenge! But

she didn't care; all the grownups sat on the barstool when they visited Dad, and Savannah wanted to do all things grown-up.

"I'm not sure Squirt, summer break is coming in a few weeks. Do you want to spend some time on the rez with Uncle and the girls again?"

Savannah gasped. "Oh yes! Please!"

Dad chuckled to himself. "Okay, okay! I wasn't sure after last summer, are you feeling better about going back now?"

Dad always made the best Sunday dinners but tonight he outdid himself; Kraft Dinner, hot dogs, ketchup and broc...

"Not broccoli!" Savannah yelped as she shrugged her shoulders down, pouting in protest.

"Yes, broccoli, and you will not leave this table until it has been eaten." Dad had his serious, don't mess with me eyes on.

"But, two WHOLE pieces?" Savannah questioned.

"Yes. Two whole pieces. That means every single bite."

Savannah sighed heavily, pushing the bright green tree-like vegetables to the very edge of her plate. However, the Kraft Dinner and hot dogs made up for Dad's torturous move, so Savannah focused on the items she loved.

"So, what about the kids on the rez? Will you feel ok playing with them, or will you be upset again?" Dad asked, hunched over the counter watching his young daughter eat happily.

"Well, I want to go play again. And ride our bikes to the lake. And swim in the lake. But not get the

yucky black blood suckies on me again. EW!”

Dad laughed, “Yes, leeches are kind of gross”.

Savannah giggled and shuddered at the same time. “And we can jump on Uncle’s trampoline and have campfires and play hide n’ seek in the woods!”

Dad slowly nodded along. “You sure can.”

“And NO BOYS Dad!” Pieces of macaroni flew into the air with Savannah’s stern declaration. “Okay, Dad? No Mean Boys. Only Uncle and only Daddy.” she exclaimed.

“Not all boys are mean, Squirt. Look at me, I’m not mean, am I?” he asked.

Savannah thought for a moment, slowly placing a slice of hot dog in her mouth. “No, you aren’t mean Dad. Well, except when you make me eat broccoli. Or oatmeal. That’s not very nice but then you’re mean but not on purpose mean, just food mean.”

Dad laughed as Savannah was using one hand to explain and the other to fling macaroni noodles in the air, also trying to explain.

Savannah paused, “Dad, am I Indigymnes?” she asked in a very serious tone.

Dad chuckled, “You mean ‘In-di-gen-ous’. And you, my princess, are Métis.”

“But is Métis Indigenous?” Savannah asked.

Dad sighed slightly to himself. “Métis brings together the cultures of First Nations and European. Did you know about the Métis flag? Our flag has the infinity sign – two circles coming together – and this represents the European and Native parents forming a new group. So, yes, you are a ‘kind’ of an Indigenous, little girl.”

Savannah felt supported and yelled out. “I knew it Dad! I told those mean boys I was In-dig-en-ous and they all laughed at me. They said I was a ‘whitey’ and I cried because I’m not a ‘whitey’, I’m Métis. They said I was ugly because I didn’t have dark skin like them. I don’t like those boys, Dad.”

Savannah’s father could feel the emotional angst in his little girl’s experience. “I know, Squirt,” he replied quietly.

Savannah continued, “When we got back home to Uncle’s, I told Aunty the boys were being so mean to me.” Savannah continued sharing her experience but with fevered pitch now. “Aunty asked why I was crying. I said because the boys said I was a ‘whitey’. But then Aunty laughed at me, Dad. Aunty said I am a ‘whitey’.”

Savannah looked at Dad with her blue eyes tearing up, “But I yelled at her, Dad. I said, I’m not a whitey, I AM INDIGENOUS!”

Savannah’s father could see how worked up his girl had gotten, reliving her moment of non-acceptance simply because she was born with white skin. He knew she needed to be comforted.

“Okay, okay. Let’s calm down a little bit here,” he said. “It’s challenging to have two different kinds inside you. I got bullied too when I was your age,” he shared.

Savannah gasped. “You were bullied, Dad?”

Her mouth had fallen open, “But you’re so big! And brown! And with muscles! Did they say you aren’t Indigenous too?” Savannah was shocked that anyone would think her father was not a strong, proud Native man.

“I sure was, kiddo. They called me lots of names: half-breed, drunk Indian, Indian-wannabe. Lots of names. It’s not easy to know where we fit into this world when we are young, and even when we are older. But you will figure this all out along the way, my girl. You just keep learning and being kind and being YOU.”

The large, loving father leaned forward and kissed his daughter on the nose. Savannah giggled. He began to clean the kitchen while Savannah quietly watched her father. She had no idea what the names her father was called meant, but she knew they had hurt his feelings. The words must have been really mean to hurt Dad’s feelings.

“Wow.” She whispered to herself.

Suddenly, Dad spun around with a dishcloth in his hands. He quickly flung the cloth over his shoulder and declared “So, it’s decided. You will go see your cousins on the rez.”

“Yay! And see Uncle. And Kookum. And Googoo. And the chickens!” Savannah’s excitement was brewing inside her again, slowly building like a teapot about to scream with steam. She really loved all the space she found on the reserve. There were so many trees everywhere and the sky seemed infinite during the prairie sunrises and sunsets. The reserve meant freedom to Savannah. Freedom to play and to run and to learn about animals and bugs.

Savannah suddenly gasped, “I forgot, Dad! We can go to the Pow-wow and I can dance in my jingle dress again! I love to Pow-wow, Dad!”

By now, Savannah was again lost in her mind’s eye, remembering all the drumming and dancing at

the Pow-wow. Everyone sang together, everyone ate together, and the elders would share stories. Dancing jingle was Savannah’s favourite thing about Pow-wows. Just like that, Savannah was gone, lost in her own mind, enjoying her moment of dancing. She thought of all the colors, all the voices, all the smells - ALL THE BANNOCK!

SNAP! A finger snapped in front of Savannah’s eyes bringing her back to the present moment.

Savannah giggled realizing it was her father. “Daddy!” she exclaimed.

Dad smiled. “I’m happy you are so excited, Squirt. But now,” he said, tapping his large finger on the little girl’s plate, “eat your broccoli.”

Dang, Savannah thought. She had tried to hide the ugly, green trees under her plate but Dad was too smart for her tricks. Savannah giggled at herself being caught but quickly realized Dad had his serious eyes back on. She was busted.

Slumping her shoulders forward with her head collapsed onto her plate and arms hanging at her side with no life in them, Savannah whined. “Daddy. Not the broccoli.” ❀



Alcohol and Community Health Dialogue Sessions

M N B C

The Alcohol and Community Health Dialogue project was led by MNBC's Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions in November/December 2020. A series of four dialogue sessions with twenty-one Métis participants were held, centering on Métis-led conversations around alcohol and community health. This project was made possible thanks to an amazing team of six Métis community volunteers, who served as co-hosts and facilitated discussions over the course of four weeks.

This project was centred around allowing Métis individuals the chance to come together, and to share their community wisdom around alcohol use in a culturally centred way; during these sessions,

participants engaged in sharing experiences of alcohol use, misuse and addictions.

These sessions worked to allow this incredible group of participants to connect with their own wisdom around this issue, to share their stories and ideas, to learn from each other, and to explore new possibilities for health and resilience in the Métis Community. The sessions focused on connection, relationship, and honouring the deep wisdom of Métis culture. In a safe, supported environment, participants came together to safely discuss alcohol use in Métis Communities.

This was guided by the belief that when we combine our voices, our knowledge, and our vision we can creatively build on the strengths and resilience



that already exist in our Métis Communities.

During the fourth dialogue session, a graphic facilitator (Tiaré Jung from Drawing Change) came to capture the emerging themes of the dialogues – above is the resulting image, capturing and summarizing the ideas and wisdom that emerged through each session.

Another key part that came of this project was the creation of a harm reduction sash. The harm reduction sash works to represent the wisdom shared by the Métis participants of MNBC's Alcohol and Community Health Dialogue sessions. This custom sash was created for all participants, with chosen colours guided by the themes that emerged from the dialogue sessions.

The meanings of the colours of the Harm Reduction Sash:

- **RED:** alcohol/addiction awareness
- **PURPLE:** overdose/opioid awareness
- **GREEN:** mental illness awareness
- **TEAL:** recovery awareness
- **YELLOW:** suicide prevention and awareness
- **WHITE:** connection to the Earth and creator

*Pictured are some of the Métis participants,
wearing their harm reduction sashes.*



PIXIE WELLS



JUNE GRAHAM



LAUREN DEAN



ROCHELLE WALLACH



CAREN NAGAO



VALERIE L.M. KUILBOER



“Shaakiiyishoo la Michin” (self-love is medicine)

ADAM GAUTHIER

Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental health journeys, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those impacted by mental health concerns. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather share Métis voices that provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

My name is Adam Gauthier, I am currently twenty-five years old, and in my final year of the Bachelor of Child and Youth Care program at the University of Victoria where I am expected to graduate April 2021. I am Métis from Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta on my paternal side and Coast Salish from the Tla'amin Nation on my maternal side.

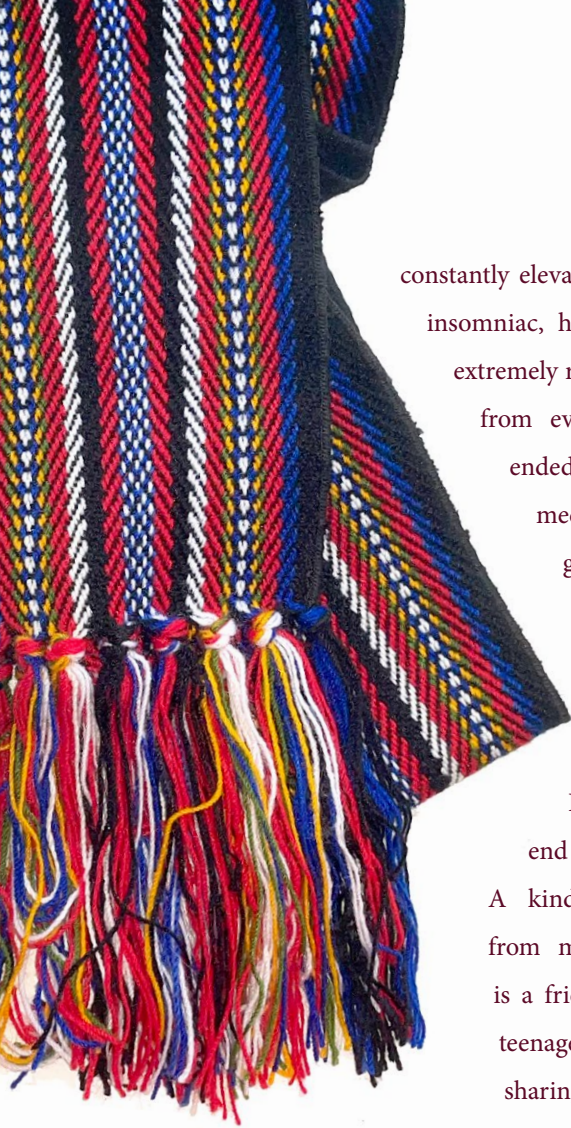
My experience with mental health has always been health through wellness as described by the First Nations Health Authority. This meant having a balance between my mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical health - which is a part of the medicine wheel. I find that placing importance on Indigenous

worldview and perspective is how I view all aspects of my life.

In May 2020, I was beginning to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety that were taking heavy tolls on my life. My body and mind were noticeably different; not only within myself, but others saw a switch in my usual self. I was not eating, sleeping properly, leaving my bed, or seeing many people. I took away my own voice, power, and slowly lost myself day-by-day.

When I hit rock bottom, I looked in the mirror and really saw myself. This person was lost, broken and scared; someone that was screaming for help but felt like nobody would care or listen. My heart rate





constantly elevated, I was tired yet insomniac, highly unmotivated, extremely reactive, and distant from everyone I loved. I ended up making a social media post to a support group hoping that I could receive any form of support and listening ear, as I felt like I hit a dead end with any options. A kind human who is from my hometown and is a friend from my early teenage years commented sharing their experience, which helped normalize

my feelings and connected with me to inform me that I was courageous. This person informed me it was more than okay to seek professional help in whatever way I see fit.

I picked up the phone after a couple weeks of eliminating the shame and struggle I felt around reaching out, and once people started picking up I started to slowly realize how big my circle of friends, family, and support truly is. I got an appointment with my family doctor who then assessed me and diagnosed me with Adjustment Disorder (AD). AD is a group of symptoms, such as stress, feeling sad or hopeless, and physical symptoms that can occur after you go through a stressful life event. The symptoms occur because you are having a hard time coping. Your reaction is stronger than expected for the type of event that occurred. He also performed blood work on me, and the results showed my B12 levels were severely low to the point where I needed to start

B12 shots immediately. I got prescribed Cipralex and B12 dosages for three months that I needed to maintain to heal my body and mind. On top of that, I registered for counselling and sought out new approaches that included being a part of my cultures more. This helped guide me into a transformation I wanted, but really this help me find myself again.

I have now started rekindling my soul, igniting new and old friendships, strengthening connections, and reviving my spirit. I have now started to see how valuable life and mental health is when you give it a chance. Please, when you feel down and out remember you are NOT alone; there are people and professionals out there who are willing to help mental health problems. Vulnerability is a two-way street. Do not feel trapped on your life journey, we are all resilient human beings.

Here are some resources that I used during my time and believe can be a help to others experiencing mental health in a negative way:

- **Métis Nation British Columbia Crisis Line:**
1-833-638-4722
- **24-HR Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line**
(Métis Nation Ontario): 1-877-767-7572
- **Hope for Wellness Line:** 1-855-242-3310 or their
online chat at: <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>
- **Youth in BC:** www.youthinbc.com for youth resources
or chat with a counselor online. You can also call 1-866-
661-3311 (toll-free in BC) 24 hours a day
- **Mental Health Help Line:** 1-877-303-2642
- **First Nations Health Authority:** [https://www.fnha.ca/](https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-First-Nations-Health-Benefits-Mental-Health-Provider-List.pdf)
Documents/FNHA-First-Nations-Health-Benefits-Mental-
Health-Provider-List.pdf 🌸

Day by Day

KATINA

Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental health journeys, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those impacted by mental health concerns. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather share Métis voices that provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

Content warning: this piece contains talk of abusive relationships.

Mental illness is all around.

Mental illness is right in your backyard.

Mental illness comes in all shapes and sizes.

Mental illness is...

As I sit and reminisce on my life up until now, I often wonder, what is mental illness? As a nurse, I've seen many things in just a short amount of time. Some of it good, and others bad. Some of the things I am able to laugh about, and others not so much. Every day I wake up, mentally prepare, and build my wall up so I can be there for others. It is not easy somedays, but others

are great. It's the great days that remind me why I'm here - to help, to serve, and be there for others who cannot help themselves.

My name is Katina, and today I am here to remind others that it's okay to not be okay.

Mental illness *haunts* many people in many different ways.

"I don't want to get out of bed"

"I don't want to be around other people"

"My heart is racing"

"Can we just get take-out?"

These are just some of the demons people with mental

illness fight with, *every day*. This is what I deal with, *every day*.

My story is not special. My story is not life changing. But my story is my story, and if it can inspire or help one person; then I'm happy to share it.

It was about twelve or so years ago when I was misdiagnosed with bipolar disorder. I was stuck in an abusive relationship and going nowhere in life. I was losing friends, family and had no idea how to be happy anymore. Initially, my treatment consisted of a low dose mood-stabilizer. As the year went on and the doses continued increasing, it began affecting every part of me, and not in a good way. I was unable to cry, unable to care and just unable. I felt numb. I can recall a handful of times crying in fear because I could not move an inch to get a glass of water.

It was after a year when I knew I was hurting myself more by taking these medications. Maybe it was the fact I had been paralyzed, and not just physically at times, but emotionally all the time. I decided to seek out alternative help. After reaching out to counselling services, friends, and consulting with other doctors, I was just not finding the answers I was looking for. I needed to take control of my own life and did just that.

I would never want to deter someone from getting medical supports such as medication, but for me, it was not the right choice. For many people, medication is the best course of action, and can save lives. I hope my message empowers those to seek out what works for them, and the best supports for their health journey. Whether it be medical, spiritual, or relational, we all heal in our own ways.

After several failed abusive relationships, weening off all my medications, and the supportive love of my husband (boyfriend at the time), I decided to go back to school. Nursing school challenged me in many ways, but in many ways, it also saved me. I failed at times, but I would get right back up and fight even stronger. This is where I learned more about anxiety.

Anxiety often triggers with stressors, but can also trigger in any moment at any time. Realizing that anxiety has always been and will be a part of my life, I was going to have to learn new ways and strategies on how to cope. I began learning new techniques that helped me through school, and throughout many of the larger milestones in my life up until this point. Even though I have these skills, it still takes time and effort from me every single day.

Today, my husband and I now live in a small Northern community with our two dogs, Daisy and Tika. Most of my coping techniques consist of exercising daily, walking, playing with my dogs and eating healthy. I have also been incorporating more traditional Métis cooking, decorating and customs into our home, which has been overall very humbling. Although this may or may not work for others, it has worked for me.

I'll leave with this, i'm still grateful every single day for all the supports, and even though things could have been different I cannot look to the past, but instead to the bright future. Out of everything I have learned, the one thing that sticks with me to this day is: take it day by day, because no one day will ever be the same and tomorrow can always be a fresh new start. ❀

*Take it day by day,
because on one day
will ever be the same and
tomorrow can always be a
fresh new start.*

Being Métis

NORA ZILKIE

Our father, Lars, immigrated to Canada from Norway in the 1930's. After traveling across the United States and Canada, he ended up in a small town in the prairies called Robin Hood, where our parents met. Our mother, Jenny, was teaching school there and stayed at the boarding house our father visited while looking for a distant cousin. She was Cree on the maternal side; my four siblings and I are Métis.

This poem was written to echo my feelings about being Métis, for my mother:

In Praise of the Red River Jig

Listen to the turletage

Music of Métis

Count coup in triple time

Because the slide of the fiddle pulls us into life of moccasins and sashes, woven colours of our people

Because of bannock and tea breaks on the trail carts a-rumble deepen grooves to the west

Because the tune is the beat of our Red River hearts.

Jig a jagged rhythm for our bright ribbon shirts

Shiny satin flash

Fringes flare and fly

Because our floor is the earth of the buffalo hunt and pony runs

Because slippers slap as signal to step a story of then and now

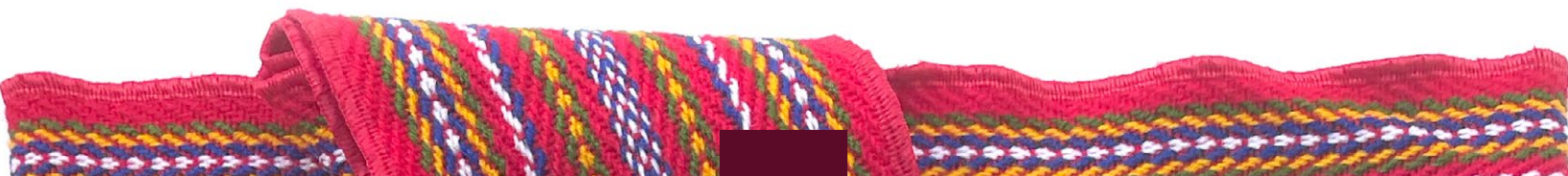
Because when we dance we cry for joy and not the past

Because of Riel, Batoche and Greybonnet,

Cut Knife Hill and

Gatling guns

Because slipjig muskeg 6/8 time silences the swingdance of the gallows.



LIVING WITH: *Depression, Anxiety and PTSD*

SHAUGHN



Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental illness, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those living with a mental illness. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather to provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

Content warning: this article includes information about suicide

I am living with major depression, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

What would you want people to know about living with your illnesses?

Depression isn't a choice. Anxiety isn't a choice. PTSD isn't a choice and not only that, but you DON'T have to be a war veteran to have PTSD. What would you have wanted to know at the start of your journey? For all of the above, just knowing that just because I'm not getting "better", it doesn't mean things aren't

getting easier – and will keep on getting easier as time goes on.

Have you felt stigma because of your illness?

Yes, and I feel it comes from the classic "Man's Man" approach to life that is so often portrayed. It is OKAY for men to have mental health issues. Men CAN cry. These are things that I think a lot of people need to know and respect.

Have you felt self-stigma because of your illness?

Yes, I have a lot of self-doubt from the societal

This submission is a part of Métis Nation BC's Mental Illness Awareness Week Campaign. In support of this campaign, Métis participants have volunteered to share their stories of living with a mental illness. The goal of this is to work to promote understanding and reduce stigma through sharing lived-experiences. Thank you to our incredible volunteers for sharing with us these messages of hope, resilience, and understanding.

norm. I have denied myself opportunity's because I don't think I'm well enough to do them. I even put off this interview until the deadline because I don't know if I am okay enough to give my opinions of mental health. But how else would people learn without firsthand accounts?

How would you break down the stigma around your illnesses?

The only way I know how to break down stigma around men's mental health is to continue to normalize the idea that men can be affected by it. I will try my best to always allow myself to be true to who I am and what I live with.

How long have you been living with mental illness?

Diagnosed in early high school. Maybe grade nine? So about nine years or so.

What was your experience with getting diagnosed?

It was fairly clinical. I filled out a test given to me by a therapist and thought I was doing well. I handed it back to her and she marked it and let me know what all I was suffering from.

How did you feel when you received your diagnosis?

I was really confused and sad and immediately thought "something is wrong with me" - but in the same breath almost relieved to know what was wrong so I could at least try to fix it.

How has living with this illness shaped who you are today?

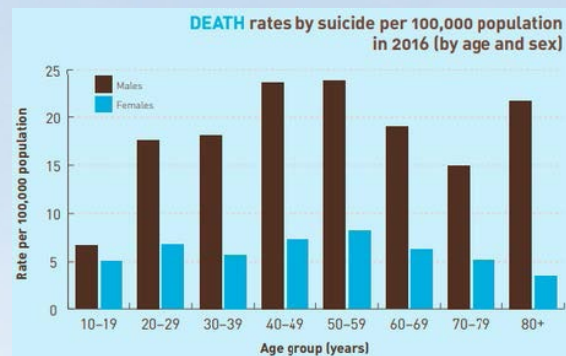
I feel that my illness has made me almost one of two people, depending on who I am around. With friends I am very, very open caring to a fault, and

easy to trust and be trusted. To people I don't know, I come off as guarded and quiet sometimes, or overly friendly and quick to start a conversation.

What strengths have you witnessed in yourself while managing your mental illness?

I have found that I am a lot more calm and have been called "wise beyond my years" - which I have always just taken as a kind way to say I am more mature than others in my age group, and always have been.

Is there an image that you associate with your experiences, illnesses, or resilience?



Graph from: <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phacaspc/documents/services/publications/healthyliving/suicide-canada-key-statistics-infographic/pub-eng.pdf>

To me, this image is the proof that I needed to know that there is so much work to do for men's mental health advocacy. I know we have a lot of work to do - not just for the Youth but for all men. It breaks my heart to know that for the first FIFTY NINE YEARS of a man's life his odds of suicide increase, and that in almost all cases (excluding men 19 and below) men die by suicide nearly three times as much as women. In a perfect world, both men and women wouldn't ever die by suicide; I hope in the next few

years men can be better heard and supported, and these rates can be brought down.

Are there any cultural teachings that have helped you during your journey?

I have really enjoyed mantra bracelets and the reaffirmation of a single thought. I also love just speaking with Elders. It doesn't even have to be about mental health; I just find their presence soothing.

What has contributed to your wellness?

Time and support from friends and family to just keep trying.

What are your favourite self-care activities you like to engage in?

Playing games and listening to music or audio books. 🌸

Take a moment to learn more about depression

From the *Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division*:

Depression leaves you feeling sad or depressed. Some people experience depression as feeling “numb” or having no feelings. Depression can also make you feel irritable, hopeless and guilty. Many people living with depression lose interest in things they used to enjoy or and they often isolate themselves from family and friends.

But depression can affect more than your mood: you might have a hard time concentrating or remembering. You might sleep or eat less than usual or more than usual. You might also feel tired all the time.

From *HeadsUpGuys* (read the full article here: <https://headsugguys.org/mens-depression/symptoms/>):

Depression affects everyone in different ways, which means your particular symptoms are unique to you. For example, one person might not have enough energy to even get out of bed, while another person might feel constantly edgy and restless. Depression doesn't come on suddenly—it can slowly creep up and before you know it, you're caught in its grip. Recognizing depression is the first step to preventing or stopping it from controlling your life. You wouldn't attempt to heal a broken leg by simply toughing it out. Treat depression the same way you would treat any other serious injury or illness.

RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Métis Crisis Line:

1-833-MétisBC (1-833-638-4722)

Canadian Mental Health Association BC:

<https://cmha.bc.ca/documents/depression-2/>

Crisis Centre BC:

<https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/get-help/>

HeadsUpGuys (information on men's mental health):

<https://headsugguys.org/>

Here to Help BC:

<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/about-us>

Mood Disorders Association of BC:

<https://mdabc.net/>

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT DEPRESSION

MYTH: *Depression isn't real or depression is just sadness.*

FACT: Depression has a physiological basis and is associated with low levels of dopamine and serotonin, two neurotransmitters, and is strongly associated with inflammation throughout the body. Depression may also have an impact on the body's immune response, and can lead to decreased response to infection, increased stress-hormone production and increased risk of heart problems. There are several treatment options for depression, including medication and therapy, that are designed to help restore balance to your body's brain chemicals and inflammatory system.

MYTH: *Depression always will get better by itself - if you can't get over depression, you're weak.*

FACT: Depression is a disease and treatment is a necessary step to overcoming the illness, much like treating any other physical condition. If you don't treat depression, it can often get worse - and worsen other illnesses as well. Seeking treatment for depression can help you manage and overcome your symptoms. Those who go without treatment often suffer for years.

MYTH: *Children cannot get depression.*

FACT: Children can be diagnosed with depression as young as three years old, although the symptoms can be hard to identify in young children. Depression can make children feel worthless and rejected, and can interfere with their energy, sleep and appetite. Because of this, kids with depression can have low energy and a lack of interest, but this can also be interpreted as not trying and irritable moods can be seen as disrespect.

MYTH: *Depression only happens if something bad happens to you - like after a bad divorce or losing your job.*

FACT: Stressful experiences play a role and can coincide with the onset of depression, but there are many factors

that lead to the illness. Depression onset is impacted by your brain physiology, family history, temperament, traumatic experiences and stress, drug and alcohol use, and even some medication and physical illnesses. Any one or any number of these factors can trigger the onset of depression.

MYTH: *Depression mainly affects women.*

FACT: While women are more commonly diagnosed with depression, at least a third of all people living with depression are men. The truth is, men are less likely to seek treatment for depression, are more likely to self-medicate with alcohol or drugs - and are therefore less likely to receive a diagnosis. Men may also suffer from a few different symptoms of depression, including anger and rage, and some men deal with depression by working more.

MYTH: *Depression is forever and people with depression are always sad.*

FACT: Depression is treatable and most people who receive treatment for depression will not experience another depressive episode. For those with a more intense experience, treatment can help balance episodes so symptoms are limited and shorter. For those experiencing a depressive episode, symptoms can manifest in a variety of ways from physical symptoms like headaches and backpain to feelings of anger and guilt.

MYTH: *Friends can't help friends who are living with depression.*

FACT: Depression is a struggle and the empathy and support of friends and loved ones is as important to overcoming depression as any other illness or disease. While friends are no replacement for treatment and therapy, showing empathy and asking how a friend is really doing can go a long way to showing them they are supported and cared for. "Tough love" and dismissal only worsens the stigma and creates harm.

My Top 5 Ways to De-Stress

JAMIE SCOTT



MY TOP 5 WAYS TO DE-STRESS



1. Take a bath

* Bring a good book, use bubble bath and add some essential oils (I like earthy scents like cedar and sandalwood)



2. Practice a hobby

* I enjoy knitting, but maybe try learning to crochet, felt or paint.

3. Cook a meal that will make you feel good.

* Add in some colourful veggies and make something healthy that also tastes great. I love a big bowl of pasta with tomatoes, garlic and kale.





4. Exercise

* Find a form of movement that makes you feel good. Try yoga, walking, running or dancing. Anything to get out of your head and into your body, even better if you can get outside.

5. Make a list !

- I find that when I am overwhelmed, making a list helps to put things into perspective.
- I like to make a list of things I have to do and when they need to be completed, or things that I am thankful for so I can remember that its not all so bad.
- I take time to really think about my list and then I put it away.



* Remember to be kind to yourself you are human *



Generations

MAUREEN F. LANDUCCI

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I have a clear vision of walking towards my grandmother as she sat on the side of a bed in the unfamiliar hospital. I remember peeling off our lids of vanilla ice cream cups that they allowed her to share with special visitors. I remember holding hands and chatting to each other naturally as if we were home. I did not know it at the time, but that was not her first episode of psychosis. I heard whispers that a stranger found her walking around the boulevard

in her nightgown distressed. He had dropped her off at the local hospital, who then transferred her to a mental health facility. I was eight at the time and my mother sat me down and discussed the full extent. She was gentle, loving and truthful.

This was my first introduction to the prevalent mental illness within my family. She told me about her siblings and the many cousins in her generation who were diagnosed with everything from schizophrenia

to depression. I learned that my sweet great-uncle suffered a breakdown in his twenties and never fully recovered, before I just knew that he was kind and unbeatable at scrabble, and that he had always lived with his parents.

There were many forms of mental illness in our Norwegian extended family as well; though trauma may be a contributor for some, there appears to be a clear predisposition within our genetic makeup that stems from my great-grandmother's lineage.


Thirty years later, I am able to reflect on my family's journey navigating mental health. It is always at the forefront. My mother and grandmother continued talking to me openly about mental health and proactive healthy habits throughout my life. We check in on each other frequently to help recognize the warning signs and symptoms of invisible illness. A casual "how are you doing?" is never casual and judgment is never exchanged. We are prepared more than most to give our time, a bed to sleep in, or finances if needed.

Thankfully, my grandmother has not had another psychosis episode with the help of medication. We have seen some real joys and tragedies for others in the family over the years. The most successful outcomes

for my family members with mental illness have been for those who combine professional treatment with their own commitment to a healthy lifestyle and mind. It is not a passive journey. Life challenges like having young children, growing a business, dealing with grief, or breaking an addiction are even more difficult for those struggling, yet it is not impossible.

I myself have suffered bouts of depression and fatigue which has left my husband to care for our children for days or even a few weeks, while I work hard to get my mind healthy. My mother recognizes it quickly and helps where she can, thankfully it is infrequent and far between. I have found that making those daily healthy choices is my prevention. I need exercise, a healthy diet, and being in nature. I need

prayer and meditation. I need to check in on my stress levels and adjust my choices when I start feeling out of control. I feel completely empowered when I can control my own choices and actions, when I can say no to myself or others. I know there may come a time when I need professional help and medication. I would not take that decision lightly, but it comes without stigma or embarrassment thanks to my family.



*Two important parts
of addressing mental
health are to remove any
stigma and find a support
system.*



Photo: Four generations, Maureen Landucci with mother (Sheila Ferguson), grandmother (Gladys Ferguson), and great-grandmother (Edel Brown) circa 1998.

I believe two important parts of addressing mental health are to remove any stigma and find a support system. I was born with both of these already in place, for which I am truly grateful. I was given the opportunity to live my best possible life, breaking the boundaries of my genetic makeup and comforted knowing my safety net was below. I now have a loving husband, four wonderful children, and a part time job that I am excited to go to each day. I travel extensively, go camping, maintain positive friendships and write as often as I can. My life is filled with purpose and adventures. These successes and so many more are possible because of that gift.

My family is not alone in these struggles. Many families are affected by mental illness at some point. In fact, statistics show that 1 in 5 Canadians experience mental illness every year¹. We can take this knowledge and be proactive, leaving a positive impact in our lifetime by passing on a generational legacy of open communication and support about mental health to our children. It was the greatest gift that was handed down to me, and I will continue passing it on to my children.

If you have not discussed these topics with your

¹ Source: <https://cmha.ca/fast-facts-about-mental-illness>

children before, maybe now is the time to consider it. It is never too late. If you do, buckle up! They will probably surprise you with their understanding and pepper you with interesting questions. If you are a young adult, consider approaching the subject with your Elders to see if they are willing to share their knowledge or experience. It is important to approach the subject naturally and respectfully. Parents can empower their children and teenagers. Discuss what healthy choices and challenging the mind looks like. Pass on the beliefs of our Indigenous ancestors. I was taught that health was so much more than the physical. It was the mind and spirit in harmony with nature. Our generations are connected to each other, with Elders providing wisdom, guidance and protection. Children and youth being gifts that bring innocence, love and the need to learn. We are never separated from our ancestors, no matter how many generations away. We are always impacted by them in some way.

Parents may want to describe what can happen or what has happened to a family member they may know. Remember, to a child or teenager, sometimes the unknown can be far scarier than the truth you are trying to protect them from. For example, a friend of mine relayed that she had been traumatized for a number of years when her father seemed to disappear for some time and then reappear in their family home shaky and volatile. It was explained to her several times that her father was just “away on a trip” and upon his return to “just be careful and quiet, he’s not feeling well”. Even as a young child she saw through the façade, she knew something was wrong. She was filled with worry and dread. Her belief is that had she

been told the truth about her father’s mental illness, even at that young age, she would have been able to understand and put her own mind at ease. Children often easily embrace these realities when explained in loving and age appropriate ways. They have much to offer as part of the support system within a family at any age. We must take care that this communication is about investing in their mental health future and how they relate to others, not to burden them or rely on them for emotional support. We honor our ancestors and build a legacy for future generations with this communication.

I remember the day my grandmother came home from the hospital. She had been there just over a month. I was excited when Grandma came in and sat in her rocker. She was quiet and fragile. I played around her as if nothing had changed. Eventually, I went up to her and grabbed her hand and said “let’s get a snack”. We ate crackers and cheese together. She became stronger and stronger over the next few weeks. Nothing about her mental illness had changed the way I felt about her, or the way she felt about me. We knew that we needed each other. We still need each other. Grandmother, mother, daughter - generations supporting and making each other stronger. ❀



MENTAL HEALTH IN MÉTIS YOUTH

TA SAANTII DEU/NESO: A PROFILE OF MÉTIS YOUTH HEALTH IN BC (2018)

MÉTIS YOUTH ARE EXPERIENCING MENTAL
HEALTH CONCERNS AT A HIGHER RATE
THAN THE GENERAL YOUTH POPULATION



It is estimated that 10-20% of all Canadian Youth will experience a mental health concern. However, findings from **Ta Saantii Deu/Neso: A Profile of Métis Youth Health in BC** (McCreary Centre Society, 2018) show that Métis Youth are **less** likely than non-Métis Youth to rate their mental health as positive. Métis Youth were also more likely to experience an anxiety disorder/panic attacks (33% vs. 18%), depression (27% vs. 15%), ADHD (14% vs. 7%), or PTSD (7% vs. 3%), than their non-Métis peers.



HAVING CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS HAS A
POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE MENTAL
WELLNESS OF MÉTIS YOUTH

Ta Saantii Deu/Neso reports that connecting with Métis Youth can considerably impact their mental wellness. In fact, Métis Youth experiencing a mental health condition who had supportive adults or peers involved in their lives were less likely to have attempted suicide. Further, "Métis Youth with anxiety disorder/panic attacks were less likely to experience extreme stress in the past month if they felt like a part of their Community; felt like a part of their school; and felt their family paid attention to them, respected them, and understood them".

CONNECTION TO CULTURE IS IMPORTANT
TO MÉTIS YOUTH



Feeling a disconnect from Métis culture can have a negative impact on the mental health of Métis Youth. During Métis Nation British Columbia's 2018 Mental Health and Addictions Forum, Youth shared that they wanted to learn more about Métis culture, and to have more opportunity to access cultural gatherings in their own communities. Building opportunity for Métis Youth to feel more immersed in Métis culture has the potential to foster enhanced mental wellness.



MÉTIS YOUTH ARE RESILIENT

From MNBC's report on the Youth Mental Health and Addictions Forum: "Métis Youth in British Columbia can often face an overburden of challenges, when compared to non-Indigenous Youth. Mental illness, addictions, over representation in the foster care system, are just a few issues that can face our Youth. However, Métis Youth have shown great maturity and resiliency in having continuously engaged with MNBC and government Ministries to speak on their experiences and needs within this province."

MÉTIS
CRISIS
LINE

1-833-MÉTISBC

(1-833-638-4722)



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Questions? Please contact Jillian at jjones@mnbcc.ca

Short Novel Excerpt:

Royalty Warriors[©]

FERN ANNABELLE HINSE

***Author's Note:** I believe that my piece connects to mental health and well-being due to my own experience. I was critically injured in a serious automobile accident and mentally not capable to handle daily life. When I woke up after the accident, I knew almost nothing about myself. I knew my name and family, but I did not know who I was within that family. The doctors saved my body but did not save my mind. I went back to school to learn how to add, subtract, multiply and divide. I tried so hard to eradicate the darkness of my mind.*

Before I could reduce my mental blindness, I had to find the bridge that connected me to healing and peace. Darkness and light are working opportunities that have not been given equal credit for what is happening in our lives because our shattered psyche and dysfunction are said to exist on a mentally dark side. I believe that both sides of our spirit, of darkness and light, are free and worthy connections to our healing.

We all want to show that we are worthy and identify that we are free, and this is why I created the short story of the Royalty Tribe – this story shows both sides of an equilibrium. We need both sides. We, the Métis People, heal by knowing the center place where the exchanging spirit heals and rejuvenates us all. There, the center of well-being is a breath taken in and the lungs swell with amazement as the renewed knowledge fills the heart that allows the exhale and rise and fall of healing for everyone.

Excerpt from Royalty Warriors:

The sun rose slowly in the sky, a father and a bronze-skinned youth climbed to the top of a plateau overlooking the River Valley Runes. One side of the runes was bathed in sunlight and there the hoodoos stood like tall living chieftains. The other side of the runes projected a picture of opposite contention as a ghostly shadowy scene. To

see this perfect parallel of opposite beauty sent shivers down the youth's spine.

Khankalli, the father was a long-standing spirit advisor and Chief. The youth, 'Kquantum, knew one day, he would take his father's place. He was enthused and saddened at the same time for his father to take him to this Sacred Place where the elders' bodies were

placed to rest. 'Kquantum knew he had to be powerful like his father and was trying hard to be strong.

He watched as his father added more sage grass to the fire, then take into his hands the rising healing smoke and bring it over his face and body. Young 'Kquantum sat quietly with his feet curled beneath him.

His father's hands were then stretched upward as if holding contact with the fading sunshine. 'Kquantum knew his father was thanking the Spirit for the blessings shared with Mother Earth. When his father's arms rested calmly at his sides, 'Kquantum cautiously broached a question that he knew would require some very complex answers.

"Where does the spirit come from, my father?"

Chief Khankalli signed to his child to add more sticks to the fire. 'Kquantum quickly complied. He squatted down again beside his father before the fire, and the questions and answers began.

'Khankalli spoke:

"There are times upon times that consult us, my child. Your same question has often been asked. This night I will take you into the height and depth of the spirit's world which is often a hidden part of everything but is well-accepted by our Royal Tribe. The spirit exists on two sides of everything. It exists as the hidden invisible energies - and as well, in - the visible energies. It shows its Royal Centers as you and I, and every energy that lives and dies between its two sides.

The two sides are easy for us to see. They are the same as the water and the land while we know the fishes and clams live and die as food for us.

Another two sides are forest and the sky for it is there the animals and birds thrive and live and die. Even between life and death changes, my son, the Royal Exchange continues.

Royal leaders know much about these spirits. They know the name to give a papoose because they know the wind that delivered the spirit of the child. They can also see in that same moment through mighty death's open door—the star—that the spirit of the child will go back to when the Great Spirit takes it home."

To contain the majesty of what he heard regarding the spirit world, 'Kquantum's eyes were opened wide. He felt that his father directed his conversation straight into him.

"The world does not only belong to the spirit of the sky my son. The sharing of spirit is combined with all our Mother's grounded world.

Chief 'Khankalli clacked two sticks together briskly over the fire for his son was so far away in thought that it snapped him back to the conversation. The particles from the sticks that fell close to the fire became illuminated and tiny firelights began a reverse journey away back up high into the darkening sky. 'Kquantum took a deep breath and secured himself.

'Khankalli continued.

"All your ancestors have had direct experiences of the cycling spirit of land and sky. They would see in their dioramic night dreams the places where the herds of buffalo were - and in the daytime that followed, their night dreams led them right to the many folds of buffalo. Your Royal great grandfathers and grandmothers held mental powers that were

passed between them and then passed on to me—and now—this night—to you. The starlit sky and the sun and the moon are Royal formations that are created from the exchange of questions and answers and in fact, the great universe is itself a transforming story that creates the melding together of all its Spiritual Verse. The questions must be put together in such a way that answers can be returned—otherwise how else would the starlit sky ever have been born?

I asked your grandfather Gorgon and my mother ‘Unilit the very same question about the spirits. They had much more time than I do now to tell you of their experience regarding finding answers. You must open your mind now my son. Imagine that you are a very important part of the universe. You are a part of the wonderful Earth. You are a part of the stars, the sky, and the sun. You are the bright daylight and you are the darkness—all in one.”

To take his thoughts away from such a frightening concept ‘Kquantum looked out over the runes below him. Earlier this day right around noon he noticed the Chieftains standing strong on both sides in shining sunlight—a reverse scenario to what he was seeing tonight. This time he saw both sides experiencing their darkness—together. This too was a frightening sight but not nearly as scary as the powerful words that his father was speaking to him. How was he to take it all in?

‘Khankalli, could see in the firelight where ‘Kquantum’s eyes were now focused and this brought recollections of his same experience.

“Oh, no, my child. The spirit lives and dies within those statues as they stand in light-time and in dark-

time. Just because the sides shows more brilliant life in the day or displays more-deathly ominousness in the evening-time does not mean that one side is more powerful than the other. The universe and all it has transformed into being is due to its ever-folding changes.”

“Light and darkness are two questioning spirits that are tied together yet walk the earth as one. Dusk and dawn are also trading questions within the cycling changes of the Universe. Even the prairie roses bud, blossom and die. Everything takes its place in its own shape and form as it passes through the cycling stages of the Great Plains.”

*To read the rest of Fern Annabelle Hinse’s story, visit
<https://timessecret.com/>*





My Papa's Sash

BY NOLAN CHEM AND EMMA GARM-STRAKER (PHOTOGRAPHER)

From Nolan: The reason why I wanted to take these photos is because this sash means a lot to me. It was handed down to me by my papa (my grandfather), who is from Duck Lake and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He was a proud Métis man, and taught me a lot growing up. He was a very humble man and soft-spoken, but always had something wise to say. He was an Indigenous Navy veteran, as you can see by the pins.

When he passed away a few years ago, he gave me his sash and his pins to remember him. Since then, I would hang a sash over top of my bed headboard to remind him every day. In the photos, I am holding my Papa's sash, and remembering who how amazing of a Grandpa he was to my brother and I. All sashes are beautiful, but this one is especially meaningful to me and I wanted to capture that through the colour, tassels, and pins - and the way I hold the sash.

From Emma (photographer): These photographs are a labour of love, a residue of familial history and an act of acknowledgment for stories passed down through generations.

"My Grandfather Wilbur was a proud Métis man." These words echo in conversation with Wilbur's grandson Nolan years later. Nolan shares the story of his grandfather who grew up between Duck Lake and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Wilbur, or fondly known as "papa" by his grandkids, was an Indigenous Navy Veteran who is remembered for his years of service for this country.

His sash is a distinct reflection of the pride he held for his Métis culture, and his pins that were given to him in honour of his service in the navy were noted as an important cultural artifact and piece of familial history in Nolan's childhood. After Wilbur's passing, Nolan was gifted this memory of his Papa which he has since gently hung across the top of his bed frame headboard as an object of daily remembrance.

These photographs are a depiction of familial relations passed down through generations. Embedded with love, the photographs highlight the importance of the Métis culture through the history of the sash. ❁







All sashes are beautiful, but this one is especially meaningful to me and I wanted to capture that through the colour, tassels, and pins - and the way I hold the sash.



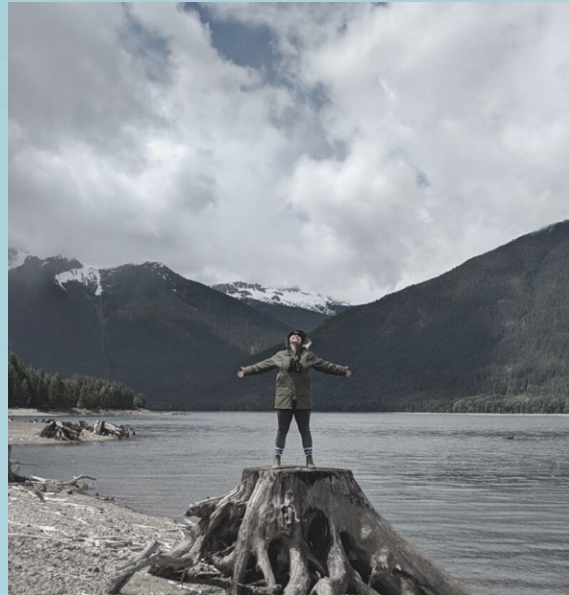
Bizhiki

NEVADA CHRISTIANSON

About the art: The buffalo is a living symbol of how Métis people once lived in harmony with the natural world. This noble creature reminds us of a time when we walked gently on the earth, living in reciprocity with wisdom, reverence and gratitude. Those teachings and traditional ways of being are even more relevant now as the global community struggles to care for this earth we call home.

LIVING WITH: *Bipolar II Disorder*

ELI AIKEMA



Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental illness, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those living with a mental illness. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather to provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

I am living with a mood disorder called bipolar type II, meaning that I experience more periods of depression rather than hypomania (which is considered to be a less extreme version of the mania experienced by those with type I bipolar disorder).

What would you want people to know about living with bipolar disorder?

Though it can be managed, or appears to be, it is a lifelong disorder that influences many aspects of day-to-day living. It is always there, under the surface lurking, waiting to greet you, even if you only forget one day of medication.

Living with bipolar disorder means that I feel my emotions intensely - which is not always a bad thing, in fact it can be quite profound at times.

What would you have wanted to know at the start of your journey?

I wish I would have known that unfortunately, anyone living with a mental illness will likely have to be their own advocate in order to get the support they need. Finding the right medication, psychiatrist, or counsellor for each individual takes time and is mostly a trial and error process, but trust me, it's worth looking for!

This submission is a part of Métis Nation BC's Mental Illness Awareness Week Campaign. In support of this campaign, Métis participants have volunteered to share their stories of living with a mental illness. The goal of this is to work to promote understanding and reduce stigma through sharing lived-experiences. Thank you to our incredible volunteers for sharing with us these messages of hope, resilience, and understanding.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT BIPOLAR DISORDER

MYTH: *Bipolar disorder isn't a real illness, it's just all in someone's head.*

FACT: Bipolar disorder is a serious, chronic illness. It is an illness that impacts mood, energy, and activity levels.

MYTH: *Bipolar disorder is just mood swings.*

FACT: In life, we all experience ups and downs. Everyone experiences feelings of happiness and sadness - this is normal. Bipolar disorder is a medical condition in which people experience periods of mania or hypomania, and depression.

From the Cleveland Clinic: What sets bipolar disorder apart? "The illness represents a change from the usual self," explains Dr. Anand. "...depression lasts for several weeks at a time, and mania lasts for several days at a time. We look for a season of summer — not one hot day."

MYTH: *People living with bipolar disorder are weak.*

FACT: People living with bipolar disorder are not weak. As with any other chronic illness, bipolar disorder is not a personal failing or character flaw - it is an illness like any other. Living with a mental illness requires great strength and resilience.

MYTH: *Bipolar disorder is extremely rare.*

FACT: With an estimated 2% of the population impacted by bipolar disorder, we know that bipolar disorder is more common than some may realize.

It is important to remember that mental illness does not discriminate, and that anyone can be impacted — regardless of age, cultural identity, education level, economic background, religion, sexual orientation, etc. People with bipolar disorder are our brothers and sisters, our cousins and parents, our teachers and family, our Elders and friends.

Have you felt self-stigma because of your illness?

I think the majority of the stigma I have experienced has been from internalized messages I have heard about people living with mental illness just being lazy or weak. Though I know this to be inaccurate, it can still be challenging to shake off the inner critic who insists I am not doing enough.

What has made it possible for you to talk about your illness?

Just knowing that speaking candidly about my struggles can have the potential to dissolve stigma, and perhaps encourage someone else to seek help.

What are some ways you manage your diagnosis?

Though I'm prescribed mood stabilizers and antidepressants, my psychiatrist is adamant that managing mental health conditions doesn't only mean medication. It also involves supplements, your diet and other things that you do. I take vitamin D (we don't get enough here in BC!), Omega 3-6-9, and Magnesium, I also try to avoid sugar. I try to practice meditation and mindfulness as much as possible. Though I struggle with motivation and consistency, exercising is a major helper - getting those endorphins going does wonders for my mood and energy.

I also have a great counsellor that I see every few weeks to help counter my inner critic, and to get an objective opinion or to shift my perspective. I use an app to track my moods daily so that I can identify my triggers, and to be aware of if I am in a depressive or hypomanic period and then I can adjust my supports as needed. I lean on my friends quite a bit when I am feeling low; connection is always uplifting for me.

Are there any cultural teachings that have helped you during your journey?

An Elder taught me to visualize sending healing light energy through Mother Earth up to myself or anyone else who is struggling. In addition, they emphasized that one can find strength in connecting to nature and expressing gratitude for our environment, planet, and universe. In my experience, doing this can help me snap out of a bad head space when I am able to realize how small my problems are in comparison to the vastness and wonderment found within our world.

What strengths have you witnessed in yourself while managing your mental illness?

To endure through the darkness, to be accepting of the past, present, and things I have no control over, to be humble and willing to ask for help when I need it.

What are your favourite self-care activities you like to engage in?

Dancing, swimming, snuggling my cat, going thrifting or eating good (usually unhealthy) food with friends. It might sound a little cheesy, but every so often I like to have a little selflove/cleansing ceremony where I burn sage, palo santo or sweetgrass and write positive things about myself or my intentions, or what I am grateful for in my life. I try to sit in that feeling and envision my most powerful self and go forth with that energy. ✿



We must lift each other up, celebrate the strength and resilience, and lend our support.

MYTH: *People living with bipolar disorder never get better.*

FACT: While there is not yet a cure for bipolar disorder, people living with this illness can and do recover. Recovery does not mean that the illness has been cured, but rather, as defined by the Niagra Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association: "Recovery is the personal process that people with mental health conditions experience in gaining control, meaning and purpose in their lives. Recovery involves different things for different people. For some, recovery means the complete absence of the symptoms of mental illness. For others, recovery means living a full life in the community while learning to live with ongoing symptoms."

Bipolar disorder often requires long term treatment, with medication as a key component. In addition to medication, engaging in therapy and lifestyle changes (such as managing sleep and stress levels) can be extremely beneficial for people living with bipolar disorder.

From Here to Help BC: "more than 30% of [patients with bipolar] can expect full and complete recovery while another 40% can expect a very marked reduction in their symptoms. Individuals can go into remission during various periods of their life.

Successful management depends on many factors including education about the illness, good communication with professionals involved in your care, a good support system (family and friends) and adhering to your treatment plan."

It is important to remember that, with the right treatment and support, life with bipolar disorder can still be a wonderful, full life.

Take a moment to learn more about the types of bipolar disorder, from the Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division:

There are different types of bipolar disorder depending on how serious your symptoms are and how long your mood [phases] last.

Bipolar I disorder is when you experience at least one manic episode or mixed episode. Most people who have bipolar I disorder also experience episodes of depression. Manic episodes last for at least one week, and depressive episodes for at least two weeks, but both may continue for many months. Bipolar I disorder is the most severe form of the illness.

Bipolar II disorder is when you have mostly episodes of depression plus occasional episodes of hypomania. Hypomania is a milder and shorter form of mania that usually lasts just a few days, but it can still impair your functioning.

Cyclothymic disorder is when your moods change constantly and quickly from periods of hypomania to depression and you're rarely in a "normal" mood. Cyclothymic disorder usually begins early in life and the symptoms are so constant that they are often mistaken as just a part of your personality. Some people with cyclothymia go on to develop a more severe form of bipolar illness while for others, it continues as a chronic (ongoing) condition.

Take a moment to learn more about the symptoms of bipolar disorder:

From the Canadian Mental Health Association:
"Since bipolar disorder is made up of two [key] parts, depression and mania/[hypomania], the symptoms are very different depending on whether you are in a manic/[hypomanic] or depressive period.

The depression you experience if you have bipolar disorder is very similar to clinical depression."

Some symptoms of mania (found in bipolar I disorder) can include: feeling unusually upbeat, increased self-esteem or feelings of grandeur, decreased need for sleep, more talkative than usual, racing thoughts, easily distracted, excessive energy, and engaging in risky or impulsive behaviour.

Hypomania (found in bipolar II disorder) is a milder form of mania.

People with bipolar disorder may also experience a mixed episode, which is when you have symptoms of mania and depression at the same time.



RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Métis Crisis Line:

1-833-MétisBC (1-833-638-4722)

Canadian Mental Health Association BC:

<https://cmha.bc.ca/documents/bipolar-disorder/#C>

Here to Help BC:

<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/about-us>

International Bipolar Foundation:

<http://ibpf.org/>

Mood Disorders Association of BC:

<https://mdabc.net/>



Breaking the Cycle

ANONYMOUS

Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental health journeys, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those impacted by mental health concerns. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather share Métis voices that provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

Content warning: this piece contains talk of depression, suicide, suicidal ideation, abuse, trauma, and addiction

When my dad was twelve, he was put on a train in Winnipeg for a solo trip to Vancouver. It was the late 1940s and he was being sent to live with his older, married brother in New Westminster. My father had previously been in a Catholic boy's school. For some reason, his mother and father decided to ship the sixth youngest of their seven children halfway across the country.

With not much money, but enough to buy cigarettes, he made it to the Pacific Coast. He eventually made his way back to Manitoba, where

his parents owned a general store and later a popular dancehall. Bullied, beat up and demoralized for being a Frenchie or half-breed, my dad begged to come home. His dad, my grandfather, was about one-half Aboriginal descent. His grandfather, referred to as a "half-breed" in Métis scrip documents, was entitled to either \$160 or 160 acres. I don't know which he chose, but I do know he was a wanderer, travelling throughout Manitoba communities like St. Francois Xavier, Baie St. Paul or to the Duck Mountains.

My grandfather, also one to roam, was a hard-drinking, sombre man who, according to my dad,

would go on binges lasting weeks. When he ran out of booze, he'd crack open bottles of vanilla or lemon extract he sold in his store and down that. My dad too took to the bottle, perhaps to bury his roving childhood or find solace from parental rejection.

Even when married, my father continued his nomadic ways, much like his forebears. He saw no problem with uprooting his family and moving across Western Canada. Was he running or searching? One year, my two brothers and I went to three different schools. My mother never bothered to fully unpack our belongings. Making friends or having hobbies were not part of our lives. Birthday parties, Christmas celebrations, and Easter egg hunts were only imagined.

Now, when I see my father, as he sits in his chair, lost in deep thought, a sad look covers his face. I don't ask him what he's thinking about. Sometimes we don't ask questions because we don't want to hear the answer. If I did ask, he may have answered that he was grieving my brother, who was relentlessly bullied because he was heavy and tall, put in a foster home and died tragically at age 50. Or perhaps he's thinking about relatives who died by suicide. Or he could be worrying about his other son, who is dealing with physical and mental health challenges. Or lastly, about his wife, who has religiously followed him, withering in the process. I don't know if he thinks of me much, but there again is the unasked question.

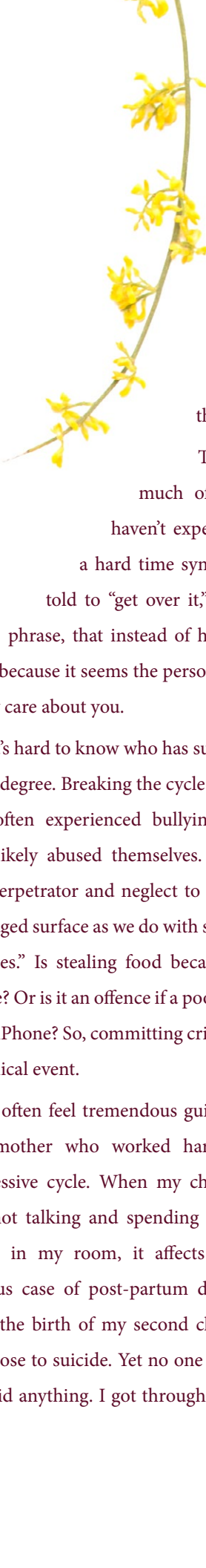

My troubled childhood, coupled with what I think is a genetic disposition to depression and anxiety, has pummelled my mental health since I was in my early

twenties. Several hospital stays, electroconvulsive therapy (sometimes called "shock treatment"), a smorgasbord of pharmaceutical drugs, and counselling have all been part of my journey.

In July, I took a leave from my job as a media monitor. I could no longer handle listening to more than seven hours a day of COVID-19 stories - many of them inflammatory, poorly researched, and soul-crushing. But the pandemic has not disappeared, and as peoples' mental health and addictions are increasingly growing, I run parallel. What has particularly saddened me is how much money and effort has been thrown at COVID-19, while people with depression, addiction, and mental illness are being left hanging. Perhaps someday we will be told why some lives are considered to be more valuable than others.

Today, trauma is a hot topic. Seems like so many of us have been "traumatized." But what does that mean? Why do some of us survive and not become addicted to alcohol, drugs, food, sex, gambling, tobacco, or shopping? Why do some give up? It's not easy, waking up after a night of bad sleep and wondering why go on - particularly in these times where activities that once brought joy are out-of-bounds. Counsellors have told me my childhood was traumatic. Now I know why I catch any cold or flu that's going around - trauma can harm your immune system. Trauma is





hard to clear
out of your
head. Trauma
can be triggered by
the simplest thing.

Trauma colours so
much of a life. Those who
haven't experienced it may have
a hard time sympathizing. I've been
told to "get over it," a particularly cruel
phrase, that instead of helping, amplifies the
pain because it seems the person is saying they don't
really care about you.

It's hard to know who has suffered trauma and to
what degree. Breaking the cycle is the goal. The bully
has often experienced bullying. The child-abuser
was likely abused themselves. We tar and feather
the perpetrator and neglect to examine under their
damaged surface as we do with so many who commit
"crimes." Is stealing food because you're hungry a
crime? Or is it an offence if a poor teenager lifts a rich
kid's iPhone? So, committing crimes can also become
a cyclical event.


I often feel tremendous guilt because I wasn't
the mother who worked hard to break the
depressive cycle. When my children see that
I'm not talking and spending a lot of time
alone in my room, it affects them. My
serious case of post-partum depression,
after the birth of my second child, had
me close to suicide. Yet no one close to
me did anything. I got through it, but

wonder how it affected my son, who today engages
in dangerous behaviours. When there are similar
stories, I understand. I am not quick to condemn the
mother to hell.

Which leads to another facet of depression: help
and resources for people impacted by mental illness,
addiction, and suicidal ideation, can be nominal and
hard to access in BC - and I suspect across Canada,
and even the world. Not long ago I called the suicide
line and it rang about six times then switched to a
Northern B.C. line, where it rang about five times. I
hung up.

What does that say about the help that exists for
those in crisis? The tragic part is that people may not
always be the best advocates for themselves. When
my father was a child, being chased up the stairs and
beaten, by his drunk father, peeing his pants out of
extreme fear, there was no help for him.

Can the links in that chain, that chokes, tugs and
binds, be broken? Only with the right tools in the
right hands. ❀

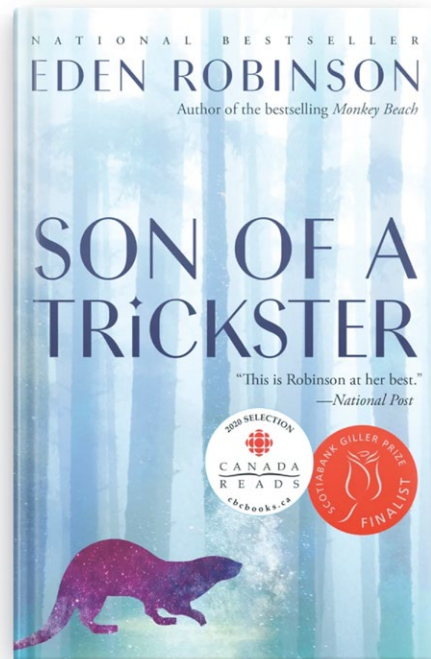


Bye-Bye Brenda

ELI AIKEMA







Book Review:

Son of a Trickster

NEVADA CHRISTIANSON

Eden Robinson is not afraid of the f-bomb, or variations on the theme. It's a minor attribute, but even the expletives are remarkably creative in *Son of a Trickster*. Her female characters are fierce, unpredictable and not to be messed with. I found this to be incredibly refreshing, even in a world of fiction where sadism and spirituality walk hand in hand.

Plus, Robinson is funny. It's a dark, gritty, gutting kind of humour, but it's effective and plentiful.

Son of a Trickster takes place in Northern BC.

Dysfunction and addiction reign, but within it all, there's love, magic and Jared. A tender-hearted First Nations teen with a penchant for pot cookies, Jared's life is a sh*tshow of epic proportions. Regardless, you will love him, his tenacity, humour and unorthodox code of ethics.

Son of a Trickster is as unusual as it is entertaining. Well worth the \$21.00 or a trip to your local library - you'll read it in a day, and then seek out the other two books in the trilogy.

Happy reading. 🌸

Does How and What I Eat Impact My Mental Health?

MS. ROMY PRITCHARD, BA BFA, REGISTERED & LICENCED HEALTH & LIFE COACH

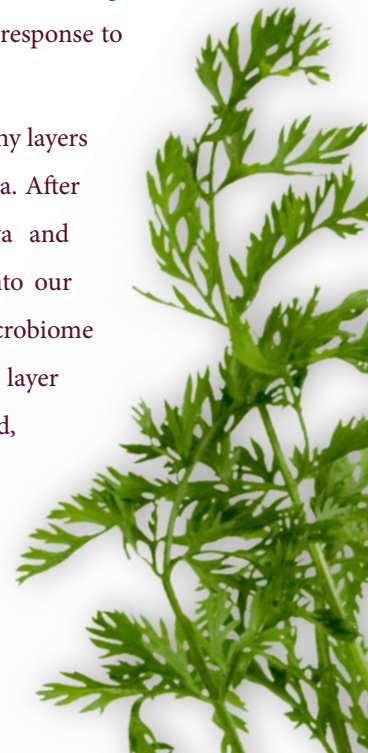
Disclaimer: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental health journeys, and all experiences are unique. Please know that the individual experiences shared here are not intended to represent the experiences of all those impacted by mental health concerns. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather share Métis voices that provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.

Everything is connected. This is what my Elders have shared. The more I learn about being healthy, the more I realized how true this statement is. Recently I have learned that what is happening in my gut could also be impacting how I think, feel, and my emotions. Since 2004, new research is demonstrating that the types of microorganisms in our gut are interconnected with our immune system and our mental health (Howes, L. 2019).

There are over 100 trillion microbes that live in our intestines. These microbes outnumber our own cells by 10:1 (Carpenter, S. 2012)! This really shifts my own thinking about who I really am. I am not just “me”; I rely on many organisms within me to support my wellbeing. We need each other. All together our gut microorganisms are called our microbiome. This

microbiome is considered our “second brain” as it communicates chemically through our bloodstream as well as through our nervous system from the vagus nerve (the largest nerve in our whole body) (Strandwitz, P. 2018). So, when you have a gut instinct it literally is an immediate felt response to what is going on around you.

Our microbiome is made up of many layers of bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. After food is broken down through saliva and our stomach digestion, it is passed into our small intestines. This is where our microbiome gets busy working with us. The first layer of microbes feed on our digested food, pooping out food for the next layer of microbes. Depending on





how well we are feeding our microbes and the environment we create for them to feast in will ultimately decide on how much toxins, amino acids, vitamins and minerals our bodies have to function, repair and grow (Villoldo, A. 2019).

Up to 95% of serotonin is produced by our microbiome (Levitsky, D. 2019). Serotonin is key for feelings of wellbeing, happiness, sleep, food cravings, and digestion. Low serotonin can cause anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Other neurotransmitters and hormones produced by our microbiome include dopamine, GABA, acetylcholine, norepinephrine, estrogen, and melatonin (Strandwitz, P. 2018). All of these impacts how our brain/body functions and our thoughts, feelings and emotions (Greger, M. 2018). As much as 70% of our immune system is also a result of our microbiome (Levitsky, D. 2019). So, what we eat and who we are being when we eat can be crucial

*Who I am being when
I eat may even be more
important than what
I am eating!*

for a healthy microbiome and subsequently our total health.

Who I am being when I eat may even be more important than what I am eating! If I am stressed, fearful, angry and upset, my body is flooded with cortisol. Cortisol tells every organ in my body that we are in danger and to stop all non-essential functions – like digestion. It prepares for fight, flight, and survival. Any food that I eat is stored as fat in my body. Cortisol also floods the microbiome (Howes, L. 2019). Consistent high levels of cortisol triggers harmful gene expression in our microbes and is a major contributor to health issues like Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

(Butler, M. et al 2019). *It doesn't matter what I eat when I am stressed* – my microbiome won't breakdown the nutrition available in the food (Morgenstern, S. 2020).

Doing a simple check in with myself to make sure I am not in the fight, flight or freeze state before I eat is my new habit. I decide on a scale of one to ten how stressed I am. If I am above a two, I do some quick calming bio-hacking strategies like Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), Emotional Brain Training

(EBT) or just put my hand on my heart, close my eyes, and breath in through my heart six seconds and out six seconds. (You can check out my website for EFT and EBT cheat sheets under resources a www.yourregeneration.com). This quick check in and stress buster habit also reminds me to slow down and relax while I am eating. This helps create a space of being grateful and present with my food.

Besides relaxing and slowing down when I eat, my next habit change is making sure I am feeding my microbiome really well. Our microbiome loves fiber rich foods especially root vegetables, greens, beans, nuts, and fruit. I aim for five servings of veggies, three fruits, a handful of nuts (pecans, pistachios, macadamia, almonds, acorns, walnuts), and a ¼ c. of beans daily. One of the five veggies I eat will include a fiber rich root vegetable like yam, beet, carrot, radish, rutabaga, or parsnip. daily. I also eat one fork/spoon full of fermented food daily like sauerkraut, kimchi, miso soup/dressing, or raw apple cider vinegar. When I focus on relaxing, slowing down and feeding my microbiome I know that I have a strong inner team helping me think clearly, feel and experience more positive emotions. Everything really is connected, including our microbiome and our mental health. ❀



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LIVING WITH: *Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*

GARY TÊTU



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Content warning: this article includes information on suicidal ideation, abuse, and residential schools.

I am living with complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD); which for me brings on generalized anxiety, depression, and anger.

What would you want people to know about living with the symptoms of C-PTSD?

I want people to know that it is possible to work through the behaviours, coping mechanisms, and cycles to a place of healing and the ability to live a healthy balanced life.

What would you have wanted to know at the start of your journey?

I wish I would have known how it was going to affect me, my thinking, my emotions and my ability to fully trust and love myself and others.

Have you felt stigma because of your illness? And have you felt self-stigma because of your illness?

I have remained silent regarding my traumas most of my life due to people's perceptions about those with mental health concerns. My internal shame acquired through my time and experiences at Residential school also contributed greatly to my silence.

This submission is a part of Métis Nation BC's Mental Illness Awareness Week Campaign. In support of this campaign, Métis participants have volunteered to share their stories of living with a mental illness. The goal of this is to work to promote understanding and reduce stigma through sharing lived-experiences. Thank you to our incredible volunteers for sharing with us these messages of hope, resilience, and understanding.

What has made it possible for you to talk about your illness?

I needed to start a journey of discovery and healing. I had buried things, thoughts, feelings, and experiences for so long; I had a lot of resentment, shame and low self-esteem to work through. The more I am able to share my experiences in a trusting, supportive, non-judgemental, accepting community, the more I heal and am able to discuss it without overwhelming emotions. I also now feel my story is valuable in helping others.

What was your journey to getting diagnosed?

Being Métis and having family with generational trauma, our families learned behaviour was to just push our bad experiences aside and move on as best we could. This method of “dealing with it” brought about many suicides, bouts of depression and anger from otherwise loving, strong, fun family members over the years. My experience was no different, due to “pushing it aside” for approximately 45 years. Over my lifetime I battled addiction and terrible sudden anger. This was very confusing as I was otherwise a kind caring man with what I thought was good self-awareness.

A few years ago, I was maintenance manager of two large medical facilities with a tremendous amount of responsibilities, pressure, stress and very little support from above or below me. I eventually started to crumble mentally and emotionally and began taking time off as a coping mechanism. At that time my C-PTSD was buried pretty deep and unaddressed, but I knew I was going through some kind of depressive disorder. After a visit to my doctor, I was offered medication to further bury my pain and



*Pictured:
Gary during
his time at
a residential
school*

emotional mismanagement. After again refusing this method previously offered during smaller battles of depression over the years, I finally realized education and understanding were the key - what I didn't understand was the long tiresome journey I would then begin.

What has been your experience in accessing mental health services?

I received a referral from my doctor and checked into the groups at our local mental health office, I first took a six week group called Rapid Access Group. I was hesitant and reluctant to accept that anyone there would truly understand my position. I quickly realized I was mistaken and many others were experiencing much of the same symptoms.

The group is broken into six different topics offered each week; it was logical, informative, educational, it gave me some insight and awareness. A few weeks later, I took a ten week group course on depression. Even though it was only three hours a day, one day a week, with my otherwise buried emotions, I was overwhelmed with the timeframe and commitment. It became easier as I began to understand and forgive my patterns and destructive behaviour, I learned so much about myself and began to heal and embrace this new loving, accepting, supportive community of

people I could relate to.

After I finished depression group, I realized how much anger I carried. I took an anger management group for another eight weeks, after beginning to understand and dismantle my thinking errors and reactive behaviour, I started to address my overwhelming anxiety. I then attended an eight week course that focused on just that.

Do you feel there are adequate supports/resources for you in your city or community?

There are free courses and counselling available, there are also support groups and local mental health support clubhouses, also free - however they have little to no advertising budget and are still somewhat a cloaked and underground system that you need to dig into. This is very difficult, to nearly impossible, to find and access for someone who is struggling, let alone reach out or actually attend.

Has culture played a role in your mental health journey?

Culture and community are massive factors for good emotional health, mental health, physical health and especially our spiritual health. So many of us deny our spirituality due to confusing it with

religion. Any community that supports, understands and appreciates us without judgement, or expectations is crucial. This can come in the form of sports teams, music, food, sweatlodge, ethnic groups, hobbies, volunteer work, etc. I believe we all need to truly understand and implement this to fully balance our medicine wheel and keep it rolling smoothly. I wish there were more opportunities locally for Métis culture to be incorporated into peoples' lives and routines.

How has living with this illness shaped who you are today?

Throughout my journey of healing, I have taken many courses toward trying to better understand myself. I took peer support worker and recovery support worker courses, and now work in a local mental health and addictions support house helping others on their journeys. I have learned that to escape anxiety, worry and depression, we need to live in the here and now. Mindfulness and meditation are helpful, but gratitude is key. I live by the simpler ways of our ancestors, completely off-grid right on the water, with wood heat, solar and wind power, ducks and chickens, vegetable garden and fruit orchard. I have community

RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Métis Crisis Line:

1-833-MétisBC (1-833-638-4722)

Anxiety Canada:

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/disorders/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/>

Canadian Mental Health Association BC:

<https://cmha.bc.ca/documents/post-traumaticstress-disorder-2/>

Centre For Addiction and Mental Health:

<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/posttraumatic-stress-disorder>

Crisis Centre BC:

<https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/get-help/>

Here to Help BC:

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/post-traumatic-stress-disorder>

HeadsUpGuys (information on men's mental)

<https://headsupguys.org/>

support, and give and receive help to others seeking the same lifestyle.

This not only keeps my brain and body busy but also puts me close to nature, and I am so very grateful for just the essentials we can so often take for granted. There is a large amount of pride and comfort that comes from being self-sufficient, at least as much as possible.

What has contributed to your wellness?

Forgiving myself, forgiving others, educating myself, not feeling guilty for taking time for things that bring me joy, implementing healthier self-talk, understanding and correcting my thinking errors and learned behaviour, omitting people with toxic behaviour from my circle, and keeping my world small and simple. ❀

Take a moment to learn more about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

From the *Here To Help BC*: People can endure a lot, but some experiences can be overwhelming. Post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD is an illness that affects people who have experienced a traumatic event. Symptoms of PTSD include:

- *Distressing or frightening thoughts, flashbacks, or nightmares about the event*
- *Anxiety and fear, especially when confronted with events or situations that remind you of the trauma*
- *Avoiding things that remind you of the traumatic event*
- *Feeling “on guard” or excessively vigilant*
- *Being startled very easily*
- *Feeling angry or irritable*
- *Problems with memory, concentration, or sleep*
- *Feeling anger, guilt, shame, or other strong negative emotions*
- *Blaming yourself for the event or believing that everything must be very dangerous*
- *Emotional numbness or withdrawal, feeling nothing, finding it difficult to connect with other people*
- *Low mood, despair, or hopelessness*

To be diagnosed with PTSD, symptoms have to be present for at least a month after the trauma. People who experience these symptoms soon after the trauma may be diagnosed with acute stress disorder first and then diagnosed with PTSD if they continue to experience these systems after one month. However, others may not experience PTSD symptoms until several months have passed since the traumatic situation or event happened.

Trauma is not always a single event. Some traumatic experiences, like abuse that happens over a long period of time, can have a very broad impact on a person's life. Some call this complex post-traumatic stress disorder or C-PTSD. Complex PTSD is more likely to affect people who experience trauma in childhood, such as ongoing abuse or neglect, though it may not be diagnosed until adulthood.

With support, people can recover from PTSD and the effects of trauma.



GARY-JAMES TÊTU'S JOURNEY

I was born in Mallardville, BC, a known Métis community in the Fraser valley near Coquitlam. In 1972 my family moved to Mission. We purchased an old house on property in Hatzic, a very quiet old farming community just east of Mission and began farming vegetables.

In 1973-74 the area experienced a large burst of growth due to many surrounding large vegetable farms being sold off and several large subdivisions going in. To accommodate the influx of new families, our small one room style school house was closed for a massive timely upgrade.

The small handful of us local farm kids students were sent to attend class at the nearby St. Mary's residential

school while renovations took place. There I experienced daily mental, verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual abuse for one full year.

Though being quietly Métis, I, unlike my First Nations classmates, had a few "white privileges". I was allowed to wear what I wanted, have long hair, leave the grounds when I wanted and go home to my family each night and for holidays.

I remained silent for fear, shame and guilt. After returning to the regular school, I put these unaddressed traumas aside. However I unknowingly developed long-standing and often overwhelming deepseated resentment, anger, shame, guilt, anxiety, distrust and low self-esteem due to never speaking of or actually healing from this experience.

Despite these misplaced emotions and various addictions

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

MYTH: *Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) isn't a real illness, it's just all in someone's head.*

FACT: PTSD is a real, serious, and valid mental illness. People who live with PTSD are not weak, but are living with an illness that must be taken seriously. People may develop PTSD after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. PTSD leads to measurable change in how the brain functions. However, with proper treatment and support, people with PTSD can and do recover.

MYTH: *Only veterans can get PTSD.*

FACT: Anybody who experiences or witnesses a traumatic or difficult event can be at risk of developing PTSD. During

or after the traumatic event, you may feel that you or others are in danger, or feel that you have no control over what has happened. Traumatic events can include experiences such as assault or abuse, neglect, experiencing or witnessing an emergency situation, accidents, natural disasters, etc. It is important to note that these are just some examples of potential events that can lead to the onset of PTSD; PTSD may be developed as a result of any number of events. For those living with PTSD, it is important to note that their experience is real and valid. A common stigma of PTSD is that what happened "wasn't that bad". This is a harmful and dangerous misconception that invalidates the experiences of the individual living with PTSD.

as coping mechanisms, I lived the best and fullest life I could. I constantly battle depression and ongoing thoughts and plans of eventual suicide. Fighting, sex, and partying became my normal. Shifting through many trades from job to job, location to location, and relationship to relationship, I didn't understand how the body keeps the score no matter what distractions or direction you run.

It all finally caught up with me in my early fifties when I was at the seemingly best point in my life and career. I became very overwhelmed and hit the very bottom and thought for sure I would never recover. I refused medication and hospitalization as I couldn't fathom this becoming my new identity. I would've rather died. Fortunately my stubbornness and resilience turned towards education, lifestyle changes and seeking a safe

supportive community to share my story. It was then I actually began to finally heal.

I took courses and attended support groups at the local mental health office on depression, anger management, anxiety, self-esteem, wellness recovery programs and eventually peer support worker and recovery support worker training.

I now live with an amazing, supportive, accepting, encouraging partner in a tiny off-grid home and hobby farm we've built ourselves and strive to live a life of simplicity, forgiveness, gratitude and spirituality. I'm very proud and pleased to work in the mental health industry and feel I am finally exactly where I am supposed to be doing exactly what I'm supposed to be doing: using my hard experiences to help others heal.☘

MYTH: *People living with PTSD should be able to just get over it and move on.*

FACT: As stated by Health Link BC: the strong emotions you may feel during the traumatic event can create changes in your brain that result in PTSD. You may not be able to "move on" because of this. It's important to remember that PTSD is a medical condition. People with other health conditions, such as cancer, deal with the condition as best they can. The same is true for PTSD.

MYTH: *PTSD is extremely rare.*

FACT: PTSD is more common than many believe, with an estimated 9% of Canadians experiencing PTSD at some point in their lifetime.

MYTH: *People living with PTSD never get better.*

FACT: With proper treatment and support, people living with PTSD can and do recover from the illness and the impacts of trauma. PTSD is most often treated with a combination of counselling and medication. EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) therapy can also be an extremely effective approach to treating PTSD. Everyone's journey to recovery is different, and some may take longer than others. There is no shame in a longer recovery, rather there is strength in knowing it is never too late to reach out for support. It is important to remember that, with the right treatment and support, life with PTSD can get better, and be a full, wonderful life.

Resilient Roots: Issue Two 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.



LAURA MEIKLE

Laura works as a facilitator of Spiritual Awakenings offering it and other educational courses for personal and professional development of Body, Mind and Spirit through Aluria: Awakening Sacred Journeys—her website that is under construction. She also works as a Massage Therapist and does Healing work in Vernon, BC as found on LaurasSacredHealingSpace.com. Being 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.



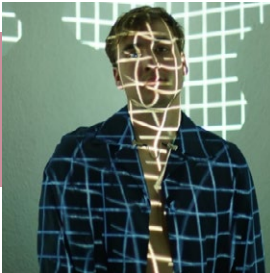
NORA ZILKIE

Nora Zilkie completed the Master of Arts—Integrated Studies program at Athabasca University. She began her undergraduate studies at Arctic College in Yellowknife, NWT, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in writing from the University of Victoria in British Columbia. Nora, a Métis great grandmother, born in Saskatchewan, lived nearly half a century in the Northwest Territories. She currently resides in Sooke, B.C.



NOLAN CHEM

My name is Nolan Chem. I was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba and moved out to Langley for high school. I completed my Bachelor of Sciences in 2017 and am now pursuing my dream career at UBC Faculty of Medicine to become a physician. I am fortunate enough to have such a talented photographer, Emma Garm-Straker, to help me bring these photos to life of me and my Papa's sash and war memorial.



LEVI GLASS

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



ELI AIKEMA

Eli is a mixed settler and proud Métis citizen (French-Ojibwe-Blackfoot), who's ancestors travelled from Manitoba's Red River region down to Montana to follow the buffalo hunt; there, they were adopted into the Pikuni Nation and eventually settled in northern B.C. Eli is in the process of completing her undergraduate degree in Gender, Sexuality & Psychology at Simon Fraser University. She is currently working with MNBC's Ministry of Mental Health & Addictions as a Research Assistant and is also a founding member of the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative.





ADAM GAUTHIER

Tawnshi. My name is Adam Gauthier. I am Métis from Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta, on my paternal side and Coast Salish from Tla'amin Nation on my maternal side. I have been exploring my Métis identity and culture by being actively involved with the community and citizens of Métis Nation British Columbia. I am a proud Métis individual who is proud to use his voice to promote mental health and wellness for everyone. My post-secondary education is surrounded by Indigenous ways of being which includes our Métis customs, traditions, and values. Every day I give thanks and gratitude for the resilience of our ancestors that have paved the way for us to be here today.



MS. ROMY PRITCHARD

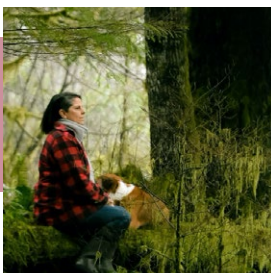
Ms. Romy Pritchard, BA BFA, Registered & Licenced Health & Life Coach

Ms. Romy Pritchard is a Métis woman whose family is from the Red River Settlement. Romy is a mother, wife, artist, works with medicinal plants, ecological restoration, permaculture, food security, loves to cook and help build healthy communities. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Human and Social Development and a Bachelor of Fine Arts. She has training in ecological restoration, permaculture, medicinal plants, art therapy, meditation and psychotherapy, addictions and mental health, and shamanism. She is a registered and licenced health and life Coach.



FERN ANNABELLE HINSE

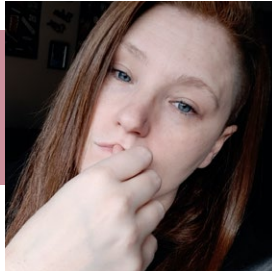
My submission entitled, Royalty Warriors, became a precursor to an existing pathway of a 2-in-one spirit world. That is where my healing began, when I found the ancient 2-in-one pathway that was trod by our ancestors. There I stood tall, holding the Centered Spirit of Presence that I was born with. I, Fern Hinse intend to take this informative study much further in my writing quest. I hope you will walk the path with me.



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.





LISA MELTON

Lisa is a Métis female who was born in Saskatchewan but has grown up in British Columbia. Lisa is a mental health advocate, a photographer and a budding author. When she is not working, Lisa spends her free time taking Kickboxing classes, working out at the gym, and volunteering her time as a photographer/videographer at her church.



AVA HART

My name is Ava Hart. I identify with (she/her). I am Métis. I suffer from Borderline Personality Disorder. I love animals. I am 19 years old, and currently attending London school's "old school barber program".



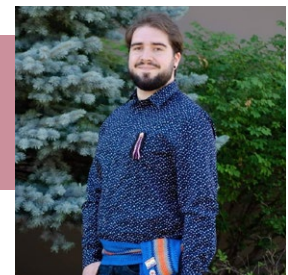
EMMA GARM-STRAKER



NEVADA CHRISTIANSON



JAMIE SCOTT



SHAUGHN



GARY TÊTU



MAUREEN F. LANDUCCI



KATINA

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.

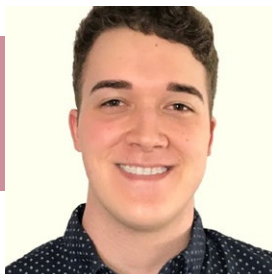
Please note some members of the MY Initiative have been credited previously on the Contributors page.

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



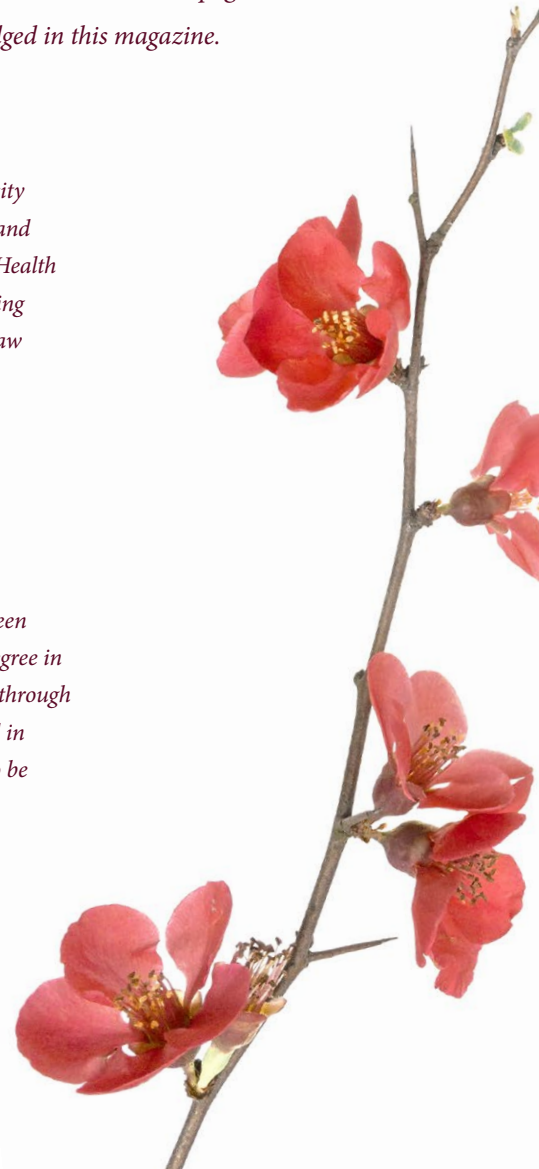
RIPLEY BURD

Ripley is a fourth year Psychology student at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. She is on the magazine and community engagement subcommittees for MY Mental Health and Wellness Initiative. Ripley has spent two years working in the mental health field and hopes to get a job as a bylaw officer after university.



QUINN BASSO

Quinn was born and raised in Prince Rupert, and has been living in Victoria for the past five years. He received a degree in biopsychology at UVic, and now attends medical school through UBC at the Island Medical Program. Quinn is interested in mental health and wellness promotion, and is grateful to be involved in this initiative.





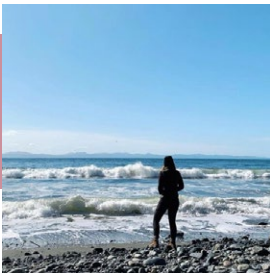
HAILEY HOWSE

Hailey is a Métis citizen of the Métis Nation of British Columbia, residing in the traditional territories of the Lekwungen peoples, known today as Victoria. Hailey is a 4th year psychology student completing her undergrad at the University of Victoria. Her goal is to become a Family and Marriage Counsellor – with a specific interest in empowering teen girls. Hailey has been a member of MY Mental Health and Wellness Initiative for almost two years now, and has loved being a part of this passionate and dynamic group. Hailey's is a huge advocate for mental health, and is excited to be working in a field that offers such rich and rewarding experiences with people. In her spare time, she enjoys being in nature, gardening, and spending time with her friends.



LAUREN MICAELA PETERSEN

Lauren is Métis through her maternal line, descending from the Ducharme & Gladue families. She was raised in the unceded homelands of the Katzie, Kwantlen and Matsqui First Nations, and is currently completing a Masters of Education in Leadership, Adult Education & Community Engagement at the University of Victoria. She is privileged to work, study, and play in the traditional homelands of the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.



JILLIAN JONES

Jillian is the Provincial Mental Health Coordinator with the Métis Nation of BC. Graduating with a degree in education, Jillian has worked in mental health for the past eight years, and is a passionate advocate for mental wellness. 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

***The Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative
is seeking new members! To learn more, please connect
with Jillian at jjones@mnbc.ca***

MÉTIS CRISIS LINE

Help is just a call away

MENTAL WELLNESS

ABUSE

RELATIONSHIPS

BULLYING

ADDICTIONS

SUICIDE & IDEATION

DEPRESSION

GRIEF & LOSS

SELF-HARM

PEER PRESSURE

ANXIETY

FINANCIAL ISSUES

CULTURE

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7 DAYS PER WEEK**

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trust and feel safe!



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Risk assessment
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Community engagement



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in collaboration with KUU-US Crisis Services



