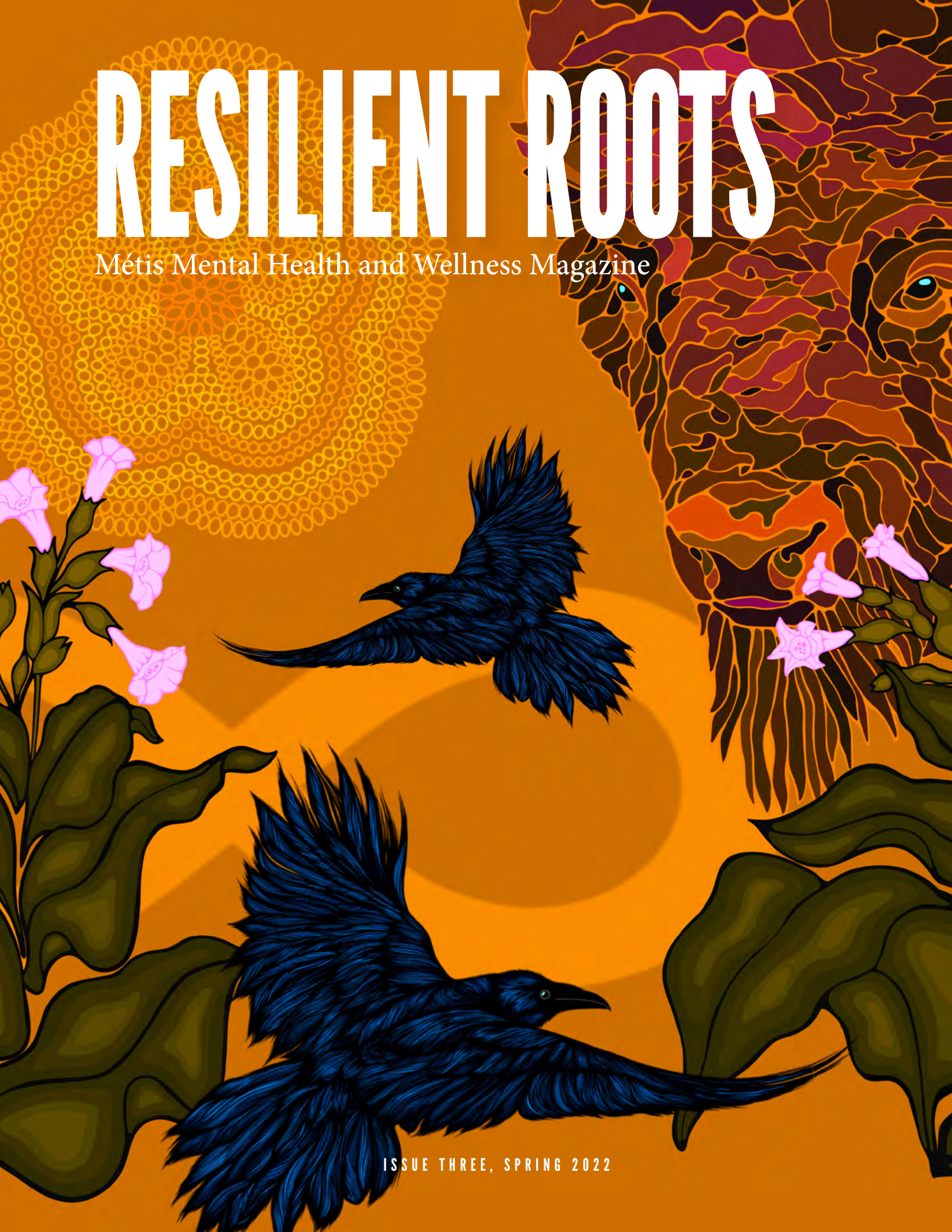


RESILIENT ROOTS

Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine



ISSUE THREE, SPRING 2022

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Métis Crisis Line

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Published by MNBC

www.mnbc.ca

Spring 2022



Minister's Message

Tawnshi,

I am happy to share with you the third issue of *Resilient Roots: Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine*. This community-led publication is centred around the themes of *miyooayaan* (wellness), *la Saantii* (health), and *Shakamohta* (connect/connection) as it relates to mental health in our Métis communities.

Mental health concerns have long disproportionately impacted Métis. While it is difficult to see this, we know also that we so often encounter the resilience of communities rooted in the strengths of Métis culture and worldviews.

Métis ways of knowing show that community-based approaches contribute to resilience and mental wellness. *Resilient Roots* is guided by the principle of *Kaa-wiichihitoyaahk* - which means “we take care of each other”. By utilizing the guiding belief of *Kaa-wiichihitoyaahk*, this magazine hopes to be a testament to that shining strength and resilience that lives in our Métis communities.

Every part of this magazine comes from the strong, inspired voices of Métis community members across BC. We are so deeply grateful to all contributors for sharing their incredible work with this publication.

Resilient Roots has been made possible by the continued efforts of the members of the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative. Marsee, to this incredible group of Métis youth for your continued passion in working to uplift Métis voices and wisdom.

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.

Pishshapmishko (take care),

Dr. Kate Elliott

Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

Métis Nation BC





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



Tawnshi

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Tawnshi! We feel deeply honoured to be sharing with you the third of *Resilient Roots: Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine*.

As members of the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative, we have sought to create a publication that raises Métis perspectives centred around mental health and wellness. Resilient Roots continues to be possible because of the generous and powerful voices of our Métis Community Members across BC.

There are many ways to share your voice, and what is shown between these pages has come in diverse expressions - including art, stories of personal experience, and poetry. Resilient Roots issue three sees 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.

Sincerely,

- *The Métis Youth Mental Health
and Wellness Initiative*



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





Perfectly Métis

KATHLEEN SVEDBERG

His dark brown eyes look up at me, full of trust and love

“How did I get so lucky?”, the Creator smiles above

His hair is wild, poker straight, unruly and carefree

My little boy runs off to play, he’s perfectly Métis

His confidence is contagious, he doesn’t skip a beat

He wants to learn all there is, his eagerness so sweet

Leaves dance in unison, there’s a softness in the air

Mother Earth connects us in this sacred family prayer

He’s running back towards me, his sash trailing behind

The red, the blue, green, yellow, white and black all intertwined

He stretches out his arms, his cheek soon pressed on mine

With closed eyes, I squeeze him back; a warmth words can’t define

My wish for you is that you know exactly who you are

The wisdom of our ancestors will act as your North Star

But if you start to question as young people tend to do

You’ll know, dear son, your strength and courage will help you to get through

A Diagnosis Doesn't Define You

LIA LATCHKEY

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 story contains discussion around overdose.

I am a person living with substance use disorder, that is in “remission” because I am in recovery. Most people (including myself from time-to-time) will revert back to calling me an “addict”, or a “person living with addiction”. Yes, that is true, however the psychological medical term of diagnosis is substance use disorder, and it is to be taken seriously like all diagnoses - not just another statistic of “the addict or person living with addiction”. Language is everything, and to undo many people’s beliefs and preconceived ideas; this diagnosis helps to de-stigmatize, streamline, and help many people find themselves in its definition.

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

Substance use disorders occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causes clinically significant impairment, including health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home (DSM 5). It is the correct term once a diagnosis is given for addiction. It is about framing our lived-experience with proper language, to help shed away the stigma. There is help and support, and it is to be taken

This submission was originally part of Métis Nation BC’s Mental Illness Awareness Week Campaign 2021. 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-experience stories. Thank you to our incredible volunteers for sharing their story, and for sharing with us all messages of hope, resilience, and understanding.

seriously like all diagnoses. There is recovery with or without the diagnosis; this diagnosis helps to see from the perspective of the medical and psychological field, and can give more weight than statistics from the newspapers, etc.

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

Asking for help is the biggest hurdle and the biggest strength. Forever I will ask for help, so even the days that seem dark I can still choose life, and do the work to heal. In hindsight, it has been worth it. The darkness will lessen, and you can recover. Everyone's journey and pace of recovery is different - just try, try, try. You cannot undo a lifetime, or a chunk of time, of use and trauma in a day, month, or year.

The pain of facing our past, our traumas, our shortcomings, is worth it when we can recover and slowly become the best version of ourselves.

A lot of support from systems, programs, counsellors, psychiatry, reading, finding things we enjoy is the best way to go, to heal our past, work in the now, and understand better for the future.

Where there is pain in recovery there will be spiritual growth; even the darkest times of my past (things one may never share with but with a paper and a pen) have begun to heal.

Every day that I spend in recovery, the pain of the past lessens, and I am recovering from hopelessness. Every day in recovery may not be the best day floating on the proverbial pink cloud, but even my worst days in recovery are far better than the cycle of active substance use disorder.

What seed might we plant now that could make the most difference in life with this illness?

Recovery is possible, many roads lead there! You are a worthwhile person, your life matters, there is no failure in trying so try, try, try - you will find recovery!

Have you felt stigma because of your illness?

I have experienced stigma, anything and everything you can imagine has been said and or done to me as a result of people finding out I use or used drugs and drank. That is okay though, that is their baggage to unpack. Because of the stigma people face, and that I have faced, I choose to put myself out here to talk about what it all means and why I chose to stand firm behind the language of using the correct diagnosis. Substance use disorder.

Some people will never hear or see past the terms "addict" or "alcoholic", because addiction and alcoholism has unfortunately impacted many of the people on this earth. Some may never be open to seeing people change. Sometimes this will happen in our own lives - where people may never forgive, or accept us as the new us. But that is okay; it can be hard, but it is okay.

Our life is for us. We cannot recover if we put other people first, even those with dependents. We must get healthy and choose life in order to have and give healthy support to others. Stigma is always going to be there. To me, I see that as their problem and their shortcomings, not ours.

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

I want to share my experience with recovery because I have seen the false beliefs of what many

believe it looks like, and many people have died as a result. I am also sharing because as a youth I had no knowledge; maybe if someone I could relate to had shared their experience, I may have tried then. I also want to make myself available as a resource and touch point for others. I am not only a few months shy of a decade in recovery, I am a certified Indigenous family support worker with LOADS of experience, and qualifications to help support others.

How long have you been living with this illness? What are some ways you manage your diagnosis?

This answer could be a scientific “nature vs. nurture” debate on whether I was born with substance use disorder (addiction) and it was awakened, or if it was something that happened to me over time as a result of my surroundings or upbringing.

I was thirteen the first time I drank and used drugs, and I became fully addicted by fourteen. I would be lying if I didn’t say I enjoyed drinking and drugging. Partying was fun in the beginning, but for my personal story it was very early on when that changed, and drugs and alcohol became the only solution to life I knew. After fourteen, I used and drank every day until I was twenty-six. At twenty-six, I went to detox and treatment. I used and drank for thirteen years, never stopping.

Unfortunately, I was a hardcore person from the beginning. However, that doesn’t make me any different or better or worse than another person with substance use disorder.

There are many reasons people become dependent on using and drinking; they want to forget and numb the pain, to fill a void, silence a trauma, be the life of the party until the party is no more, self-medicate, etc.

I was a hardcore drug user; I used hardcore methods of choice, enjoyed the streets, and being left alone. From the beginning, I blacked out more often than not from alcohol, and eventually I chased the blackout. This led me to no longer be the person I once was, and I had the potential to be mean at various levels.

I have now been clean and sober for just under a decade, but please know my story is an anomaly. Many people’s recovery journey unfortunately includes going back and relapsing, and that is okay. Some of the strongest people I know may never find long-term recovery, and many eventually do. Relapse happens, and harm reduction saves lives; abstinence at first may not work for everyone, as it has in my case. But that is okay- just keep trying, and you will find recovery in your own ways.

***Recovery is
possible, many
roads lead there!
You are a worthwhile
person, your life
matters!***

Everyone's story is different and it takes time to heal our past and trauma, but the work is absolutely worth it.

It took a lot of work, bit-by-bit, to stay clean and sober and to find personal balance with mental health; recovery will look different for everyone. Some people will go back and relapse, and may never make it back; but some will keep coming and going and one day they just get it. I have seen it all. Especially those who keep trying and one day they just get it. I've also known many others who have had to lay to rest loved ones due to overdose deaths.

The keys to my recovery and the following that I share is how I have managed to stay clean and sober this long. However, emotional mental health can and has for me taken two moves forward, six moves back, four moves forward, and ten moves back. Working on emotional recovery is one key to recovery of addiction and alcoholism.

It is important to know everyone will recover differently but the key is addressing the trauma that can lead us to use and drink, and understand that where there is pain there is growth. We can heal and move forward. We can lessen the weight of the trauma and pain - but it will not happen overnight.

Living with addiction and alcoholism (substance use disorder), we can want instant gratification. But when it comes to recovery and recovering from sometimes the most horrific of things, we cannot undo a lifetime of pain, scars and trauma in a day or a month or a year. That may sound overwhelming and scary, but it's possible and I am proof of that - I swear it is possible and worth it.

Today my downs aren't as low as they once were. Today, there is nothing in my life that using drugs or drinking will solve. There are tools for everything, and learning that there is not one set way to recovery and finding the right way for you can be life changing. Life healing and life giving.

Recovery is possible, but it will look different for every person. Getting a mental health worker, psychologist, counsellor, may be your best route for a foundation.

Being online has given me access to more support since the pandemic, and I have reached out to the First Nations Health Authority who is helping me. My own doctor is now retired, and I knew I needed to get access quickly to my mainframe of foundational support. Yes, doctors and psychologists are important, but they are only a portion in a recovery plan.

Same with if you and your health care professional decide to include medication. If you are independent or have a family member assisting you, it's time to start making appointments; calling, recalling, more recalling, getting on waiting lists, because the safety of our life is above-all, and our life is in our hands. We are precious and need to learn to treat ourselves as so.

Accessing multiple methods of support, knowledge, information about the illness substance use disorder (including alcohol) is important. Keep calling, keep trying, and find someone and something that fits you. Second opinions, third opinions, you are the one who knows what you are dealing with. Waiting lists are a pain and seem to take forever, but

please just get your name on them because it's better than not. Red tape and repetitive questions may be asked, and it can be annoying.

Sometimes we can get frustrated and not be kind or speak appropriately - owning our voice, our words, and asking for forgiveness to these healthcare places, people, and support programs is key if we mess up. We are human and the system is broken, and that is becoming apparent to the mainstream. However, I learned time and time again (especially in the early days) that biting my tongue, being patient, and asking for forgiveness when needing to go a long way. All things that went against my years of suffering, anger, trauma, lifestyle on the streets, etc.

In addition, twelve step, and non-twelve step meetings and programs are always available in real time online, and in-person- just check your local area office via phone or listings online.

Whether you are recovering at any stage, or have started recovering with support, or are waiting for support - trying different things for additional healing (whether it is cultural, natural, physical, emotional etc.), these things make recovery more interesting and not so bland. Not so repetitive. Yes, having a routine will help your recovery from mental illness and addiction, and is extremely important, but becoming stagnant or staying around the same

people, same places, and doing the same old things may increase a chance of relapse whether with the substance or emotional.

I have had to add things that make life more interesting, something to look forward to. Things that excite my brain and senses. Adventures to new places; whether in real time like hiking and camping, or increasing my artistic abilities and imagination. Adding things that interest you and make you feel alive like retreats, art, reading, going to museums, podcasts, childhood movies, sports, scrapbooking, knitting, courses or classes you've always wanted to do (even if it was something from years ago) - nothing is silly, it is all adding colour and joy and life to your recovery.

Please contact me if you have any further questions or need more information. I have a wealth of resources, personal experience with these resources, lived-experience with substance use disorder, and living and knowing others, and academic knowledge of substance use disorder. ✿

Successful Life Strategies, Lia,
vanisle.life.strategies@gmail.com



RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Métis Crisis Line:

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

BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services:

<http://www.bcmhsus.ca/>

Canadian Mental Health Association BC:

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

Here to Help BC:

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



Intersections of Climate Change and Mental Health

JANNA WALE

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 Janna, and I am studying to be a climate scientist. For many of us, 2021 was a difficult year. We are continuing to cope with the pandemic, while we are beginning to see and experience the very real repercussions of climate change in our communities. We see it on the news, we hear it from our neighbours, or perhaps we have been the ones who have had to flee our homes at the last minute, away from hellfire or highwater.

Like many people, I am coming to terms with my own climate anxiety and environmental grief. Termed “eco-grief” a staggering number of Canadians are now experiencing symptoms of anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder related

to the effects of climate change. My climate anxiety keeps me awake at night, worrying about the future. Watching these once-in-a-lifetime environmental catastrophes unfold every few weeks, I worry about what we are passing onto the next generation. As Métis and Indigenous people, these feelings are sharper; Indigenous people hold deep relationships with the land, and are disproportionately affected by climate change. We are on the frontlines of this crisis. Climate change is an environmental problem, but it is also creating a slew of negative effects on our mental health and wellbeing.

Recently, I was reminded of one of our teachings. We are taught to consider what was done for us seven

generations back, and also to make decisions thinking seven generations forward. I have heard this teaching often enough, but it didn't really click until hearing it framed in the context of climate change. Listening to a community member, he said that it is easy to feel like climate change needs to be solved right now, when in reality we are only responsible for setting up the next generation to do better. He reminded me that we are only responsible for the change we can make in our lifetime, and to trust the next generation to do the same.

A word that has been coming up in climate conversations is "resilience". Climate resilience is a slippery term, but is in essence the ability to cope with, and overcome these climatic changes that we are experiencing. Similarly, resiliency when talking about mental health is understanding that things will not always be easy, but is having the ability to fight through and come back stronger.

Feeling like we have to solve global scale problems in our lifetime is overwhelming and demoralizing. How can we possibly contend with it

all? Climate change is a hard thing. It is extremely difficult to watch what is happening on the news, and to live the changes that are occurring globally on the land. Mental health is another hard thing. It can be draining, isolating, and overwhelming. Mental health related to climate is an extremely hard thing, because it is easy to feel powerless.

Sitting with this teaching, I have begun to build resilience related to my own struggle with climate anxiety and eco grief. I am reminding myself that I can only do my best in this lifetime, and it makes it seem a little bit less imminent and a lot more manageable. Some of the tangible things that have also helped me are to take time to be on the Land, and to take good care of my physical health. I have also recently started limiting the amount of news I consume; I have been reading more books that both make me think, but also make me happy. These things are helping me to build resilience in my mental health, which allow me to rest so that I can focus on doing what I can to address climate change, and work towards a better future. ✿

RESOURCES FOR CLIMATE ANXIETY AND ECO GRIEF

Books:

A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety by Sarah Jaquette Ray

Hope is a Verb: Six Steps to Radical Optimism When the World Seems Broken by Emily Ehlers

Toolkits:

Addressing and Coping with Climate Grief: A toolkit for Group and Individual Use by Judy Wu

Climate Grief and Climate Action Toolkit by the LLC Library

Social Media:

@ecoanxious (Instagram); <https://www.ecoanxious.ca/> @ecowithem (Instagram); <https://www.ecowithem.com/>

Bouncing Back

KEVIN STEWART, MÉTIS NATION OF GREATER VICTORIA

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 includes mention of loss

Tawnshi Friends. I had initially submitted an article years ago, shortly after going through a very dark episode of depression during a divorce. I have treated the depression with counselling, research, and medication -and while depressive periods come and go, I think I have learned to live with it and function on a daily basis. There HAS been a change for the better; I would never have guessed me saying that years ago. No easy ride however. Shortly after going off medication, I was visited by depression's close cousin: anxiety.

Hardly "my favourite cousin", any kind of social situation became difficult to navigate and the workplace was particularly overwhelming. Through counselling, funded by a program at MNBC, I employed a few strategies to help me through social situations that I knew were going to be problematic. I also had to be

assertive about excluding myself from events where I knew the discomfort would be too much. Initially, it wasn't easy to anticipate; I think I eked away towards self-awareness mostly through trial and error. The error part was not fun; I remember sitting through some situations with my skin crawling, terrified people were judging me every second. I explained this to my supervisor after declining another office social (the trend had been recognized). To her credit, she took my explanation at face value and understood where I was coming from. Unfortunately, this was not always the case.

I was disappointed to find some friends wouldn't accept my explanation or would diminish its effect on my well-being. To anyone dealing with mental health issues, it is no surprise that people drop out of your life in difficult times. Some friends I knew for years

have disappeared and a few I thought would always be in my corner have kept their distance - like my depression/anxiety may be contagious. I have been lucky though, some people came through that I would not have guessed. My sister, whom I never had a close relationship with, has become a true confidante. One of the most macho friends I know has proven to be a soft-hearted and dependable sounding board. I have this quote attached to my computer monitor: *“Hard times will always reveal true friends”*.

I always make a point of asking my counsellor for book recommendations on the issue of the day - whether it be mindfulness, grounding, or gratefulness - to name a few. Everything we talk about has value but often I have more questions at the end of our sessions. I have long realized that I am a very practical learner, thus theory has little value if I cannot put it in practice. I decided to move on from one counsellor when her sole advice was to “give it time”. While I am sure it came from a good place, I needed more than just “time”.

One of the better research tools I found was YouTube and particularly TedTalks. You will find short lectures (usually about 15 minutes) from experts on all forms of mental health subjects. If you learn like I do, the succinct delivery is perfect. I often follow up with research on lectures I liked and gather articles, books, or research on similar topics. Lately, the most valuable TedTalk I have encountered is by Dr. Lucy Hone, Director at the New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing and Resilience. Her talk on *“Resilience”*, and some follow up research, nudged me to a new place on my journey. I knew I was on the right path when she said “if you are going to win this fight for survival, you are going to have to step up and take control”. Here are the critical

points from Dr. Hone and how I implement them in my daily life.

Resilient people get that sh*t happens – Her language, not mine. Dr. Hone reminds us that suffering is part of life. The more I accepted that everyone goes through something negative, the less I felt picked on. I also started to develop a heightened sense of awareness and compassion for those around me. Another ‘monitor’ quote: *“If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else’s, you’d probably grab yours back”*. Dr. Hone lost her young daughter in a car accident. Her best friend also perished in the event. If Dr. Hone and I participated in this exercise, I would reach back into the pile.

Resilient people are good at choosing where they put their attention – Dr. Hone says it comes down to controlling what you can and accepting what you cannot. Personally, I feel like I have long used this as part of my sub-conscious life philosophy but I have never had to put it into an action plan. It inspired me to create a personal inventory of things I wanted to improve, change, experience, and exclude from my life. I re-joined paddling after years away and recently finished a season completing more races than I had completed in ten years. Another change was hiking in nature several times a week; I found it helped my anxiety considerably and these is research that supports this.

I made a list of people I knew were still my friends and ensured a call or e-mail was sent on a regular basis. I also came to peace with those who chose not to stay friends. *Gratefulness* started to make

more sense to me at this time. Some suggest a gratefulness journal can help, but I found reflecting at the end of the day did it for me. Before sleep, I think back to the *BRIGHT SPOT* in my day - often a quick chat or text with a friend, the sun peeking through the trees during a hike, the sight of the blue bridge when returning from paddling. What did I *ACHIEVE* in my day? As a DOER, I get a lot of satisfaction in completing something significant every day (most days) and reflecting on this helped motivate me - doing *nothing* was no longer acceptable (previously, it was very much OK). And of course, what was I *GRATEFUL* for? Employment, friends, my attachment to a kind and supportive Métis community, paddling club mates, Jigging partners and volunteer work - which has resulted in new friends. After a while, it has become quite clear I have a lot to be grateful for. Dr. Hone described this as a “*vital, learnable skill*” and based on my experience, it absolutely is.

Resilient people ask “is what I am doing helping or harming me?” – This one question has helped me get out of the harmful habit of constantly questioning *what went wrong*. Frankly, it just doesn't help, the past is gone. In the beginning I would tread endlessly through the bog of by-gone memories and admittedly, I garnered some lessons. But it quickly turned into diminishing returns and stole time and effort from whatever is in front of me. While I do not have a perfect track record, I get myself out of wasteful, long rumination by using Dr. Hone's question in combination with her previous point. Thus, not only does staying in the past make me feel worse,

it does *nothing* in helping me solve whatever new problem I have in my life; a reality we all have to deal with. It's better to put time and energy on the here and now.

Friends and cousins, be courageously decisive with the stuff you *KNOW* is harmful. Alcoholism is rampant in my family tree and while I decided to stay sober almost twenty years ago, I would be less than honest to say I have not flirted with a return to drinking these last few years. I have stayed true to Dr. Hone's question only because I know any addictive drug most certainly would not help. I don't need *ANOTHER* problem and I doubt you do either.

I am not suggesting Dr. Hone's work as a fix-all. Personally, I doubt there is 'one'. I suspect for all of us, it's a combination of interventions that help, including professionals and a support network. If there is any *ONE* thing I am confident in, it is the notion of starting and maintaining a purposeful journey of healing. Pursue initiatives that “resonate” with you. Even Dr. Hone says that changing your perspective using these points “*doesn't remove all the pain...nor is it easy*”. I have stopped looking for the trauma of my past to go away, I am only looking for ways to live with it. I hope you can find strategies, a routine and a support network that helps you. And please remember that popular mental health adage - “*Let's Talk*”. It's a good starting point for anyone.

Marsii Friends. If you have difficulty taking the next step, ask someone for help. Your friends – including me – hope the best for you. I promise, you are not alone. 🌸

Family Omission

KATHLEEN SVEDBERG

Looking in the mirror, I couldn't find the words
A young girl discouraged, searching to be heard
Where do I belong? My future painted grey
A family omission, history torn away

My grandmother's speech is muddled, broken but sincere
"Oh that's just some French I picked up from here and there dear"
Her door is always open, her neighbours are but friends
Cooking up the next hot meal with yesterday's odds and ends

Music fills her home, a fiddle plays a tune
Grandma's feet skip and leap, gliding across the room
"Don't concern yourself with that, little one, we're all just family"
"A dash of this, a hint of that makes up our pedigree"

I struggle to find answers, a story left untold
Traditions build a people, the values we uphold
My history comes with questions, a past obscured by time
My duty to reveal the truth, make right this victimless crime





215

LISA MELTON

*Content warning: this piece contains talk of residential schools, the discovery of
Indigenous children in unmarked graves and abuse*

When media began reporting that 215 Indigenous children had been uncovered in unmarked graves, the world was shocked. I remember hearing how people were angry and disgusted. Me? I was completely confused. I couldn't understand the world's response at all. I mean, why was this making headlines suddenly? Then I began to realize that Indigenous peoples have known these things to be true for decades. The main difference is that now mainstream media could no longer ignore the reality of Canada's residential school system.

My grandmother was never sent to residential school. She was however, sent to Lestock public school which was governed by the nuns. She was one of the only Indigenous students in the school. As such, she was horribly abused by the nuns. My grandmother didn't like to talk about her experiences back in the 40's and we all knew not to push. My grandmother is also the reason I decided to try church.

Her entire life, my grandmother always had her Bibles and her rosaries. It wasn't until the number 215 became well known that I was overwhelmed

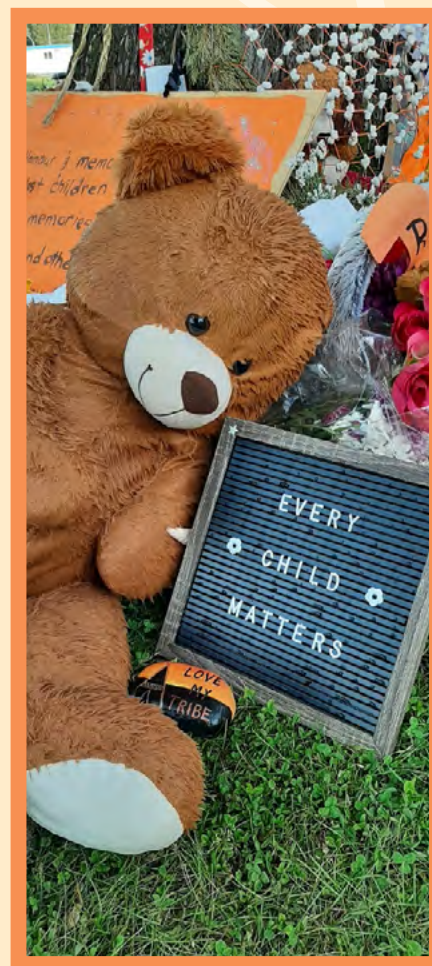
with confusion. How could someone who had experienced such grave abuse in the name of God - trust and love God so much? I needed to understand. My search took me to many of the memorial sites people had set up to honour the lives lost. I brought my camera, not fully knowing why but feeling this incredible pull to document everything I saw. My search took me to Kamloops - the source of the 215.

I needed to feel it all. I needed to take it all into my spirit. I needed to make certain those lives that had been lost and all those lives who are still lost be honored. The emotion I felt was numbing. The air was very crisp and clean, but it was also deathly

quiet. It was as though the world went silent in the moments I spent feeling the Indigenous ancestors.

I hadn't shared any of the photos I'd taken on my search. I wasn't sure I would. But the number 215 has grown. It has continued to grow. More and more Indigenous children have been uncovered.

Thousands more. And yet, the media frenzy who blasted Canadians for having such a horrible past has gone silent. Then it hit me - maybe my photos can say more to the hearts and spirits out there that any media story could. My hope is that you hear whatever it is you need to hear through my images. ❁



Changing Minds

RIPLEY BURD

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 story contains discussion around traumatic brain injury.

I was diagnosed with clinical depression and generalized anxiety in 2017. At that time, I was also diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury, which I learned afterwards most likely caused my mental health problems. In current times I am struggling with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and dealing with a phobia. My brain injury still affects me to this day.

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

I want people to know that living with depression and anxiety does not appear the same way. Even day to day, I find that my mental health can affect me

differently. Some days I just feel a bit more anxious but can continue on throughout the day. But then other days I cannot get out of bed. You will have good days, okay days, and bad days. And just because you feel like you are having too many good days and have been doing well, it does not mean you are not allowed to still have bad days. Healing is not a linear journey and there will be ups and downs.

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

I wish at the beginning of my journey I would have known that mental illness is not always brought on by an extreme event. The small things can also

This submission was originally part of Métis Nation BC's Mental Illness Awareness Week Campaign 2021. 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-experience stories. Thank you to our incredible volunteers for sharing their story, and for sharing with us all messages of hope, resilience, and understanding.

cause a person to experience mental health problems. And that just because the thing that triggers your mental health concerns may not be seen as extreme as others, it is still just as valid. I did not know that a brain injury could cause mental health problems and sometimes when sharing my story I felt embarrassed by it - almost as if my life was not bad enough to have such problems and to need so much help. But it is all valid; what you feel is valid and always will be.

What was your experience with getting diagnosed?

I remember the night I was diagnosed quite clearly. I came home to just my dad being at home and I broke down in tears. I kept telling him that I just wanted to be normal and that I was unfixable. I just kept repeating it over and over again. I told him I just wanted it all to stop. My dad reached out to my mom who came home and knew I needed help beyond what they could offer me. She took me to the hospital where they put us into a separate private room in the emergency room.

I spent the next few hours talking to different nurses and shared what I was experiencing. At this point the doctor came in and told me that he was going to send me home because I was not considered to be a harm to myself or to others. This destroyed me. After I finally took the step to getting

help, I was just going to be sent home. I felt as if my struggles were not being seen and that I was not being listened to.

After the doctor left, I broke down again after being so numb for the past hours I had been in the ER. I pleaded to the nurse who was in the room to help me. And that nurse did, they fought for me to be admitted. After some time, I was admitted to spend the night in the mental health area of the ER.

The following day I met with the hospital psychiatrist who diagnosed me and

told me to go the following day to the Foundry. I will forever be grateful to the nurse that fought for me and truly saw that I was struggling.

What experiences have you had that in the mental health system that have given you hope?

I think the thing that saved me was Foundry. After being released from the hospital I was referred to go to Foundry for support. There, I met two amazing people - one from Reach Out counselling and the other from Braintrust. The lady from Reach Out helped me with my depression and anxiety, while Braintrust provided me support with my brain injury and helped me relearn my emotions. They opened the door to acceptance and healing for me. If it had not been for them, I would not be where I am today.

To this day I still currently receive counselling from Braintrust. My family has also saved me; from

*Healing is not a
linear journey and
there will be ups and
downs.*

my mom taking me to get help, to both of my parents supporting me anyway they could. I know it was not easy for them to watch me struggle but I know that they are so proud of me. So proud of me for fighting so hard.

Has culture played a role in your mental health journey?

Culture has played a major part in my mental health journey. It was not until my struggles and diagnoses that I began looking into my Métis past. So often I would feel so lost and as if I did not know who I was. But knowing that I belonged to a community where they are so accepting and caring changed me. And while looking into my past I came across MNBC. And within MNBC and the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative, I was able to find other likeminded youth.

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

I think one of my biggest strengths I have developed from my mental health journey is learning how to deal with change. I was able to get to a point in my life where I felt like I did not need to go to counselling or be on any medication and that was a wonderful feeling. But then this last year broke me down again. My newly developed OCD and phobia took over my life, to the point where I could not even leave my house without having a panic attack. I would avoid going outside and could only sit in certain areas of my house. Sometimes I would shower two-to-three times a day just to try to feel clean. I would have to take videos of the locks in my house just to ensure that they were locked and that my mind is not just playing tricks on me.

More information from BrainTrust:

After a brain injury, many people experience challenges with their mental health. Mental health, in this context, refers to your emotions and thoughts, and how they affect each other. Your mental health is incredibly important and can have a big impact on your physical and emotional well-being as well as your recovery and rehabilitation. The challenge is that usual coping methods may not work as they used to, and the way you see yourself and interact with the world has changed.

The Impact of an Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Every brain injury is unique. Each person sustaining a brain injury may be affected differently depending on the location of the injury, its severity, any history of previous brain injuries, and age. The impact of ABI is also felt by the family/caregivers. They, too, must adjust to the changes and challenges of post-injury life.

Learn more at: braintrustcanada.com/resources/brain-injury-information/

This went on for months and I isolated myself away from the rest of the living world. I was so disheartened to have been doing so well to only fall flat on my face again. I felt like I was a failure. But I learned that is how mental health can be. It is not always a one and done thing. I have learned that not only will I change as a person as time goes on, but my mental health can also change. It can change for the

better or for the worse. But I am learning and growing from it. I can now leave my house and I am able to go a day without showering. I am nowhere near the place I was two years ago, but I am now doing better than I was a few months ago. I am proud to be able to handle the change that I am experiencing and for the change that may come. ❁

Take a moment to learn more about brain injuries and mental health

FROM BRAIN INJURY CANADA:

After a brain injury, many people experience challenges with their mental health. Mental health, in this context, refers to your emotions and thoughts, and how they affect each other. Your mental health is incredibly important and can have a big impact on your physical and emotional well-being as well as your recovery and rehabilitation. The challenge is that usual coping methods may not work as they used to, and the way you see yourself and interact with the world has changed.

Everything you think and feel is valid - this can be scary when you are feeling negative or hopeless and don't entirely know why, or you feel different and don't know what to do to feel better. Whether you find your own support system or have a caregiver develop one on your behalf, mental health support is critical. This is when you need a team of people behind you to help you take care of your mental health and manage ongoing challenges like anger, impulsivity, anxiety and depression. To manage your mental health and well-being, you need a team made up of healthcare and mental health professionals

such as doctors, neuropsychologists, rehabilitation therapists and caregivers in your corner that can help with different aspects of your well-being such as counselling, physiotherapy and medication.

Mental health is ongoing, and many survivors receive help for their mental health for the rest of their lives - even if they feel better most of the time. Consistent care and therapies over the long-term with mental health professionals and caregivers who are familiar with you and your needs are what help you continuously improve.

Some of the most common mental health/well-being problems experienced after a brain injury include anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

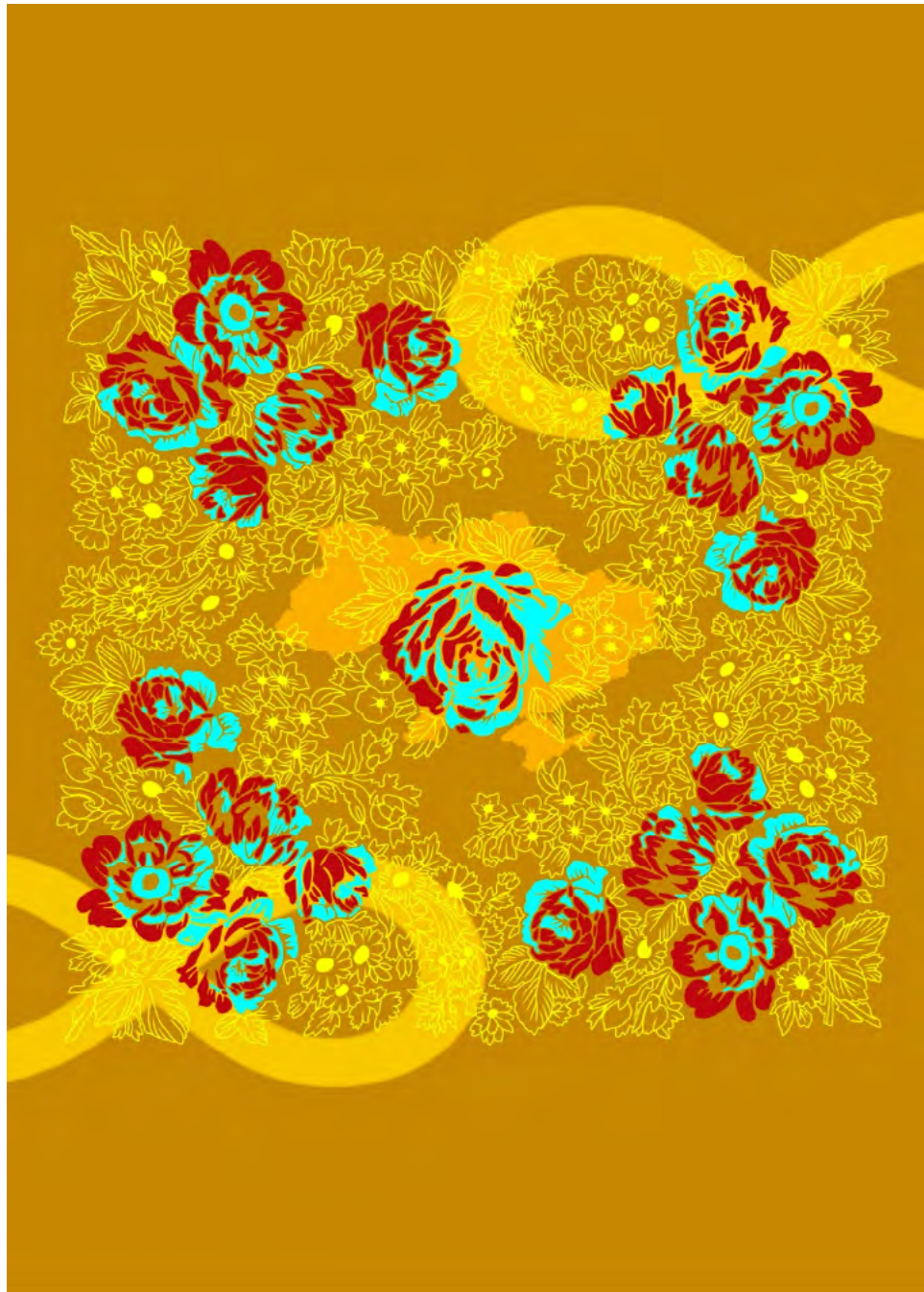
Studies have shown that individuals with a brain injury have a higher chance of developing a mental illness. A mental illness can only be diagnosed by a doctor/psychiatrist. While you may have symptoms of some of these disorders, that does not mean you have a mental illness - just like individuals with a diagnosed mental illness can experience good mental health. If you have any concerns or questions, speak with a mental health professional. ❁

Kokum Scarves

NEVADA LYNN



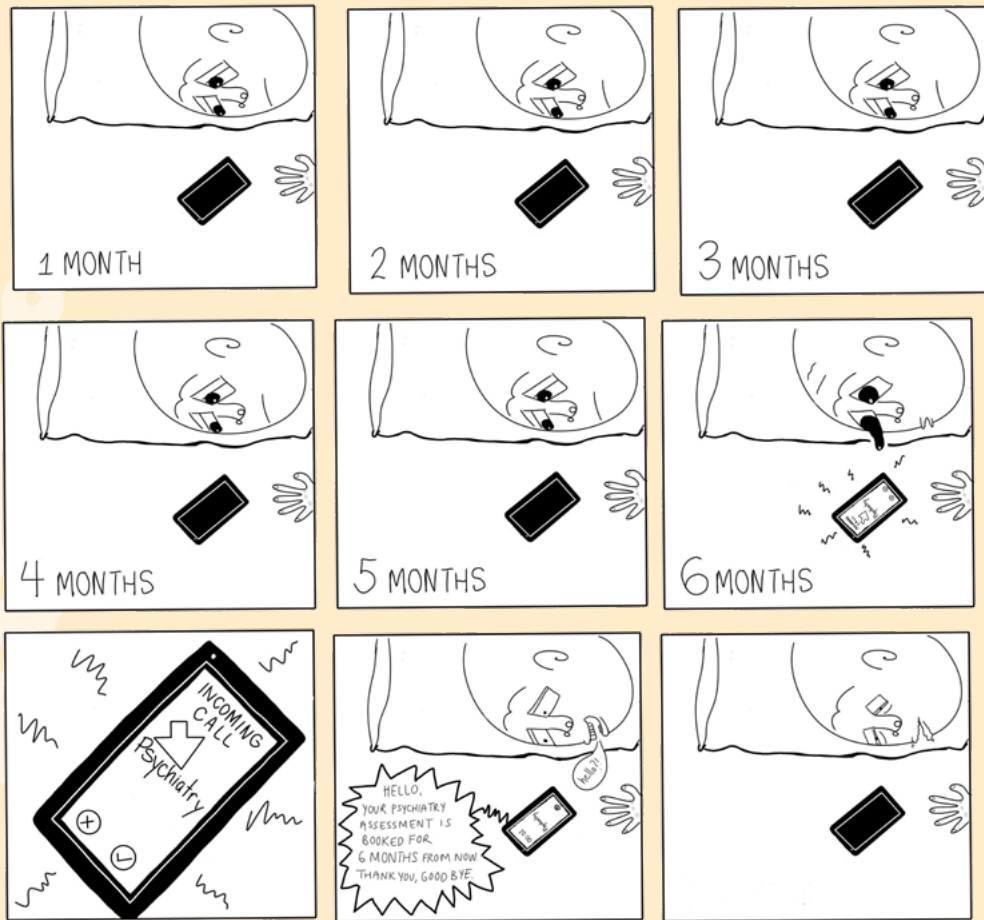
Artist's Note: I am creating a new exhibit celebrating the kokum scarf. Métis and First Nations communities adopted these beautiful floral scarves introduced by Ukrainian settlers. As a way of honouring the positive aspect of that historical relationship, I am creating an exhibit with eight drums featuring this floral pattern, creating a series of limited edition, fine art paper prints, and creating these postcards. I see it as a way the Métis community can show solidarity towards Ukrainians living in BC and abroad. ❁



You Are Not Broken, The System Is

ELI AIKEMA





All My Friends Do Drugs

KAYLA CARSON

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 drug use, seizures, and language that may not feel suitable for everyone

All my friends do drugs. Let's talk about this. I'll start. I was diagnosed with a mild form of epilepsy sometime in 2018? 2019? It's a bit of a blur. Had I not had a proclivity to drinking and indulging in recreational drugs I likely would not have ever found out. Which begs the question – If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it actually fall? If you have no symptoms, do you have a condition? The question is as pompous as it is pointless, honestly. And not the point of this essay anyways. But it does set the tone for my frustration. Perhaps there are others that have an undiagnosed condition, living in ignorant bliss as they have not had the lucky fortune of bad decisions to push their bodies to its limits; the consequences of their hidden abnormality pulled to the surface. Regardless of my

philosophies on all this, it really does not matter, does it? I happened to be there when the tree fell and of course I heard it, it hit me and landed me in the hospital more than once.

My first seizure was in 2015, my next was 2016 and my third stint was a marathon of three in one day in 2017. After that last misadventure it took me almost a week to get all my short-term memory back. I knew who I was, who the important people and what their names were. But I drive the same route from our house to work and to town, 16 kms round trip, at least twice every day. I had done it hundreds of times. I could picture our cabin, warm and a bit dusty, I could visualize the outside of the large building that houses my partner and I's shared work, but the pathway in between was gone. It's the epileptic version of walking

into a room and forgetting what you came in for; or having that word on the tip of your tongue. You know it's just outside, just beside you, dangling off you even, swinging from a string, just not graspable. It is strange that something you felt once belonged to you, even something as trivial as my boring and repetitious drive to work, could be stolen.

My mind map of the entire town, to friend's houses, places that I frequented often, were like that. It was like my story was written up on a chalkboard, and with a dusty brush someone wiped out every other word, sometimes taking out letters in the words that remained. It was obvious what was missing but difficult to fill back in.

"I know I should know the route home, but I just can't picture it right now, I don't know how to get home," I said to my twin sister and future husband as they sat on my hospital bedside, two sets of gentle eyes peering back. I am so tired. I may feel it, but they know it. Despite how defeated and lost I was coming to under those beaming fluorescent hospital lights, can't be anything to how useless one may feel watching someone have a seizure.

I had been sent for tests in 2015, heard nothing back and took no news as good news. I remained more responsible, but still not responsible enough, clearly, up until 2017. Then they sent me for more tests. They sent me to a neurologist. I now have a neurologist. I didn't tell many people. I wanted to know before I received unwanted attention. Useless worry and mercy. My ego didn't want to admit defeat, desperately avoiding infamy. Who wants to be notable for something that is a reflection of their weaknesses? We are so much more than our worst qualities.

I got tested. Then I got tested again. Medication. Tested. No medication. Tested. New medication. Tested.

And the guilt. So guilty, for being potentially physically weak as well as mentally. I had always been strong and healthy. I always had few consequences. I thought it was a lesson, as easy as, ah ok, well simple, maybe I shouldn't stay up all night drinking a plethora of whatever is in the house, found or offered. That with a party pack of drugs oh which any user should be naive to not think that at the best is mixed with baby laxative and at the worst, meth and fentanyl. The solution seemed obvious, I was ready to move on and forward, and the first step to me, was to be brutally honest with my doctors.

They left me disappointed.

My straightforwardness was not matched. They were unobtrusive, safe, and passive in their conversations with me. I felt like they were being guarded against creating discomfort. Their assumption of defensiveness by me, along with general awkwardness was veiled as gentleness and a willingness to be non-judgmental. I have wondered how they would have treated me if I was younger, dumber, a person of colour, trans, anything other than I. I'm never going to be just a conservative belle, but I must admit I made sure to put on my plain, basic, and clean shirt and my boring, unstained jeans for my appointments. It is not very difficult to make my Caucasian, blonde hair, blue eyed, 28-year-old self, look even more stereotypically trustworthy and forgivable than I already do. No one knows I am from mixed-Indigenous descent. You know that cringey feeling of self-awareness when you hear your own

voice on a recording? I always sound much more naïve than I feel.

Their unwillingness to fully commit to my honesty left me feeling like they didn't know how to fully help me. I felt a little sorry for them for the missed opportunity, to be honest. I'm a humorous delight, and possibly a pretty good case study. Put me in those textbooks as a lesson in science and interpersonal relationships for future health and medical leaders. I always wanted to be paid for an identical twin study, I'll take being seizure girl too.

After every follow up appointment with my neurologist, sometimes months apart, sometimes just weeks.

"So, no seizures?"

..... *Well, no but I haven't been fucking with substances....* is something I do not ever really get a chance to say. Maybe it is just me, I feel like I might disappoint them. I wish I could be crass.

They ask the question as if seizures are a possibility in my everyday life, rather than in a tweaked, cooked and intoxicated, state. Perhaps they are really just doing their job, they don't understand my seizures totally yet either, but it seems like they are not brave enough to ask the right questions. Just do it. Just ask, "have you done recreational drugs or drank to excess lately or a combination of such? Have you fucked up, taken it too far, been too reckless since our last appointment Kayla, and be honest."

C'mon, guys, let's just fucking do this.

This pattern continues. Nearing the end of this almost two-year journey, my neurologist basically gives me the o.k. to live my life.

"Your medication is working really well, and you should be fine from now on, maybe if you're ever just really tired, maybe just don't drive."

What she could have said is, "If you do ever fuck up, or are really hungover, or are yes just actually sleep deprived - intoxicants or not, most likely nothing will happen, but you probably shouldn't drive or really do much at all". Why can't they just say that?

Let's not totally bash the doctors, I do have credit to give. Moments of clarity were still forged.

I mean, so what if I just don't abuse drugs and alcohol?

"Yea but all your friends probably did the same and none of them had seizures."

All my friends do drugs.

Shit.

My denial has been called out.

Doctors do of course know what they are talking about, despite a sometimes-lacking delivery. I was so focused on trying to not be shameful, to try to move on from feeling sorry for myself, as I knew it would do me no favours, my attempt to regain some of my credibility and take responsibly for myself, that I didn't realize I was avoiding something more. There might be something wrong with me that I have no choice in. Something that I cannot change nor make amends for.

Even though my ignorance of invincibility had been shattered, it had not for most of those around me. And might not ever. All my friends do drugs. But they don't have epilepsy.

Recreationally, habitually, addictively, and abusively are all words as theories that drown into

one another when it comes to “recreational” drug use. “Partying”. I am coming to an age where naturally as people grow out of their 20’s they are realizing this. And some change their habits. Not all though. And at my time of fun doctor visits, just a couple years ago, almost no one around me was quite shifted, grown.

For my last test I was on the medication that I perhaps will be on for the rest of my life. I stayed up for 22 hours straight for a sleep deprived EEG. I had finished an overnight shift at work while I was part-time living in Vancouver. My walk to St. Paul’s was marred with blur, putting all my focus towards each weighted footstep. Turns out staying up all night to see the sun rise feels wrong even without cocaine. But this time I am exhausted. I thought I was about to hallucinate. I do not do well without sleep.

EEG. The one where they put all those wires with sensors on your scalp to watch and record your brain activity. They draw the points of attachment onto your scalp with a red crayon like substance. They then add a Vaseline sort of sticky like substance to the electrodes and string your head up with this node net of a contraption. I’m not sure how the technician so effortlessly and accurately attached it to me, plenty of strings and plenty of hair. They then put you in a dark room and make you do some brain activities. The technician is in the dark with you too. An observer in the dark. It’s weird. They shine some lights, on the left, on the right, left, left, right, right, centre, BIG flash. Flash flash flash FLASH FLASH. They strategically throw some sound at, in and around that brain. Some pleasant, most intense. Beep. Beep. BEPPPP, BEEPPPPP. BEEEEPPPPPP. BEP.BEP.BEP.BEP.BEP. BEP. They are trying to stress out your brain, after all.

It goes on for a very long half hour.

A few weeks later, the results come. The EEG before the last, was without medication. “Hmmm there is a slight irregularity here...” my neurologist says, sitting in the appointment room that I was starting to get familiar with.

I am irregular? Something is slightly irregular. Great. I did not feel too stressed during that test. Annoyed, sure. Wanting to escape the incessant noises, sure. Do other brains feel differently? Do they experience annoying tweaks and beeps and lights, less so than I? I won’t ever know.

But the next time, after what for now has been my final test, occurring while on medication, my neurologist, all smiles, with a somewhat genuine but still rehearsed chirp to her voice, “Great so your scan came back normal. Which means the medication works”.

She had a sense of accomplishment to her stride as she walked through the small appointment room that I was now very familiar with. They really should put more fun things in there to read. Doctors are always running behind. Her comment had a sense of briskness to it that I was not expecting. Most of all, it felt shallow and incomplete. Her enthusiasm was not contagious. I don’t know what I expected. I guess I hadn’t thought this far. My flat reaction caught her off guard, now neither of us knew how to feel. This might be the first time she was able to see how I felt. She wasn’t crushed yet as I wasn’t visibly unhappy, just not visibly relieved. Apparently, I am not always as honest with my doctors as I have preached. But as I couldn’t decipher yet how I was feeling, I at least wasn’t going to argue with her satisfaction.

“Ok, good. Awesome” I said.

That was it.

Problem solved. Problem explained. Success.

The path to drinking less habitually, to cutting drugs out entirely has been challenging, is still incomplete and might never be to the satisfaction of my doctors.

And although they don't mean to, I am incompletely unsupported by family and friends around me. They are on the side of caution for their own sake. In the *oh I want to support you but I don't want you to judge me, kind of way*. Most of them anyways. Unintentionally. But all my friends do drugs. To let them maintain support means I must be thinking of my exit before midnight. I work nights. My midnight is your 9pm.

Creating boundaries doesn't change the fact that all my friends should do less, or no drugs. Maybe take more than a three-day break from drinking. I can't tell them that though. Being forced to shift, rather than completely out of free will, means that I have little credit in their eyes. I'm also a reminder of what they are trying not to think about.

But the worst is when I am given no credit at all.

“Well yea you are saying no because you *can't*.”

Mostly just one person goes that far with me. And they are wildly incorrect.

I always can. I am always capable. There is no such thing as can't. Also, fuck off.

It is a projection. They don't want to admit that it is hard for them to say no. They frame it that way because it means to them that if their life was on the line, they could say no too. And it's a lie. And it discredits how hard it has been for me and the work that I've put in.

Not everyone is like this. Some are proud I can tell. Those that won't recognize my changes as difficult, are also the ones that don't want to admit that they might have a problem too. Because if it's hard for them to cut it out it means that they aren't actually in control. I'm not yet. You might not be either.

It can be lonely here. My peers are not unlike my doctors. There isn't a lot of completely honest conversation going being jumped into. Both sides speaking safely, guarded conversations veiled as non-judgment.

“You think you're so much better than everyone else because you can't do drugs.”

Once again. I always *can*.

Maybe you're the one that cannot.

All my friends do drugs.

Kayla ❀

RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Métis Crisis Line:

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

BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services:

<http://www.bcmhsus.ca/>

Canadian Mental Health Association BC:

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

Here to Help BC:

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

BC Epilepsy Society:

<http://bcepilepsy.com/>

Epilepsy Foundation

<https://www.epilepsy.com/>

Métis Me

KATHLEEN SVEDBERG

A mother of two with twins on the way
I started this journey one brisk autumn day
To find out where I belong, my ancestry
I'd finally understand what it means to be Métis

The teachings are beautiful, there's so much to learn
Little did I know, what I'd receive in return
A legacy for my children, a soft place to land
The Creator chose me, it was all part of the plan

I smudge, speak Michif, wear my sash with great pride
These are the traditions I use as my guide
To ground me, to anchor me when my thoughts get too loud
I'm part of something bigger, not just one in a crowd

I feel so renewed, at peace and connected
Mother Earth holds my hand, I am safe and protected
Thank you for your encouragement, you know who you are
This is the story of my life, a mindful memoir





Indigimutt

KAYLA CARSON

Authors note – I identify as Métis, knowing that Métis culture celebrates our mixed heritage. However, my relationship to that identity is complicated in part by how I've inherited my mother's colouring rather than my father's. This essay is about my internal struggle with claiming Indigenous identity while experiencing white privilege, along with how I personally connect to my Indigenous background.

The original copy of this essay was written with the assumption of a mainly white audience.

This is the face of an Indigenous woman. Perhaps not what you were expecting. Not what I was expecting either, to be honest. Does my face with my identity, my history, make you uncomfortable? Or perhaps worse, do I make Indigenousness more palpable for some?

These questions reflect my insecurities: I may risk doing a great disservice to many people, many of my people, my ancestors, but mostly to those alive, those whose faces do not look like mine. To those who

experience racism, not the white reflections. They are bombproof. Protected, revered and powerful. The Caucasians may cry but are left unscathed. They wince, but there is no blood to justify it.

Wait. It's me. I'm doing it right now, aren't I? I try to not be ignorant of my place as a very white and privileged person. But this is an example of such isn't it? Poor conflicted white girl.

But are you listening to my voice because I am more likely to have a voice in the first place?

I feel mismatched. And not in the unbothered way that I wear socks. I claim one history at a time, not together, it must be kept separate. I am both over AND under-represented. And I am not sure to which bloodline that I feel an imposter too. My claim to Indigenous identity must be dangerous.

If I tell you to accept me, to see me as something more than what is evident by my fair skin, does it harm those punished by their darker skin, who are screaming, demanding, and dying for acceptance, to just be seen? Does it push their movements some steps back? Does it silence them all over again?

Is it even right for anyone that lives with white privilege to identify with something that for those that “look the part,” have a very different experience? Indigenous identity without Indigenous struggle? That can’t be fair. Maybe I shouldn’t yearn to be rid of it. I am safe. You can’t see the Indian in me.

I am the literal physical embodiment of the consequences of colonialism, of racism, of discrimination, of power and control, and of the loss of Indigenous voices and stories. My ancestors’ stories have been white-washed, and as I exist, I do to them the same.

White people say white people things to me, a fellow “whitey”, all the time:

“Something, something Indian.”

“This one time this damn drunk Indian.”

“Ah yea and our taxes pay for it.”

Incomplete sentences with incomplete reasoning.

“I’m actually Métis. Yea, my dad’s side is Indigenous and Métis, most of my family is much darker than me.” Full stop. I feel the need to explain

my skin. To defend myself. But mostly to validate their surprise. As if their discomfort needs a hand to hold. The irony in my defense is that I am having trouble finding the accent on this format to correctly even spell Métis. There it is. Had to dig a little deeper, is all.

We wait to see what this whitey comes up with next. His biases have previously been safe in the presence of fellow whiteys. How good are they are at backtracking without making it look like such? As if they have a larger conception of the situation than they voiced. As if their previous statement might be misunderstood if they didn’t now give more context.

Who knew, “Ok, and why do you think that?” could be such a triggering invitation.

This wasn’t mean to be a conversation after all. Talking at, not talking together. How dare we question the white man.

According to the paperwork, the family tree, back to the 1600s, Métis Nation BC considers me Métis. I got their stamp of approval, a card and everything. Names for some of the women on this written history, precursors to the Métis society, make it very clear that they entered from a different world. Her identity was not compatible for translation into the white man’s society. They married and bore children into an encompassing but alien world. Yet their part in the survival of many of these early “pioneers”, especially Hudson Bay Traders, has been whitewashed.

It would be a disservice to forget that.

Last name: “Cree”.

History either did not care what her proper name was, didn’t care to recall her in depth or accurately, or

just didn't have the tools to tell her story correctly - it's one of many early acts of genocide. Tell her story for her and tell it wrong.

When I am feeling an identity crisis or weak to my connection to my past, my ancestor's history, and our stories, I remind myself of the most significant indicator of our native lineage:

Trauma.

Ooooff.

Let's stop.

It serves my argument, but the white man has gotten enough of us, hasn't he? The consequences of trauma do not need to be my default claim to fame. It has its place, maybe in a different essay. That is his story; it is not mine. I try to correct myself. I come to memories of highway drives, riding shotgun through the British Columbia mountains that have always been my home.

It still puts me in awe how quickly and effortlessly we can travel through valleys, over mountains, across the rivers and lakes, chasing the sun or moving under the stars. My ancestors, my relatives saturated, survived, thrived, and died, for thousands of years on these lands. Valleys that would have taken days to travel across and through, mountain corners that would have taken stride and strife to get to the other side of, arrival at rivers and lakes and seasonal homes with pride and celebration, that I get to not just see, but bask in, take for granted in the span of a couple of hours from a heated seat and a tinted window.

Their footprints are all over these same lands that I inhabit now. My ancestors were the first humans to inhabit these lands, not so long ago when the ice

fields opened up, the melt and the green and the open called to them. They made a home of this world. That is powerful for me. The travel. The battles. The births. I can see the stories and feel the presence of them and their lives every time I cross a valley. We are still here. I am still home. How many people can say that they have always been home?

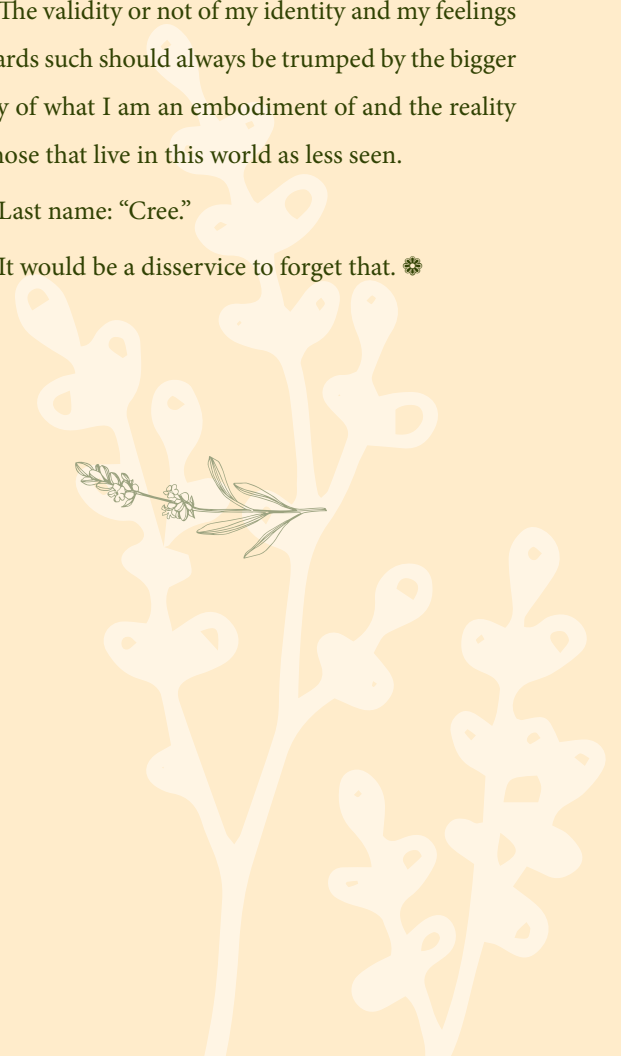
It would be a disservice to forget that.

But then I look in the mirror. What a way to hide all that, what a way to erase her story, by changing her face. The blue eyes, the blonde hair, it seems like they won. Like they are winning. And let's be honest, they essentially are. I'm tricked into thinking I don't know my own history, even if I know how to read family trees. I look for her, and If I can't find the right lines, I read between, under, and around the other ones.

The validity or not of my identity and my feelings towards such should always be trumped by the bigger story of what I am an embodiment of and the reality of those that live in this world as less seen.

Last name: "Cree."

It would be a disservice to forget that. ❁



New Anthem

CHARITY MARIE MARVIN

Me and my blind mind
Losing track of all time
We've got mental woes
Slippery sideways tracking vertigo

Lost my love walk
I can't even talk
What should I say?
I'm bleeding my belief this way

Time for a new anthem
Sounds like the beat of wild laughter

Living silent in blind rhymes
These are slippery times
They get up inside my down
Fooling me all around

Surely, I can walk away
But the direction is astray
It's leading me down
Now I'm suffocating underground

Time for a new anthem
Sounds like the beat of wild laughter

Are you laughing with me?
Just as long as it's free
And can you feel this pain?
I'm slipping sideways all over again

Can you lift me up in this place?
And carry me through the timeless race
I'm flat out mute
Time for something new

Yeah it's Time for a new anthem
Slip into the beat of wild laughter



The Courage to Persevere

MEGAN MONKMAN

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 story contains discussion around suicidal ideation

I have been living with mental illness for close to twenty years. In that time, I have been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder, major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, autism spectrum disorder, and most recently bipolar I disorder.

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

I would like people to know that living with bipolar I disorder means you have shifts in energy over sustained periods of time. These shifts in energy can be for weeks or even months. I'd hope to also impart to others the reality that obsessive-compulsive disorder

can be extremely painful.

In an ideal world others would understand that these are illnesses, and that those afflicted deserve support and compassion above ridicule or judgement.

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

I would have wanted to know that I am not unique: that there are so many other people out there experiencing what I am going through and that I am not abnormal because of my illness.

Have you felt stigma because of your illness?

Yes, I have experienced stigma because of my illness. While studying mathematics at Simon Fraser

This submission was originally part of Métis Nation BC's Mental Illness Awareness Week Campaign 2021. 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-experience stories. Thank you to our incredible volunteers for sharing their story, and for sharing with us all messages of hope, resilience, and understanding.

University, I experienced a significant and debilitating mental health crisis. This was a very taxing experience, made even more challenging by the responses of some of my peers. I considered attending another university, and often battled suicidal thoughts.

I experienced ostracization and discrimination at that time, but I must say I did experience understanding and acceptance from the friends I still have today.

Have you felt self-stigma because of your illness?

Initially I agonized over the diagnosis of bipolar I disorder. It felt like this new label on my identity, and I didn't want it. Everything I knew about the disorder came from the media and other off-colour comments. Soon after my diagnosis I began attending support groups. Being with people that were like myself, and yet so diverse, helped open my eyes and break down my own stigmas and biases around mental illness.

Have you taken any steps to address stigma/self-stigma?

With regard to my self-stigma, I now view my diagnoses as simply guides for my doctors. With these guides they can provide me with the best care possible. I do not consider my diagnoses to be labels that I should live up or live down to.

My identity lives outside of that and, although it took me a while to get here, I am now free of the self-

stigma I had when I was first diagnosed.

More broadly, my mother and I established the Courage to Persevere Award at Simon Fraser University in order to combat stigma, and to help students that face significant mental health challenges during their studies. This was really her idea. We hope that by attaching my story it encourages others. I know that I would have appreciated any aid during tough times, so we hope it has an impact on each individual recipient.

What are some ways you manage your diagnosis?

In order to manage my illness I am diligent with my health routine! I take my medication, track my mood, keep up with all of my doctors, and attend regular counselling. Counselling is so important to me. On down days it can shift my perspective, and on good days we dive deep and I end up learning new things! I love to learn.

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

I cannot imagine what my life would have been without mental illness; it is something that I grew up dealing with and it has shaped not only my life but the life of those around me. My mother went back to school at the age of 48 to become a psychiatric nurse.

I think my illness shaped my heart, and I think that I have a greater compassion for others than I might have

*I was forced
into resilience by
circumstance, and after
twenty years it has made
me strong*

if my life path was a bit smoother. I think that I love and appreciate things in my life more now, because I have faced so many challenges. I was forced into resilience by circumstance, and after twenty years it has made me strong.

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

One of the skills I have developed in the face of my illness is the ability to incorporate humour into my life (where appropriate) despite challenging situations. When you are dealing with depression for example, it is easy to get into wholly cynical trains of thought. I like to take the edge off when I can.

What has contributed to your wellness?

Contribution, connection, and intentionality are major factors in my mental wellness plan. Every Monday I volunteer with the Rainbow Kitchen in Victoria, BC. They provide meals and groceries to anyone who needs it, no questions asked. Taking some time to serve my

community is important and I am honoured to be a part of such a warm and vital initiative. Contributing takes your eyes off of your own struggles and opens up the floor to breaking down stigmas of all kinds.

I think developing and nurturing my connections leads me to mental wellness. My relationships are one of the greatest treasures in my life and I appreciate the depth and quality of the connections I have cultivated.

I am learning to be intentional with my life. The work and projects I take on are only those that speak to my values; this includes mathematics education, animal welfare, mental health, and work with Indigenous communities. Being intentional to me means knowing and respecting your boundaries, getting in tune with your values, and honouring your needs.

Apart from these high-level factors, maintaining a good sleep schedule, tracking my mood, spending time with my dog, attending counselling, and staying on top of my medications keeps me well. ✿

Learn more about the Courage to Persevere Award:

This award was established at Simon Fraser University, and the fall of 2021 will mark its first dispersal. Megan and her mother conceived of the award when they noted that there were so few financial supports for students that struggle with their mental health. Megan's mother is a mental health nurse at a large university so this cause is close to her heart; her mother's partner is also a main contributor to the award.

Megan was an undergraduate student at Simon Fraser University when she experienced a debilitating and life-altering mental health crisis. This award hopes to enhance life for students in similar situations, and uplift and celebrate them for the courage they exhibit.

The award is open to all students that are registered with the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) and have a significant mental health challenge. This alleviates the burden on students to submit documentation or lengthy applications -- CAL is already set up with them. The intention was to streamline the process and make it as painless as possible.

Currently the goal page is set at \$7,500 but this is just the incremental goal. The ultimate goal would be to raise \$20,000 and have the award endowed, so that it will exist for years to come.

To learn more, visit: <https://www.give.sfu.ca/ways-to-give/fund/courage-persevere-award>

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. 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. ❁

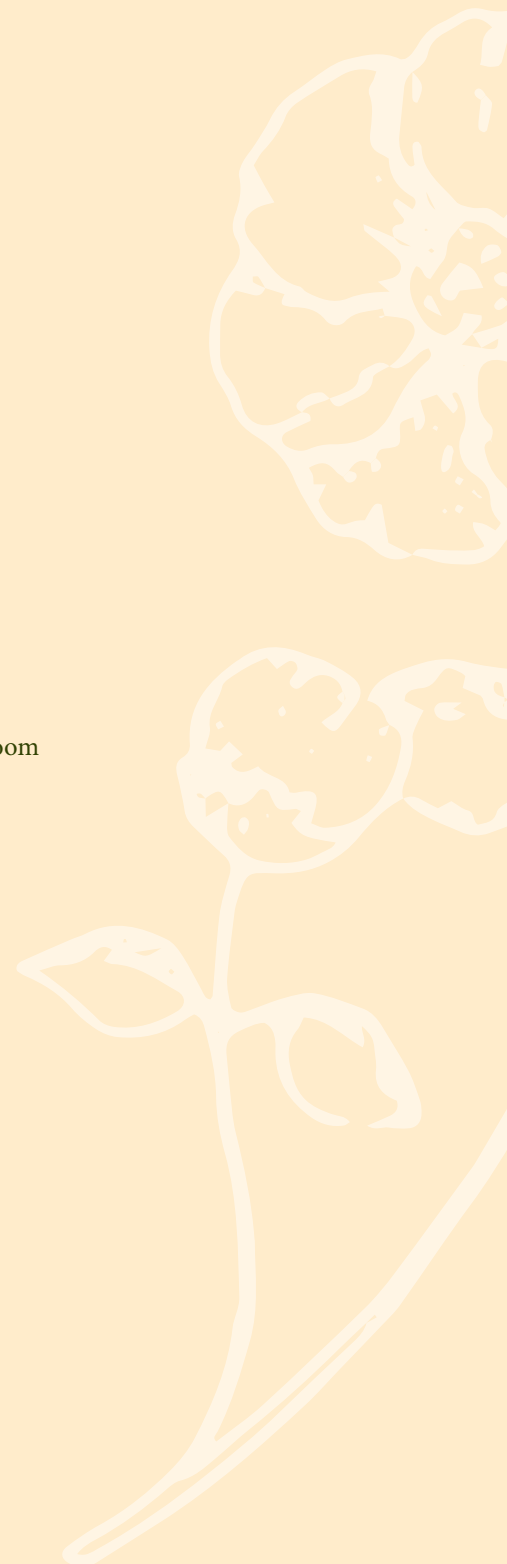


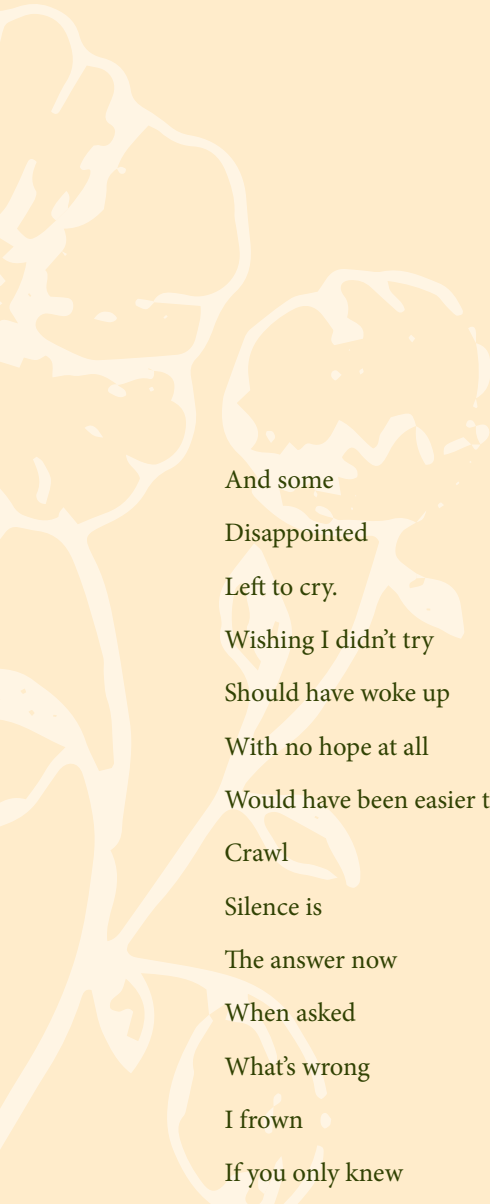
Mind Full

TRACEY DAWN SMITH

Anxiety for me
Waking up with goals and dreams
Standing still
Frozen it seems
Staring off out to space
Wishing for a mind
With grace.
Excited to do this or that
Only to sit down and
Gasp
Full of energy
Losing hope
I look like a joke.
Starting one thing.
Now another
Wait what happened
I discover
More mess
Then I started with
Frustration fears

Begin to rise
Waiting for my tears
To hide
Sitting now
Lost and confused
Frozen faced with inner doom
Exhaustion hits before
The race
Ready set go
Let's start the chase
Between the mind.
And soul today
Knowing I have
What it takes
The time tells all
It's almost late.
Another day almost
Done
My mind has won
Again





And some
Disappointed
Left to cry.
Wishing I didn't try
Should have woke up
With no hope at all
Would have been easier then this
Crawl
Silence is
The answer now
When asked
What's wrong
I frown
If you only knew
The truth
What my mind really gets up too
The chitter chatter
A million things
Focus just focus
I'm told by him

Don't try to do it all
Start here then finish
That's all
Well that is really easy it seems
Unless you have the mind of me
Oh no what's that smell
Fire fire bloody hell
No fire baby just relax
They say
No wait it's the same each and every day
Feeling sorry for my life
To the people I come across
They all seem to have the way
To live Life
It seems better than this day
I'm tired of being in fear
My dreams gone and it just never
Is clear

Métis Now: Elders, Artists and Activists

NEVADA LYNN

Métis Now: Elders, Artists, and Activists is a portrait exhibit that honours Elders, supports artists, and celebrates activists in the Métis Community. These portraits will be on display at Métis Nation BC's Surrey Headquarters beginning in April 2022, and will also be featured in the book Métis Now: Elders, Artists, and Activists. Publication details to come in the future. ❁



Métis Now: Elders, Artists, and Activists- Amanda Strong



Métis Now: Elders, Artists, and Activists- Kaija Heitland



Métis Now: Elders, Artists, and Activists- Heather Tibbs



Métis Now: Elders, Artists, and Activists- MJ Dandeneau



Métis Now: Elders, Artists, and Activists- Cassidy Caron



Métis Now: Elders, Artists, and Activists- Logan Howard



POETRY SERIES

My Journey Of Resilience

PAUL MICHAEL ARTHUR

Anxiety or Don't Fit In?

You see, the mind can feel like a prison at times.
Throw the key away so there is no contact with the outside world.
Sitting there in plain swag looking normal to all.
But constant battles in the prison of the mind.
Stranger in the midst that no one knows and no one approaches to introduce.
A few here and there finally do but only say a few words.
A square peg trying to fit through a circle peg.
For as long as I can remember it has been this way.
Plenty of people around but little friends feeling alone with no visiting hours.
There are times nothing feels right while all comes to mind what others think.
Is the prison a blink of imagination or reality of myself always being different?
Reminders that many brilliant minds of history did not fit in either.
Am I one of those?
Or just an awkward individual not knowing how to escape this prison?
Either way will see what folds out because life is an intriguing journey.

-Sept 2018

Take Credit

Friends tell me to take more credit,
Old teacher now friend tells me to never stop typing.
My love tells me I am talented and she always asks to read first what comes out naturally.
....Well why don't I see it?
Would think like a blossom would soak it all in as if coming from the sun.
Especially for someone who has a history of being vulnerable.
It has been going on ten years from those dark days.
But still feel it following me around,
Like a big nasty black wolf with red eyes watching from the shadows
Seems too easy to me and so natural.
Everyone can do it and I am nothing special.
No matter how much I am told it doesn't register.
It is getting sucked in but not absorbed as more and more is sucked in.
Like and endless black hole,
Is my black hole dying?
For someone who dreams of publishing it is something to get over.
But how?
Especially when I don't see myself as special.
No matter how many special jokes I make about myself.
It's my biggest weakness and battle.
Like knights on the field charging.
Trying hard to be normal but never wins.
Just like lions fighting to acknowledge myself but that isn't the dominant one.
But I know the future of publishing is there....
Maybe it's time to go over and see what I have.

Undercover

Paint brushed identity by society.
Hiding in the white flock.
Whispers about my people and others related.
Degraded with the normal finger pointing.
Like preschool children asking their parents
“Why is the sky blue?”
About to blow my cover as these rants don’t know
who they are around.
Yet this is my hardest assignment.
Indigenous undercover who looks white.
“Blood quantum” or “your mainly white” try to paste
on my forehead.
But the glue never dries as I call the bison.
As the white flock panics as the ground shakes.
“My ancestors are here.” escapes my lips.
As I stand welcoming the massic herd.
I feel the sparrow eyes carrying the message “savage”
Or people yelling “Indigenous stigma is partly
warranted”.
Just as those words are about to hit me.
Two spirits waist deep in the snow carrying pounds
of fur walk by the herd.
Yet as we ride away the rest of the bison transform
into men on horseback.
The eagles cheer welcoming us all home.
As the rest of the land celebrates our victory.

Just Me!

A life of feeling misunderstood.
Bouncing off the walls with ADHD.
Too honest at times while initiative.
Being seen as passive aggressive at times.
Yet those that know me know this is the complete
opposite.
Yet the barriers of society.
Looking fine in the shell but my challenges on the
inside.
Can’t focus to read!
Yet the ink flows connecting me to words.
Bringing me down from the clouds.
Not for fame!
For me!
I don’t feel special!
But told I am a teacher.
Yet I can’t get past that I am just me.
Is this work the Buffalos Hunter means?
The one who visited me in my dreams.
Who said I am special and have work to do.
It’s a journey I must follow....
While staying true to my heart and soul.



Feeling Helpless

Don't believe this fake smile.
Harmony it seems for all to see.
Rising up with each sunrise,
the angel and demon fighting.
Shunning my own for having depression and anxiety.
Yet I have to protect my own sunshine rays.
Keep my bulb shining brightly.
Yet the ugly monsters rear their ugly heads at me.
Now I am a hypocrite?
Becoming what I chose to walk away from.
The footprints leading to helping others.
When there is more darkness than sunshine these days.
Hearing in denial racism with a divided family.
As one side sees me as my white skin color.
Like I'm wearing the skin that my family threw on me.
Another side accepts me and tries to understand.
Which I love them for.
From my Indigenous bloodline side most understand.
Yes, I have European Roots as well and little Indigenous Blood.
But that doesn't make me any less Metis.
My grandfather is 6th generation Metis and their memories are in my veins.
Colonization written all over my white throw over skin.
Depression and Anxiety threaten to choke every last breath out of me.
Refusing to let me have a life and live outside.
Yet being broke drops the balance to the bottom of the well even more.
The land is connected to all the spirits around me and within me.
Why can't everyone accept me for me?
I never chose to be who I am and I never regret it!
But even from an Indigenous sibling I hear the racist jokes.

When defending myself and standing up to these jokes.
My ears pick up denial in racism.
It is extremely dysfunctional with siblings with few connections.
Yet here I am with one that always had trouble connecting with and another who isn't by blood.
I thought I could trust them but they are the ones saying all this shit.
Is it sad when my partner's family as a whole accepts me for me?
When my family has people across the accepted spectrum.
Hearing as well as mocking disabilities and creating false diagnoses.
When living with invisible disabilities (challenges) myself.
I also have to make changes to have my partner out in the world more together.
Mocked and told I am a downer after going to my partner's aunt's funeral.
My soul is trying it's best but bent under pressure to follow protocol.
A few caps of mushrooms....
Will the creator and spirits forgive me?
Releasing my sage into the water after I smudged and see my relative of the sea.
While feeling like a museum exhibit while eyes are on me from around the campsite.
With a spiritual family experience that I can't even trust to tell my own siblings....
Who knows it could be just for me and not to share anyways....
My brain like a broken record keeps going round and around.
Can't escape judging myself and getting mad at those around me.
I need help so I don't lash out like a hormonal teen.
So I am better not just for my partner but for the profession I am going into.
Friends pulling me out to help break the cycle even though I am still broke.
I feel so helpless and angry not knowing how to process.
Luckily my first steps of help come in the morning....



Grief and Healing in the Flower Beadwork People

JUSTENE DION-GLOWA

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 suicide, loss, and suicidal ideation

An Elder once taught me that when you bead a circle, you use seven beads. Four of these represent the four directions and their domains of wellness, one represents mother earth, one father sky, and the last represents the self.

My losses and grief through Covid seemed insurmountable. My mother and father, both gone by 61 years old, less than a year apart yet long separated by time, hurt and distance. No closure, services or even a pause to cope. Then the same day my father passed I learned one of my closest friends had taken his own life the day before. An Indigenous man under 30. Reminded me of my 28-year-old brother taking his life so many years ago. I approached my aunt and asked how to properly grieve, because even though we had much practice when my brother passed, I was too deep

in my trauma to recall any of those moments. We lit our candles, (no fires during BC fire season), gave our offerings and prayed. I thought it would be enough, but something inside me still felt unable to move on. My mind was filled with pain at the opportunities lost with my family and plagued by memories of my hometown and the people that would never be there again. Long ago when I left Win-Nipi to come to Secwepemcú'lecw, when I looked back on that town in my mind, it was nothing but a stormy, swirling grey sky. It seemed that way again – no longer filled with opportunities to reconnect, build memories, or reminisce. Just darkness, impending danger, and yet, empty. All of that, too, would pass, leaving no trace or sign behind.

Knowing I would never see my dad again was truly a deep wound – one I knew it would be impossible to

heal on my own. I felt lost, and the lateral violence that plagues our families took over, serving only to further deepen the swelling storm inside my mind – that no one cared about my pain for more than the first 24 hours after my dad was gone was really the last I could bear. I started beading to pass the time, and I started planning my own death. Thinking of the many ways I could fade away from the people I love most in a way that left them feeling a little less hurt. Every time someone asked me if I was okay, the only reason I could give an honest yes is because I knew my death was on the horizon. Maybe I would just float down the river. The kids could say I drowned. Maybe I could end up in a car accident. Not an assured death though. Maybe I could just overdose, it wouldn't feel bad and then I'd just peacefully die in bed or something. When I finally told someone about this, they helped me get the care I needed, and I took time off work and called a counselor. For a long time, even this wasn't enough – I never got rid of the idea that I'd take my own life, I'd just push it further and further away from the present. But then my counselor called me out – she said, why are you going to continue this cycle of trauma for your own children? It was that moment I realized that the First Nations, Métis and Inuit do not just carry their own stories, or their own selves. They carry entire communities, carry entire future generations. That is what being an Ancestor is. We are the future Knowledge Keepers. The future Elders. The future Ancestors. I also realized that beading was saving my life.

We do not bead with bad thoughts. Beadwork is medicine – we infuse it with our prayers, our good intentions, our positive feelings, and our love, in every sense of the word. I couldn't always think of dying,

because I wasn't able to think of that while beading. I had to think about my love, my hopes, and my people, the Métis. I had to stop wanting to die, even if it was just for a little while. But beading is time consuming, and soon enough, I wasn't thinking about it at all anymore. I was thinking about my duty to my people. I was thinking about making sure my community could heal, and about ways I could be a part of the decolonization of our culture, lands and languages.

In the months since, the territory I now call home has lost a number of Indigenous youth, many of whom I knew personally. If I couldn't bead, I'm not sure I ever would have found healing. Rarely as an urban person living in a colonized society had I thought to go back to my own people and traditions to make sense of the pain I experienced, to process it into something greater than myself. I knew this was my purpose, it always had been. It was my brother's substance use and eventual suicide that lead me to calling of being an Indigenous Youth Support Worker, and it would be the ongoing losses I face that would drive me to continue my path and develop new ways of helping others. My mother was supposed to be on this path too, but she never took the leap. When I received my spiritual name, I was told that this was to be my path now as it had been hers – an obligation I am honoured and proud to step into.

Now I help lead a beading group with youth. It's small, about 4 kids come regularly. But they are all learning. They are learning what that Elder passed down to me – that to bead is to honour everything around you...

and your self. ❁



Firekeeper

Iskotewino

CORINNA STEVENSON

Content warning: this piece contains talk of cancer, illness

We are all Firekeepers. Our sacred role is to gather and prepare what we need to create Life Giving Fire. Then, we tend to Fire and keep the door to the realm of Spirit and inspiration open. In doing so we keep the tendrils of hope and healing alive.

Back in 2001, learning about the sweat lodge, I was given the role of *Iskotewino* (Firekeeper). In ceremony, the practical and the symbolic live side by side. Practically, the role of Firekeeper includes laying and starting Fire, keeping Grandfather Stones covered with Wood, and making sure Fire stays safely contained. Symbolically, Fire is the gatekeeper to the Spirit World. The Firekeeper's sacred role is to keep the portal to the Spirit Realm open by tending to the Flame of Life.

Of all the elements, Fire is the most powerfully transformative. Water, Air, and Earth are transformational too, but Fire is unique. You can feel the heaviness of Earth and Water. Even Air has weight to it that can be felt as Wind pushes against our bodies. Fire though, is more elusive. Weightlessly, Flame flickers and dances like a veil between this world and another that most do not know exists. Fire's capacity to completely change something is obvious. Wood, for example, takes years to transform under

the influence of Air, Water, or Earth. Fire though, can completely change Wood in a matter of hours.

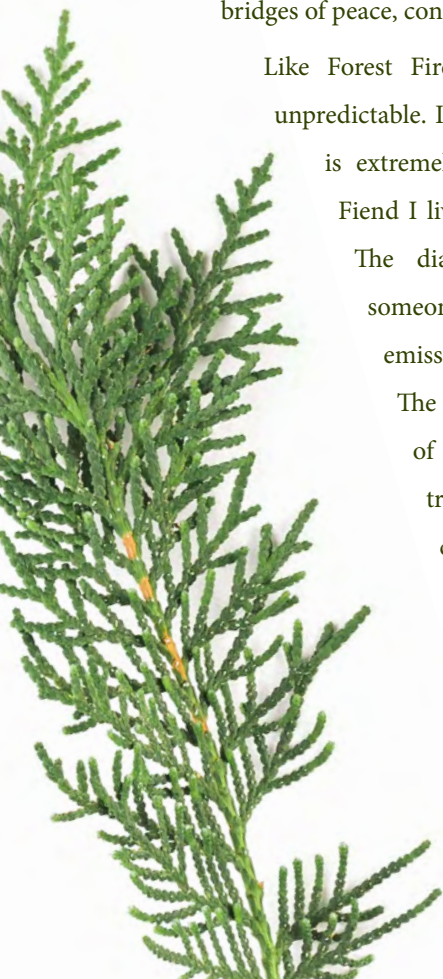
Fire has two faces. One of them is Destroyer. Forest Fires, for instance, manifest as Destroying Fire, capable of incredible destruction and waste. In my case, cancer takes the form of Fire as Destroyer. Multiple myeloma cells are described as flame cells with fiery red cytoplasm. And, when I imagine what multiple myeloma looks like were it to have a shape, what I see in my imagination is an angry Fire Demon. Just as Fire destroys Forests, this Fire Demon devastates parts of me, burning holes through my bones and reshaping my landscape. Within each of us is Fire capable of becoming Destroyer. Illness, grief, pain, fear, and anger left untended all have the potential to lash out and become Wildfire, burning bridges of peace, connection, and health.

Like Forest Fire, Multiple myeloma can be unpredictable. In rare cases, multiple myeloma is extremely difficult to track. The Fire Fiend I live with falls into that category. The diagnostic tool of choice for someone like me is the positron emission topography or PET scan. The PET scan involves an injection of dye containing radioactive tracers that collect in areas where cancer may be present. These areas light up like little bush fires, on the image the scan produces. Because the PET scan contains radioactive

material, I must wait months between scans. Time in between can be a blessing that allows me to blissfully live without worrying about a call from my doctors telling me the sword of Damocles has fallen. The lengthy time between scans also means that relapses can sneak up on me. Over the years, I have learned the art of tracking this Fire Predator, but multiple myeloma has become an expert at hiding and is a stalking shape-shifting Fire Beast, changing its form from one type of myeloma to another.-

In September of 2020, multiple myeloma jumped the fire ring and became uncontrolled Wildfire. Lifting a heavy propane canister, I noticed a burning ache in my left clavicle. A few days later, I went to River to bathe. As I submerged, I felt a severe flash of pain and knew that my collar bone had broken. Follow up tests confirmed that multiple myeloma was burning uncontrollably in my clavicle, jaw, and thigh bones. My team of doctors responded with radiation and a new medication strategy. A couple of weeks after radiation treatment, I continued to experience pain in my left femur, as if something were still smoldering deep within that bone. I followed up with my radiologist who theorized that what I was feeling was inflammation caused by the treatment. What he did not see and what I did not know was that multiple myeloma has caused dangerous damage to both my legs.

Reassured by the idea that the pain was caused by inflammation and not something more serious, Greg decided to head out with a couple friends to cast a line on White River. He told me he would be



back around noon and left. Shortly after, I put on a jacket and decided to head down to our garden to see if Brussel Sprouts were ready for my mom. She loves Brussel Sprouts, and I was growing them for her. On my way, I took a step and slipped, just a little. I heard two loud cracks and fell into Creek's dry bed in the most excruciating pain I had ever felt. A heartbreaking wail of fear and pain escaped my lips and echoed loudly through Ravenwood. Helplessly alone, with a broken leg and collar bone, and unable to move a centimeter without terrible pain, I was stuck. I spoke aloud and told myself that I needed to regain my calm. I knew Greg would be back in a few hours and that I had to find a way to be still and wait.

Flames can destroy and kill, but Fire's second face is that of Healer, providing us with life-giving warmth and hope. That Fire too, lives within us. Healing Fire is our spark of inspiration, our radiance, our passion for life. Our Inner Fire shines through us and keeps our hearts from turning cold. As hours passed and I laid in Creek's bed, my Inner Fire grew weak with coldness, pain, and discouragement. Scared, angry, and so incredibly sad, I felt let down by myself for not being skilled enough at tracking multiple myeloma, angry at my team of doctors

for not seeing that my leg was at risk of breaking and betrayed by Spirit to whom I had prayed for health. I knew these thoughts were not Truth. My clarity of mind and senses were clouded by the smoke of my diminished Fire. But nevertheless, there they were.

Sometimes, the hard cruelty that life can
at us risks extinguishing the light
shines through us.

*Sometimes,
the hard cruelty
that life can throw
at us risks extinguishing
the light that shines
through us.*

As my Inner Fire grew weaker and I wondered how it would go on, all the living beings of Ravenwood rallied in support to keep the Healing Ember of Life with my heart from giving up. When hypothermia crept close, Sun burned through

Morning Clouds and warmed my body.

When unconsciousness was near, Tree Frog croaked, waking me up, bringing me back to my senses. Spider sitting on her dew-drop-glistening web, watched over me, reminding me that I was not alone. Carefree Raven flew by to see what all the fuss was about. With luminous black wings spread, he skillfully rolled to his side. His piercing gaze met mine and with a loud croak, he sent a scolding message demanding that I remember, without compromise, my resilience and strength.





Three horrible hours later, I heard our truck coming down our driveway and knew that help was on the way. I yelled as loud as I could. Greg heard me, came running with his friends close behind, and took care of me while we waited for the ambulance. I was rushed to the hospital and into surgery. Hours later, I awoke with a brand-new titanium rod inserted into my leg. When I was strong enough, my second leg would need the same procedure to keep it from breaking too. I was in hospital for two weeks before being released.

In my lifetime I have survived two stem cell transplants, dozens of bone fractures, debilitating pain, and heart-wrenching uncertainty. I have been on the threshold of death more than once. I am no stranger to discomfort or relapse, but this time

was different. Even after returning home from the hospital, the Life-Giving Flame I once felt coursing within me, connecting me to everything else, was dimmed. My Inner Fire, my spark of life, remained overwhelmed by a sense of helplessness, betrayal, and grief. There will be times you will experience this too. To be human is to know grief and peace, pain and joy, love and betrayal, kindness and anger, darkness and light.

Once again, I needed to assume the mantle of *Iskotewino* and tend to the Healing Flame of Life. This time, the Fire that needed keeping was mine.

Physically, I allowed myself to rest and heal. Emotionally, I gently reminded myself to acknowledge the grief, pain, and anger that surfaced. Spiritually, I began the process of weaving back together the

A FIRE KEEPING RITUAL FOR YOU

1) Spend some time journaling on the following questions:


- What is dimming your Inner-Fire?
- What aspects of your Healing Fire need tending?
- What are the qualities that you want to invite in your life that will help you tend your Inner-Fire?

2) Find or create something flammable that represents the obstacle(s) preventing your Fire from shining through and/or the things that are dimming your light. These can be pieces of paper with words written on them, old photographs, letters, or a piece of wood carved into a talisman, for example. The important thing is that your object(s) be significant to you.

3) Prepare to create Fire. Gather dry kindling, matches or lighter, Fire-proof vessel, and anything else you will need. If you have experience starting Fires and the space to create a Camp Fire, go ahead. If Fire is not allowed or you do not have the space, find a vessel that will safely hold Fire and use pieces of paper as your flammable objects.

4) Start first with creating a ring out of stones or other items that will contain your Fire. These should represent the qualities you want to invite into your life and that will help you tend your Inner-Fire. These can be qualities like humour, courage,





strands of connection that were frayed by the trauma of my fall. Symbolically and ceremonially, I wanted to work with Fire to revive my Spark. I went to Ravenwood's sweat lodge and prepared. I found six Stone Kin and named them Faith, Hope, Strength, Courage, Trust, and Love. I tenderly placed them in a circle. Within the circle I laid kindling. Each stick a prayer for connection and renewal. As I lit Fire, the melody to a Cree song calling in life, joy, strength, and courage came to my lips.

As Fire grew in strength I listened, searching my heart for the truth of what was going on. I stared into Dancing Flames and asked for guidance. Raven flew by and perched on a nearby Fir Tree. She turned her gaze upon me, her presence a supportive omen. Drum in hand, I prayed and sang for the return of

inner-Flame and strength. With courage and the intent to regain my Spark of Life, I fed Fire what she needed to grow in strength. I called on her transformational power and laid on her pyre pain, betrayal, uncertainty, fear, anger, and hopelessness. As these dissolved into smoke and were carried away by Wind, the Small Ember in the center of my being began to grow in strength. Hope stirred in my heart.

A short time later, a kindred spirit who lives down River, in another magic forest by the name of Robinwood, showed up with a gift. She had found a dead Raven and kept one of Raven's feet as a talisman for me. As her gift, she crafted a beautiful light catcher. Raven's scaly, black foot and sharp talons hanging on some cord, decorated with crystals. Dangling below the foot she hung a beautiful crystal ball that

respect, grace, trust, truth, wisdom or anything that comes to mind. Take your time. Name each Stone or object with the qualities you are inviting into your life as you lay them down. If you are using a smaller Fire-proof vessel and paper, find smaller Stones or objects to place around your vessel and do the same.

- 5) When you are ready, lay your kindling and light your Fire. When Fire is large enough to sustain Flames, place the object(s) representing the obstacles preventing your most authentic Self from shining through or that are dimming your Inner Light into Fire. If you are using a Fire-proof vessel, light your paper with a lighter or match and safely drop the paper into the vessel. Remain present and tend to Fire as the objects are transformed by Fire's flames. Stay as long as you need. When you are done, make sure Fire is safely and completely extinguished before leaving.
- 6) Spend a few minutes journaling about any feelings or insights that came to mind during your ceremony.
- 7) Ceremonies like this are not a cure. They are a catalyst. We say we are keeping Fire, not Fire is kept. Fire Keeping is a life-long role. Tend your Fire always by creating a hearth and home that feed your Healing-Fire. All transformation starts with intent, but then we need to act. Transformation requires focus, attention, discipline, creativity, and unconditional love. Tend your Fire often. ❁

wondrously catches prisms of sparkling light.

In Coastal lore, during a time of great darkness, Raven steals the light and brings it to the people. With a kind smile and love in her heart, my good friend looked me in the eyes and said,

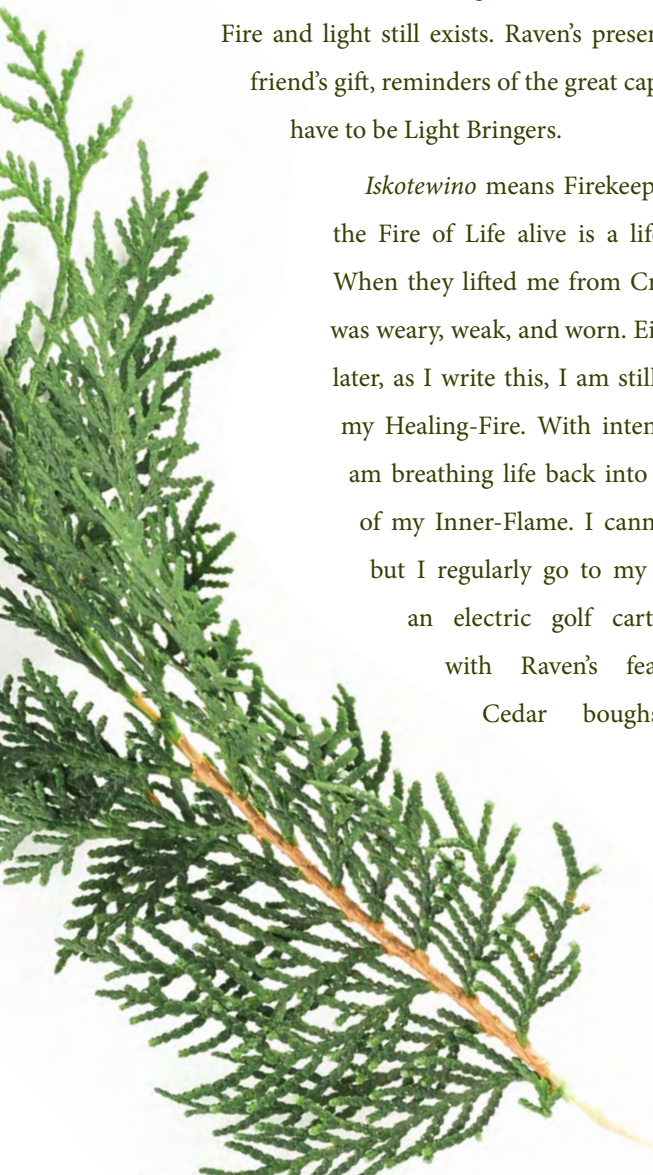
“It is Raven stealing the light!”

I laughed aloud and thought to myself, “Of course it is!” Raven, still perched nearby, croaked out in loud agreement and with a whooshing sound of her wings, took her leave. What I was shown on that day was the elusive, always flickering, moving, never-the-same-from-moment-to-moment nature of Fire. Life is like that too, fleeting and ever changing. I was shown that in times of great darkness, the Healing-Fire and light still exists. Raven’s presence and my friend’s gift, reminders of the great capacity we all have to be Light Bringers.

Iskotewino means Firekeeper. Keeping the Fire of Life alive is a life-long role. When they lifted me from Creek’s bed, I was weary, weak, and worn. Eight months later, as I write this, I am still tending to my Healing-Fire. With intent to heal, I am breathing life back into the embers of my Inner-Flame. I cannot walk far but I regularly go to my Sit Spot in an electric golf cart decorated with Raven’s feathers and Cedar boughs. Within

Ravenwood’s groves I sit and find peace. Wind cleanses my spirit, Birdsong fills my heart, and Tree Kin keep me rooted in this world. I do ceremony, offering gratitude for the gift of being alive. I pray for the wellbeing of All My Relations, rekindling my sense of belonging and connection. I have sought the support of people who know how to listen with their heart and am adjusting to a slower pace. Life, like Fire is evanescent and shimmering. Always changing. Regardless of our circumstances, we must be daring enough to hope. In times of uncertainty, we must find equanimity and remain hopeful about the future without becoming attached to an idea of what that may look like. We must dare to keep the Flames of Faith, Hope, Strength, Courage, Trust, and Love alive. Like Sun, Tree Frog, Spider, Raven, and my Soul Friend who lives down River from me, we must also let those allies around us help us. Not because we need comforting illusions in times of challenge but because they are life-giving forces that allow us to see the possibility for change, and to create and *be* the very thing we wish to see.

We are all Firekeepers. Our sacred role is to gather and prepare what we need to create Life-giving Fire. Then, we need to tend Fire and keep the door to the realm of Spirit and inspiration open. In doing so, like Raven who brings light to the world, we keep the tendrils of hope and healing alive. ❁



Métis Resilience- Rising from the Ashes

DELANEY ANN CUNNINGHAM

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 story contains discussion around multiple mental health issues, grief and loss.

I was diagnosed with a major depressive disorder, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety, and borderline personality disorder.

How long have you been living with your illness?

I've been on my mental health journey for the last nine years. I went through an experience that triggered some trauma that I had gone through in my past. After that particular experience in my life, my mental health started to deteriorate to the point where I was no longer able to mentally and emotionally function and cope in healthy ways; my mental health started to exhibit itself through unhealthy behaviors.

It's been a learning curve to gain the knowledge I needed to find more constructive ways to try and overcome this part of my life.

In 2016, I lost my oldest sister Amber, and that was extremely difficult for me. I took it really hard because it was one of the first significant losses that I had experienced in my life. While going through this experience, I was unable to manage the feelings that accompany grief and loss in losing a close family member. Shortly after, I was admitted to the psychiatric unit at Kelowna General Hospital where I received treatment for a month. Being there really helped me to learn how to manage my mental health in a more constructive way through different

This submission was originally part of Métis Nation BC's Mental Illness Awareness Week Campaign 2021. 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-experience stories. Thank you to our incredible volunteers for sharing their story, and for sharing with us all messages of hope, resilience, and understanding.

grounding techniques, and it gave me a safe space to focus on getting mentally well again.

The nurses and doctors on staff also provided me with more knowledge and insight regarding my mental health conditions and how to cope in healthier ways to prevent from being admitted into the hospital again. They connected me to resources within the community – different kinds of counselling.

I've been speaking with a few different counsellors, and it really helps me to be able to have somebody to talk to and connect with when I'm having a hard time.

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

The first thing I would want people to know is not to let your illnesses define you. I feel it is important when newly diagnosed not to be defined by the label given to you. At times it can be difficult to cope through the many feelings that accompany mental health conditions. Which is why it's important to be as gentle on yourself as possible, and to practice a lot of self-care and self-inventory to look within yourself to be able to pinpoint where these feelings and triggers are coming from. It's also very important to have a great support team behind you to help and guide you through this point in your life (family, friends, therapy, counseling, etc.). I would

not have made it as far as I have without my support system by my side.

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

In the beginning, when I was first diagnosed, it was nine years ago. I wish I would have known how to access the resources available for people living with mental health conditions. It was a really big learning experience for me to work towards getting the help

that I needed. It was a bit of a process, and

I wish I had more information on what resources were available to people in my position.

Have you ever felt stigma because of your illness?

The answer for myself would be a definite yes. I find even today there still is a stigma behind living with mental health conditions. That's

the reason why I wanted to be a part of this campaign - to create more awareness and hopefully help to alleviate the stigma that comes with being diagnosed.

Being diagnosed with borderline personality disorder means that I have strong emotions and at times may be unable to cope with them in healthy ways - so I'm either too high or too low; there's no happy medium. Through my diagnosis, I experienced a stigma that comes with it, I was labeled as being "too emotional". This experience came from within my own inner circle.

There shouldn't be shame in getting diagnosed with mental health conditions.

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

In the beginning when I first started experiencing this, it was difficult to talk about. But what makes it easier to talk about now is the want to create more awareness for people with mental health conditions. I want people to feel that they can freely talk about it and get the help that they need.

How did you feel when you received your diagnosis?

When I received my diagnosis, it was a big sense of relief. I felt that in getting that diagnosis, it allowed me to have more understanding and insight into myself and what was causing me to feel this way. So having a diagnosis - something to define it - it's really helped me understand myself more as a person and why I experienced the emotions that I was feeling at the time.

There can be a big sense of shame surrounding diagnosis, which shouldn't be the way it has to be. There shouldn't be shame in getting diagnosed with mental health conditions, but instead there should be more care and understanding.

What are some ways you manage your diagnosis?

For me personally, what I do is a lot of self-inventory and reflection, as well as a lot of self-care. Self-care when you're living with mental health conditions can be anything from taking a walk or having a shower, making sure that your body is getting proper nutrition; it can be small things. Or it can be bigger things, like setting goals or having interests and hobbies to keep your mind busy and preoccupied from going to a dark place.

Getting to know what resources are available within your community is also important; mental health resources, counselling, therapy, groups - that's something that's helped me a lot. And recently I've been looking into dialectical behavioral therapy to help me manage my borderline personality disorder symptoms in a healthier and more constructive way.

I feel that it's highly important to learn what resources are available within your community because it's an important aspect of self-care when you're living with mental health conditions - it helps to make you feel less alone in your struggle.

What was your experience in accessing mental health services?

In the beginning it was a little bit difficult because I didn't know what services were available. It was a process and it took some work, but once I did find the resources that worked for me, they really helped a lot.

When you're first diagnosed with mental health conditions, it can be a little bit scary, so it's really important to take that first step to overcome the fear and shame that comes with it.

How has culture played a role in your mental health journey?

Culture and tradition are an extremely important aspect in not only my day-to-day life, but they've also been an essential tool in providing me guidance and support throughout my mental health journey and my healing journey as well.

I've been discovering and learning more about my culture since I was about sixteen, and I still am learning. I find having something bigger than myself

to connect to on a spiritual level really helps me to ground. Culture has played a pivotal role to me over the last few years of this journey, it has allowed me to experience the depth and richness of universal values and principles present within our culture and to gain inner strength from that.

Some of the cultural practices that provide me support in my mental health journey are medicine harvesting (which gives me the opportunity to connect to the land), language revitalization, spiritual practices such as smudging, cleansing with medicines, ceremony, and connecting with community Elders - just to name a few. Having culture present in my life has created growth for me in all aspects of the medicine wheel (Mental, Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual). It has restored a sense of belonging through my pride in my identity, family, community, and my ancestry. Culture is healing.

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

In my own mental health journey, it has given me more self-awareness; getting to connect with myself as well as gaining more insight and clarity about who I am as a person. Learning what my triggers are, and when my mental health is starting to get bad and what steps to take to overcome it.

Living with depression, it's been difficult; some days you feel like you're okay and other days it's just the complete opposite. So, it's important to take it day-by-day and not put too much pressure on yourself or be too hard on yourself.

What words of hope would you share with someone who has been newly diagnosed?

Going on what I said before is to not let yourself be defined by your illness. If you are newly diagnosed with a mental health condition, that mental health condition is not who you are and you are not alone in your struggles. There are many others who are living through the same experience you are and there are supports available to help guide you through this.

On resources:

One resource I think would really help that's helped me in the past is the Hope for Wellness line. They're really great, and they're available 24/7. They've really helped me when I needed somebody to talk to at that moment when I could feel my mental health starting to decline. 🌸



RESOURCES & INFORMATION

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

BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services:

<http://www.bcmhsus.ca/>

Canadian Mental Health Association BC:

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

Here to Help BC:

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

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

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: 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) 🌸



Dixie

NORA ZILKIE

Content warning: this piece contains talk of grief and loss.

Author's Note: I wrote this out of grief, after the death of my younger sister, who bravely endured a difficult end of life. While watching a powwow on a reserve near Brentwood Bay, and then later that day, the Splash Symphony concert at the Inner Harbour in Victoria, I imagined our sister sitting with us:

Powwow at Tsarlip & The Symphony

Dear Dixie,

You would have had a good time

The dancing, the drumming, the people

They were open and friendly like you

They looked like you, they wanted to please.

Laughing, listening, eating bannock

Potato Hill and Little Raven driving the beat

Yellow Wolf and Star Tracker echoing in the cedars

And over the sloping plain

Spreading sound in the heat

As the dancers' approach.

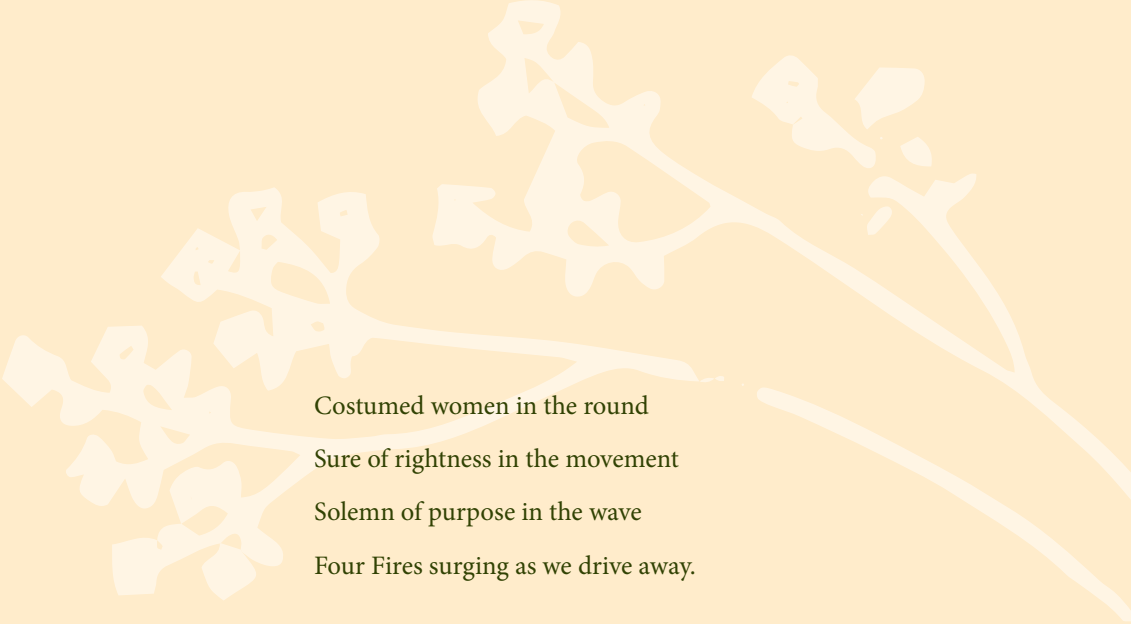
Moccasins tapping out the rhythm

Jingle and feather drawing us in

I saw the past then

The ancient people too

Carrying on the heart pound



Costumed women in the round
Sure of rightness in the movement
Solemn of purpose in the wave
Four Fires surging as we drive away.

And today you would have wanted to be here
The inner harbor clear skied, water moving with ships
Music soaring out over it all and up where we sit on the Empress lawn
Tangos, waltzes, weaving people on the causeway
Pipers marching, drums timing feet along the crowded street
Fingers snapping, a family stepping out the Mexican Hat dance behind us
A man in a wheelchair waving glo-sticks
Bolero
España
A lone performer twirling golden capes
Then the Finale
Sound building to crescendo
Cannon boom to remind us of war
With fireworks to lift us up into the warm night sky
You would have swayed across the grass
Flying like the orchestra
Floating like their barque
High above the whole shebang, shebang, shebang

And driving home we see the rising Salish Moon



Crazy Is A Bad Word

CHARITY MARIE MARVIN

Author's note: The word "crazy" has always bothered me. Perhaps because I have family members living with mental illness, as well as my own struggles around mental health. Regardless, our vernacular around race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and mental health issues is constantly evolving (and rightfully so), yet it's still widely acceptable to use the adjective "crazy" to describe something or someone with undesirable or "deranged" traits (go ahead and look it up in the dictionary). I believe this needs to change. So, this poem is my attempt to mark "crazy" as a bad word.

She was the girl of everyone's dreams
And then there were scary screams
This girl is not what she seems
She's... crazy

Crazy is as crazy does
Crazy is a bad word!

She knows Creator's game
Even still, she blasphemed
She was taking up in reverse
When her whole faith burst

Now she's trying to figure out a return
But her bridges are burned
She has no place
And they laugh in her face... She's crazy

Crazy is as crazy does
Crazy is a BAD WORD

Mental pain
Who's to blame?
It's on her—she's a shame in comparison
Her own worst enemy, just plain crazy

Crazy is a bad word
Crazy is so lonely

Just a never-ending apology
Save it for crazy's eulogy
Yeah, let's put her to rest
She'll never pass life's cruel test

So long insanity
Pishshapmishko
Crazy is as crazy does...
Crazy is no more



Living with Mental Illness

JESSIE STANGA

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 story contains discussion around suicidal ideation and self-harm.

I was born with Fetal Alcohol effects. As I got older, I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, PTSD, and borderline disorder traits.

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

This is something that I work hard at every day. I want people to know to be kind to themselves, reach out for help, and that they are not alone.

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

To trust that there was going to be help. That medication can really help.

What has made it possible to talk about your illness?

Having amazing family support, regular therapies, and medication. Without a system of supports in place I would not be where I am. Even though these supports can seem to be a lot at times, they are important to keep my mental health on track.

What are some ways to manage your diagnosis?

Over the years we have tried many things to help with my mental health. What has worked for me in the long run is weekly equine therapy, weekly

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dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) counselling, weekly psychological appts, and medication. It took a long time to find the right combination. I struggled for many years thinking it would never get better. I want other kids to know to hang on and keep trying things - even if you don't see how they will help.

What has been your experiences in accessing mental health services?

We have had both good and bad experiences with mental health services. Overall, it has been lifesaving! I have definitely experienced stigma – including professionals thinking I am somehow faking the intensity of trying to live in my own brain - but overall, it has been good. My parents have been great in finding services and funding to help me. Right now, we are looking to try to get a psychiatric service dog for me because this has been recommended as something that will help. This has been hard because my disabilities are invisible, unlike deafness or blindness. We are going to keep trying.

Has culture played a role in your mental health journey?

My family are Métis and have deep roots with the earth. We have many traditions into my journey for mental health wellness. My grandmother and my family grow our own gardens and harvest each fall. Each spring we tap birch to have birch water to replenish our bodies after a long winter. We also harvest berries each year. This is very social and fun

as our family all does it together. My auntie has started to teach me how to weave willow baskets as well. These types of activities encourage family connection and I find them to be very helpful to my mental health. We also (before COVID) always have big family gatherings for holidays where we all get together for meals. These large family gatherings are very important to keep connected to my loved ones.

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

I spent many years feeling like it would never get better, and that I was a burden. I now see that things

*Hang on and keep
trying things- even if
you don't see how they
will help.*

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can and will get better. I spent years when I was younger being scared of people in authority because I felt they did not understand or have enough experience with kids with mental health struggles. I felt as though they didn't take me seriously, and didn't believe me. Thankfully my parents have helped me to advocate for better supports, and safer spaces for people with mental illness. Our family's advice is that if something is wrong, keep talking and find the right people to help. In one case we even went to the ombudsman!

What are your favorite self-care activities?

Some of my favorite self care activities are:

- Going for walks
- Riding my horse
- Going for drives with the music on
- Playing with our cats and dog
- Visiting with family and friends
- Watching funny movies ❀

Take a moment to learn more about Generalized Anxiety Disorder

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, and they worry more often 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.

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. 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 happens 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.

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





Resilient Roots: Issue Three 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@mnhbc.ca.*

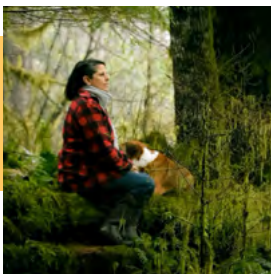


CHARITY MARIE MARVIN

I am living with traumatic brain injury. The visual, auditory, speech and balance centres of my brain are “mismatched”, as a result of a few too many brain injuries since childhood. And, it’s a bit like having a dizzy trickster in my head.


I’ve always written poetry as a meditative form of expression – it’s my soul therapy. In the last few years, especially, I use poetry to reflect on the liminal space that is my mind – a way of writing through mental disconnect and finding healing in my own written word. This poem is about truth, acceptance and finding a new anthem in my recovery.

I believe we all struggle with feelings of not being enough. Not enoughness is a common sentiment I’ve witnessed along my journey to reconnect with my Métis culture and roots. In this way, some of the mental health struggles surrounding my mind’s battle are not unique – so I write through those issues too. The truth is that we are all more than enough – and, what’s more, kaa-wiichitoyaahk (we take care of each other).



CORINNA STEVENSON

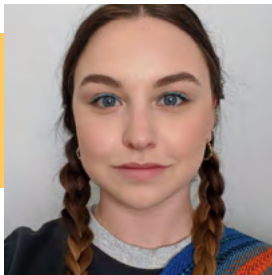
For over 24 years Corinna has taught and guided people through personal transformation, first as a high school teacher and then as a therapeutic wilderness guide. An exceptionally talented teacher and facilitator, Corinna brings much heart, humour, and integrity to her work. Her immense respect for the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





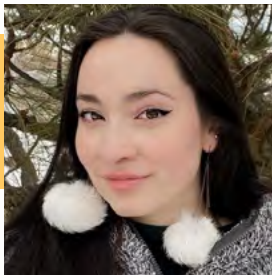
DELANEY ANN CUNNINGHAM

Delaney Cunningham is Métis from Peavine Métis Settlement, Alberta. In 2012, she relocated to Kelowna, BC to enroll in the Digital Photography Program offered through Centre for Arts and Technology to pursue her dream of creating a career in visual arts. She planned to reside in Kelowna for the duration of her program but during this time fell in love with the city and decided to stay long term. She continued to pursue her dream of creating an impact through her work as a photographer and visual artist. She has done work with various Métis organizations within and around BC, photographing events happening within the community. It was also during this time when she started her own mental health and healing journey to recover from trauma that she has experienced in her past as a child. Through this experience, she has become extremely passionate about mental health advocacy and hopes that in sharing her story, it will create an impact for those suffering from mental health conditions and to let them know that are not alone and that there are many different supports available to give others who may be in her position a voice to break the stigma.



ELI AIKEMA

Eli is an Interviewer/Outreach worker for a research study focused on cis and trans women living with HIV; she is extremely humbled to bear witness to each participant's unique lived experience by listening to each person share their vulnerabilities, challenges, and pain, as well as their strengths, resiliency, and wisdom. Eli is of settler and Indigenous heritage (Dutch & Métis), born and raised on the Sôlh Téméxcw, shared asserted territory of the Stó:lô. Currently, she is studying Psychology, Gender and Sexuality at Simon Fraser University. As a person living with Bipolar disorder, Eli has an understanding of the ways in which societal, structural, and internalized stigma work to negatively affect one's health and well-being; as such, she is passionate about destigmatizing the areas of mental illness, HIV+, substance use, and sex work. Eli is also a member of the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative.



JANNA WALE

Janna Wale (She/Her) is Gitxsan and Cree-Métis. She currently resides in Syilx territory (Kelowna, B.C.), where she is working on completing her M.Sc. -Sustainability, which focuses on Climate Resilience in Indigenous Communities. While her research is focused on climate, there are strong connections between mental health and climate change impacts. She believes that in order to take care of the environment, we also need to take care of ourselves.



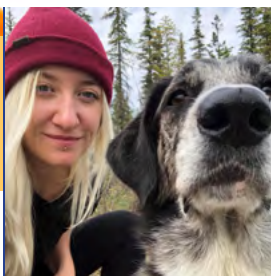
JESSIE STANGA

I am 17 years old and in Grade 12. I was in foster care when I was really young and then adopted. I have struggled with mental health for many years. I have self-harmed, and suicidal thoughts are part of my struggles. I am a survivor of suicide attempts. It was tough to get through, but I am a survivor with lots of help from my family and my support team. I am very passionate about riding horses. We have eight and I own one of my own. She is a barrel horse and we do barrel racing together - she is also four months pregnant, so we will have a baby horse by the spring of next year. I am hoping to advocate for teens with mental health challenges and hope to bring change to some of the system. I am looking into becoming a police officer when I graduate, and am looking into mentoring programs with the RCMP to explore career ideas.



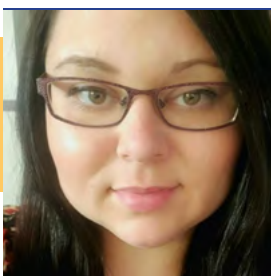
JUSTENE DION-GLOWA

Justene Dion-Glowa is a queer Métis creative, beadworker and poet born in Win-Nipi (Winnipeg) and has been residing in Secwepemcú'lecw since 2014. They are a Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity alumni. They have been working in the human services field for nearly a decade. Trailer Park Shakes, their first full length collection of poetry, comes out October of 2022 from Brick Books. They can be found on twitter as @gee_justy, on Facebook at facebook.com/justenedg, and on Instagram as @jdgwrites. Their beadwork can be found across social media as @tahkahtchikun



KAYLA CARSON

Kayla Carson is of Métis, Indigenous and European background, with deep ancestral roots in BC where she was born and raised. She is an aspiring freelance writer. Kayla has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a New Media and Freelance Journalism Certificate. from Simon Fraser University. With her sister Kira, they run a blog where their latest pieces can be found. Kayla lives in Golden, BC with her husband and four pets where they own and operate a bar, restaurant, and live music venue. Her favourite things to write about are the controversial, uncomfortable, empowering and enlightening - often with some added humour.



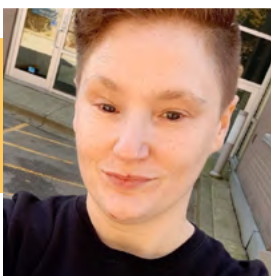
KATHLEEN SVEDBERG

Kathleen Svedberg lives in beautiful Kamloops, BC with her husband and four young children. While she has always known of her Métis ancestry, it wasn't until the birth of her twins in 2020 that she decided to journey back into her mother's history. Kathleen enjoys reading and writing, being out in nature and taking scenic backroad drives.



LIA LATCHKEY

I was born on Treaty Six territory in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Currently I live on Sc'ianew territory, Vancouver Island. I've lived all over Canada from high-rise to street line. I never believed I'd live to be this age. Entering recovery and tackling substance use disorder has been a new lease on life. I've started to live beyond my wildest dreams. Connecting with culture, the Creator/ Universe, creating art, helping others and sharing my story is all I want in this life. That and my two miniature schnauzers and cat! I am working long hours on my artistic developments and endeavors, alongside the development of my business Vanisle Successful Life Strategies. That includes the arts, Indigenous support, life skills, consulting, and workshop business. I have tried many things, learning has been an awesome part of my path: receiving my dogwood at 27, and attending post secondary, working to complete programs of Indigenous studies, psychology, and community and social developments. I never thought I would amount to anything, but today I believe inside I am worthwhile and can try & do anything!! We are all worthwhile humans.



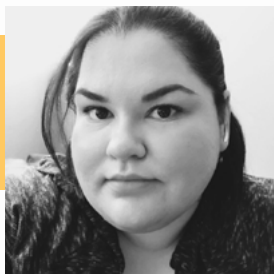
LISA MELTON

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.



NEVADA LYNN

Cree Métis Artist, Nevada Lynn (she/her), is an activist at heart dedicated to evolving and leveraging her creative practice to serve as a conduit for change in the realms of social and climate justice. Nevada works digitally as a graphic artist and studies Visual Art at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. She is gratefully living and working in Whistler on the shared, unceded territory of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation and the Lilwat7úl (Lil'wat) Nation.



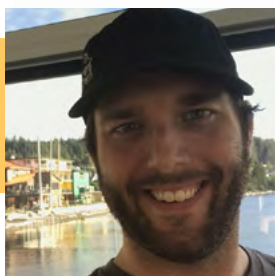
MEGAN MONKMAN

Megan Monkman grew up in Mackenzie, British Columbia and is of Métis heritage. She is an alumna of Simon Fraser University's mathematics program and currently works as a Junior Analyst for Big River Analytics Ltd, an Indigenous owned firm that leverages economic, statistical, and technical expertise to benefit Indigenous nations, organizations, and governments. She is grateful to reside on the territories of the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples (Victoria, BC).



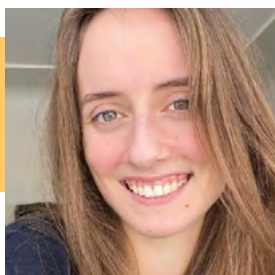
NORA ZILKIE

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.



PAUL MICHAEL ARTHUR

My name is Paul Michael Arthur, and I am originally from the Comox Valley located on the traditional territory of the K'omoks. I grew up on both Kwakiutl and Namgis nations in Sointula BC. I now live in Nanaimo on the traditional territory of Snuneymuxw. My ancestors' communities are St Boniface, St Vital, St Norbert, St Rose de luc, Ritchot and St Francis Xavier. My family names are LaRiviere, Nault, Roy, Lagimodiere (twice), St Germain, Blondin, Robillard, Morand, LaFreniere, Marion, Laurence, Cadotte, Primeau, Delorme and Villebrun.



RIPLEY BURD

Ripley Burd lives with gratitude on the traditional territory of the Syilx peoples in Kelowna, BC. She holds a psychology degree from the University of British Columbia Okanagan. Over the past three years, Ripley has worked within the John Howard Society as a Community Support worker and with the Canadian Mental Health Association as a Tenant Support worker. Ripley is also a part of the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative.



KEVIN STEWART, MNGV



TRACEY DAWN SMITH

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.

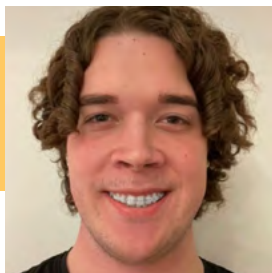
Please note some members of the MY Initiative have been credited previously on the Contributors page.

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



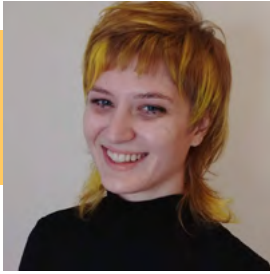
LOGAN BURD

Logan is a Métis citizen residing on the unceded and traditional Coast Salish territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. Logan was born and raised in Kelowna, the unceded and traditional territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Nation. She completed her undergraduate degree in psychology at UBCO and is currently completing a Master's degree in Public Health at SFU. Logan is working towards a career in Indigenous health promotion and research and is deeply grateful to be involved in the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative.



QUINN BASSO

Quinn Basso was born and raised in Prince Rupert. He earned a degree from UVic in biopsychology, and is now attending the UBC Island Medical Program in his second year of medical school. Quinn has enjoyed being involved in this initiative, and is excited to see how it develops into the future.



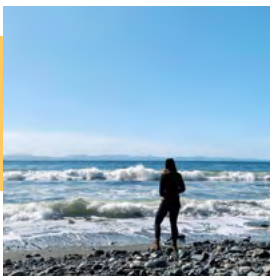
CARLIEGH GAINER

Carliegh was born in Prince George, on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh and now lives on Vancouver Island. She is in Year 3 of a Bachelor in Nursing Sciences with a passion for mental health, addictions, and neonatology. Carliegh is proud to be Métis, and has found a new passion for the relationship between mental health and language. Learning Michif and practicing weaving and beading are some of Carliegh's favourite cultural activities she uses as part of her self-care.



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 completed her undergraduate degree in psychology this past December, she plans to complete her Masters in Counselling to become a Family and Marriage Counsellor. Hailey is an originating member of MY Mental Health and Wellness Initiative; she is grateful to be a part of a project where fellow initiative members are as passionate about mental health as she is. She advocates for mental wellness and healthy lifestyle, 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, dancing, and spending time with her friends.



JILLIAN JONES

Jillian works with Métis Nation BC's Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions as the Provincial Mental Health Coordinator. Graduating with a degree in education, Jillian has worked in the mental health field for the past nine years. 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 or Resilient Roots, please email Jillian at jjones@mnhbc.ca





NOELLE SAEMEROW

Noelle is a proud Métis citizen, who was raised on the unceded territory of the Secwépemc, and the chosen homeland of the Two Rivers Métis Society. Today, she is fortunate enough to live, work and benefit from the unceded and traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, which is also home to the North Fraser Métis Association. Graduating in Spring 2021, with a degree in Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University, Noelle currently works in the field of Indigenous Health. Noelle is passionate about Métis health, specifically mental health and wellness, and is incredibly grateful to be a member of the MY Initiative alongside such incredible Métis youth across BC.



JAMIE SCOTT

Jamie Scott is a recent graduate of Simon Fraser University with a bachelor's degree in Psychology minoring in Human Development and Counselling. She has been volunteering on the MY Mental Health and Wellness Initiative since its creation in 2019 and is proud of all the amazing Métis contributors in this year's volume of Resilient Roots. In her spare time, she enjoys reading and knitting as a way to keep grounded in a stressful world. Maarsii.

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



RESOURCES

DISCLAIMER: Please note that the resource lists provided below are not exhaustive lists, and do not provide region-specific resources.

These resources are up-to-date as of the April 2022 publication of Resilient Roots issue three.

PHONE LINES

Crisis phone lines:

Métis Crisis Line: 1-833-METISBC (1-833-638-4722):

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

1-800-SUICIDE: If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, call 1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE). Both of the 310-6789 and 1-800-SUICIDE phone lines are available in over 140 languages using a language service.

Youth in BC Distress Line: Call 604-872-3311 or 1-866-872-0113 (toll-free) to speak with counsellors and trained volunteers who are committed to helping youth in crisis. Available 24 hours a day.

Non-crisis phone lines:

310Mental Health Support: Call 310-6789 (no area code needed) toll-free anywhere in B.C. to access emotional support, information, and resources specific to mental health and substance use issues. Available 24 hours a day.

Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service: Call 1-800-663-1441 to find resources and support. Will connect you to open and available services and resources for alcohol and substance use supports.

Helpline for Children: If you are a child or youth and would like to talk to someone call the Helpline for Children at 310-1234 (no area code needed), toll-free anywhere in B.C. to access emotional support, information and resources specific to mental health and substance use. Available 24 hours a day.

Kids Help Phone: Call 1-800-668-6868 to speak to a professional counsellor. Available 24 hours a day.

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre (phone support):

Call toll-free from anywhere in BC: 1-800-665-1822; Lower Mainland: 604-875-2084 for peer support, assistance in navigating the mental health system and accessing resources, and information and education about mental health and substance use challenges. Available Monday to Friday from 9:30am to 5pm Pacific Time.

CHAT OR TEXT SUPPORTS

Crisis Centre Online Chat: <https://crisiscentrechat.ca/>

Get support, information and resources for adults in B.C. and Yukon. Online chat is available from noon to 1am Pacific Time

Indigenous Initiatives Network 24/7 Text Support: kidshelpphone.ca/indigenous

Through the 24/7 Crisis TEXT Line powered by Kids Help Phone, Indigenous adults now have the option of connecting with First Nations, Inuit and Métis crisis responders when available. To connect with the Indigenous Initiatives Network at Kids Help Phone:

- Simply text FIRST NATIONS, INUIT or METIS to 741741 for adults
- You can also call 1-800-668-6868

Kids Help Phone Live Chat: kidshelpphone.ca

Chat counselling lets you connect one-on-one, real time, with a Kids Help Phone counsellor, on the web or from a smartphone. Chats are for youth up to age 20. Available Wednesday to Sunday from 3pm to 11pm Pacific Time.

Pacific Post-Partum Support Society (text support): <http://postpartum.org/>

Texting Support 604-255-7999. please text in anytime between 10 and 3 p.m. Monday to Friday.

YouthInBC.com: <https://youthinbc.com/#>

YouthInBC.com is an on-line crisis chat service, where you can chat 1-on-1 with a trained volunteer from the Crisis Centre. It's for youth who need a place to access support and information, or just someone to listen without judgment.

It's also for parents and/or professionals who are looking for topic-specific information and resources for various youth-related issues.

Youthspace Online Chat: <https://youthspace.ca/>

A community of volunteers who can provide emotional support, crisis response, and more. Available 6pm to midnight Pacific Time. Also available by text at 778-783-0177.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Anxiety Canada: <https://www.anxietycanada.com>

Anxiety Canada™ is a leader in developing free online, self-help, and evidence-based resources on anxiety. We are the developers of the award-winning free MindShift™ CBT app for iOS and Android devices, which helps Canadians manage anxiety using scientifically proven strategies. We also serve Canadians by developing services and programs they can trust, including our online directory (Finding Help), and our online courses (My Anxiety Plans).

BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services: <http://www.bcmhsus.ca/>

Provides a range of specialized mental health and substance use services for adults across the province.

BounceBack®, Canadian Mental Health Association: <http://bouncebackbc.ca/>

BounceBack is a free skill-building program designed to help adults and youth 15+ manage low mood, mild to moderate depression, anxiety, stress or worry. Delivered online or over the phone with a coach, you will get access to tools that will support you on your path to mental wellness.

Canadian Mental Health Association BC: <https://cmha.bc.ca/programs-and-services/>

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is a national charity that helps maintain and improve mental health for all Canadians. As the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health, CMHA promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of

people experiencing mental illness. In BC, mental health, substance use and addictive behaviour are within the scope of the organization. The Canadian Mental Health Association provides mental health promotion and mental illness recovery-focused programs and services for people of all ages and their families.

Confident Parents, Thriving Kids Anxiety Program:
<https://welcome.cmhacptk.ca/>

Confident Parents: Thriving Kids – Anxiety Program is a ‘made in BC model’ based on the best available evidence for supporting families to effectively reduce mild to moderate anxiety in their children. Delivered through videos and supported by scheduled telephone coaching sessions, the approach focuses on building skills and strategies that parents can use with their child and family at home and in community settings. The program was developed in collaboration with BC experts who work extensively with children experiencing anxiety and their families, incorporating key concepts from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

NOTE: This program requires a referral. The Anxiety Program accepts referrals from Doctors, Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) clinicians, Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health (ACYMH) clinicians, Nurse Practitioners, psychologists, teachers, school counselors and ECE's.

Early Psychosis Intervention (EPI): <https://www.earlypsychosis.ca/>

An online resource designed to help individuals and families understand psychosis, the importance of early intervention, and find information or services on age-appropriate and stage-appropriate treatments.

FamilySmart: <https://familysmart.ca/>

FamilySmart comes along-side young people and families to provide support, navigation assistance and information and then invites them and professionals to come-alongside each other to learn with and from each other to enhance the quality of experiences and services for child and youth mental health.

Foundry Virtual: www.foundrybc.ca/virtual

Foundry BC is now offering virtual drop-in counselling sessions by voice, video, and chat to BC's young people ages 12-24 and their caregivers. Young people aged 12-24 and their caregivers can drop-in or schedule a virtual counselling appointment, find peer support, access primary care, get support with employment, access groups & workshops, or browse our library of tools and resources.

Foundry (Information and Tools): <https://foundrybc.ca/info-tools/>

In this section you can learn about health and wellness topics, use tools to check out what's going on for you, and quickly connect to resources, services and supports.

HeadsUpGuys: <https://headsupguys.org/>

An online resource that supports men in their fight against depression by providing tips, tools, information about professional services, and stories of success.

Here2Talk: <https://here2talk.ca/home>

Here2Talk connects post-secondary students with mental health support when they need it. Through this program, all students currently registered in a B.C. post-secondary institution have access to free, confidential counselling and community referral services, conveniently available 24/7 via app, phone and web.

HeretoHelp: <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/>

HeretoHelp works to support you in finding quality information, learning new skills, and connecting with key resources in BC. Explore strategies to help you take care of your mental health and use substances in healthier ways, find the information you need to manage mental health and substance use problems, and learn how you can support a loved one.

Jessie's Legacy: <https://jessieslegacy.com/>

Provides eating disorders prevention education, resources and support for youth, families, educators and professionals including the Eating Disorder Prevention Toolkit and Jessie's Legacy Blog.

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre: <https://keltymentalhealth.ca/>

The BC Children's Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre provides mental health and substance use information, resources, help with mental health system navigation and peer support to children, youth and their families from across BC. They also provide these services to people of all ages with eating disorders or disordered eating concerns. All services are free of charge, and you can reach them over the phone (1-800-665-1822) or by email (keltycentre@cw.bc.ca).

Kids Help Phone (online resource):

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

Provides confidential support and information about bullying, violence and abuse, feelings, internet safety and more. Provides confidential support and information about bullying, dating, emotional health, violence and abuse, LGBTQ, physical health and more.

Lumara Grief and Bereavement Care:

<https://lumarasociety.org/>

Lumara is a charitable organization that helps children, youth, adults & families cope with serious illness, grief, and bereavement. We bring light to grief and sorrow, nurturing healing and hope within the strength of community. Lumara works to provide education, support, and counselling services to individuals, families and groups who are grieving the death of a loved one or coping with a life-threatening illness.

MindHealthBC: <http://www.mindhealthbc.ca/>

Provides easy access to information and resources related to mental health and substance use conditions.

Mood Disorders Association of British Columbia: <https://mdabc.net/>

The MDABC is a nonprofit organization that provides treatment, support, education, and hope of recovery for people living with a mood disorder. We serve to build awareness and understanding in communities throughout the province, reaching out to as many people as possible.

Open Mind: <https://openmindbc.ca/>

Provides mental health tools and resources for youth and young adults who may be facing new experiences, challenges and pressures.

Pacific Post-Partum Support Society:

<http://postpartum.org/>

Provides information and support to mothers and families experiencing postpartum/perinatal distress, depression, and anxiety.

Veterans Affairs Canada (Mental Health):

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/health-support/mental-health-and-wellness>

Provides a wide range of mental health services, support and information for Veterans and their families.

Wellbeing: <https://wellbeing.gov.bc.ca/>

Managed by the Provincial Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions. Everyone's journey to wellbeing is different – whether you are on a personal journey or are supporting someone who is facing mental health or substance use challenges. Wellbeing.gov.bc.ca was created because:

- People from all over British Columbia should have the tools necessary to navigate accessing the services and resources they need. And sometimes you may not know where to start.
- People need access to the right supports, at the right time, that meet them where they are at, easily and quickly.

This site is your trusted guide to finding the right information and services to meet your needs.

Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) Rape Crisis Centre: <https://www.wavaw.ca/>

Provides information and services to support women who have been victimized by sexual violence. Services include a 24-hour crisis line, 24-hour hospital accompaniment, Aboriginal women's services, one-to-one counselling, and support groups.

Y Mind: <https://www.gv.ymca.ca/mental-wellness>

Young people 13-30 can sign up for six-seven week long programs online for free – these courses are offered regularly throughout the year. The YMCA of British Columbia's Y Mind program helps young people cope with stress, worry and anxiety.

FREE DOWNLOADABLE APPS

Insight Timer: <https://insighttimer.com/en-ca>

The #1 free app for sleep, anxiety and stress with more than 100k guided meditations led by the best teachers from Canada and the world.

Lifeguard App: <https://lifeguarddh.com/products/lifeguard-app/>

Lifeguard App is a life-saving app designed to combat the opioid epidemic. The Lifeguard App is best known for the 'Use Alone' timer that will send emergency services to a user's location if they become unresponsive after consuming substances. The app also offers several resources such as a Naloxone guide, a CPR Guide, Services Near Me, direct 911 calling, direct 811 calling, and a crisis line.

Lifeguard App's new customization feature provides users with the option to choose between two available themes: the classic Lifeguard look and **an all-new Métis design.**

LifeLine Canada App: <http://thelifelinecanada.ca/lifeline-canada-foundation/lifeline-app/>

The LifeLine App is the National free Suicide Prevention and Awareness App that offers access and guidance to support for those suffering in crisis and those who have suffered the devastating loss of a loved one from suicide. The LifeLine App also provides awareness education and prevention strategies to guide people in crisis. A free Canadian Suicide Prevention App to connect someone in crisis with the support and guidance they need 24/7 and to help guide loved ones left behind after a suicide.

MindShift® CBT:

https://www.anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt/?_ga=2.97854941.376228673.1644862522-651840514.1644862522

Free evidenced-based anxiety relief. MindShift® CBT uses scientifically proven strategies based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help you learn to relax and be mindful, develop more effective ways of thinking, and use active steps to take charge of your anxiety. A new feature, the Community forum, now enables you to find and offer peer-to-peer support.



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

**24 HOURS A DAY
7 DAYS PER WEEK**

A place where you can talk,
trust and feel safe!



SERVICES:

24 hr phone support
Risk assessment
Safety monitoring
Community engagement



1-833-MÉTISBC

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



in collaboration with KUU-US Crisis Services



