



RESILIENT ROOTS

Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine

ISSUE FOUR, SPRING 2024



Contents

2	Taanishi
3	Minister's Message
4	Forward
5	Every Day Feels Like a Triumph
9	Do Not Perceive Me
10	Blood Memory
12	Warrior Drum
13	Visions like Memories
18	Raindrop Lullaby

21	Direction
22	Culture Saved Me
24	Fellow Traveller
25	The Love People Need
29	Warrior Drum 2
30	The Hibernating Bear of Childhood Trauma
32	Internal Concern
33	Live Well
34	Reflection on Resilience

36	Book Review: A Grandmother Begins the Story
37	On Becoming a Mother
41	Mindful Beading
42	Contributors
 <i>editors:</i> MÉTIS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMMITTEE MNBC'S REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR (INTERIOR) AND MNBC'S PROVINCIAL PROGRAMS MANAGER	
 <i>designer:</i> DARCY SENGER	
 <i>front and back cover art:</i> NEVADA LYNN	
 <i>Published by MNBC</i>	
 <i>www.mnbc.ca</i>	
<i>Spring 2024</i>	





Taanishi

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

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

Resilient Roots was developed by the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative in 2019, with the release of the first issue in Spring 2020. In 2023, after careful consideration and deliberation, the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative decided to form two groups highlighting the vast needs of both Métis youth and the gaps in resources for community members aged 25-35. The members of the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative transitioned to the Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee, including long-standing and new contributors, and the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative has continued with fresh and diverse voices.

Resilient Roots as a publication has transitioned to the Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee, and it is with gratitude that we share the newest issue of Resilient Roots: Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine. As members of the Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee, 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 four highlights the many unique forms of expression woven together into this publication. Some topics around mental health can feel heavier – but this does not mean that these stories should not 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. Maarsii and be well.


Sincerely,

- The Métis Mental Health
and Wellness Committee



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 to provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.





Minister's Message

DR. KATE ELLIOTT

Taanishi,

I am pleased to share with you the fourth issue of Resilient Roots: Métis Mental Health and Wellness Magazine. As with previous issues, this community-led publication remains 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. Despite the hardships and challenges that Métis People experience, the strengths of culture, belonging, and community shine through. Métis ways of knowing show that community-based approaches contribute to positive 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 that lives in our Métis communities. Every part of this magazine comes from the inspiring

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 commitment and support of the members of the Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee. I hold so much gratitude for this incredible group of Métis People for their ongoing passion to uplift Métis ways of knowing, being, and doing. 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





Forward

Over the last year, the Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee has deliberated on the title of Resilient Roots, honouring the resilience of our ancestors while wanting to highlight the well-being, capacity, and thriving of our Métis Nation. The term ‘resilience’ highlights the capacity to overcome challenges, framing strength within hardship. The Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee wishes to recognize that our Métis Nation is inherently strong in our culture, connection to community, and wholistic worldview regardless of the hardships our People have faced. Recognizing this shift in direction, the Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee is pleased to share the new title of this magazine moving forward, “**Thriving Spirits: Métis Perspectives on Wellness.**” This title captures

the spirit, strength, and growth of the Métis People in BC. In future issues, we will focus on themes that highlight Métis leaders within our communities, stories that capture the wellness of Métis community members, and teachings from Métis knowledge holders. We look forward to sharing the revamped magazine next year. Please watch for more information and calls for submissions!

Maarsii,

*- The Métis Mental Health
and Wellness Committee*



Every Day Feels Like a Triumph

BENJAMIN PENHALE-WILSON

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 discusses hallucinations, delusions, suicide, and hospitalization.

Tanishii, my name is Benjamin Wilson. I am a Métis youth living in a small town. I enjoy gaming, punk rock music, mohawks, Dungeons and Dragons, hiking, playing the drums, and reading books. I am also a person with a diagnosis of Catatonic Schizophrenia, which means I can experience auditory, tactile, or visual hallucinations. Schizophrenia can also cause me to have delusions of grandeur, paranoia, and disrupt my daily thinking. I'm 'catatonic' in that when these symptoms manifest, they can cause me to shut down and I become unresponsive to those around me. Basically, it can take a normal day and flip it on its head.

In late 2018 I began having increasing anxiety at work. I began having delusions and after a

boxing day brunch conversation with my parents they realized I wasn't acting like myself. I was involuntarily hospitalized. I was having strong auditory hallucinations that were alarming to me as I was detaching from reality. I was also experiencing persecutory delusions and delusions of reference. This was extremely disruptive and elevated me in all the wrong ways, so much so that I ran from the hospital. I felt like I was thrust into a nightmare that I couldn't control or wake up from.

One of the strange things about experiencing psychosis is not knowing why you are in the hospital. I wasn't convinced something was wrong with my thinking. I was eventually transferred to a larger hospital where I received my diagnosis. "Not me. How could this happen to me?". That hit me like

a semi-truck full of bricks. I didn't know what to do. I can still see the moment so clearly; the side room, the windows on the wall looking into the common area, the couch I was sitting on, my parents, the doctor sitting across from me, the first time I heard "Catatonic Schizophrenia" as if the words came out in slow motion.

After I was showing reduced symptoms and signs of stability, I was released from the hospital. I moved in with my parents where they could help support me. I had to quit my job. My plan was to work on recovery. I had safety plans and regular counseling sessions set up. When I was in the hospital, I started drawing a comic book called "Jumpsuit" about the character, Jumpsuit, and his otherworldly adventures and his nemesis who he sometimes teamed up with. It was an important coping mechanism for me. As this character was experiencing their hardship in fantastical quests, I was also experiencing a parallel form of hardship in the hospital and at home.

I started my road to recovery in a pretty dark place. The stigma began setting in. I thought I was a 'crazy person'. I would say things like, "My life is over". I felt like less than a person. I would hardly show my face around people. I would stay in my room and cry for days. I was suffering. I had quite a negative outlook about my future. My delusions and hallucinations caused me to go into a depressed state and I attempted suicide. Eventually, things began to turn around in small ways.

I'll never forget the time I watched a Ted Talk by Elen Saks, in which she shares her own story of mental illness. A story of someone living with

a severe mental illness thriving? I couldn't believe it. That was a turning point. That gave me hope. Someone like me is succeeding. If she could do it, so could I.

I became more engaged in my counseling. This is where I learned about Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – in particular, thought records. This has become one of the strongest coping mechanisms that works for me.

I worked with my doctor and psychiatrist trialing certain medications. After almost a year we found a medication that worked best for me. Finally, I had a major reduction in symptoms that allowed me to continue to do the cognitive work that I needed to do.

I have to give a shout out to those friends that supported me early in my recovery. There were only a couple of people I could be around in those days due to my feelings of worthlessness and anxiety. Those couple friends visited me, checked on me and became educated about my diagnosis. They really helped me feel connected and appreciated. Connection with my friends was an important part of my recovery.

My negative self-image began to change as I worked on myself, supported by my medication. I changed from, "My life is hopeless" to "Nothing in life is hopeless". I read books on how to work through fearful situations. I began volunteering at a local community garden and reconnected with old friends. Things were changing.

My understanding of schizophrenia up to this point came mostly from the media. Movies refer to

people as schizophrenics who are low level minions or bad guys; online, 'schizophrenic' is quickly used as a derogatory term. I thought people with schizophrenia were violent and resorted to crime. This gave me a very bleak idea of what my future looked like. I figured I wouldn't be able to hold a job, and once my parents passed away, I wouldn't have a place to live. I figured it was a matter of time until my supports ran out, and then I would be screwed. I also wondered what my friends would think of me after my diagnosis. Would people see me differently? I was very hesitant to tell people what my diagnosis was due to the stigma that schizophrenia carries.

I couldn't write this without mentioning the love and support I received from my parents. They did not give up on me when I wanted to give up on myself. Every time they pushed me through my comfort zone, no matter how terrified I was. Even the most mundane of tasks, like picking up the mail, felt like a massive victory in the face of my diagnosis. Their support showed me how to ground myself and de-escalate when my symptoms increase.

The moment my father gifted me with a handwoven sash he made, I felt connected to my family and my Métis community. I belonged somewhere. That was important for me because I felt for the longest time that I didn't belong

anywhere. This sense of belonging is a massive pillar in my support network. Subsequently, I have been exploring my own cultural heritage.

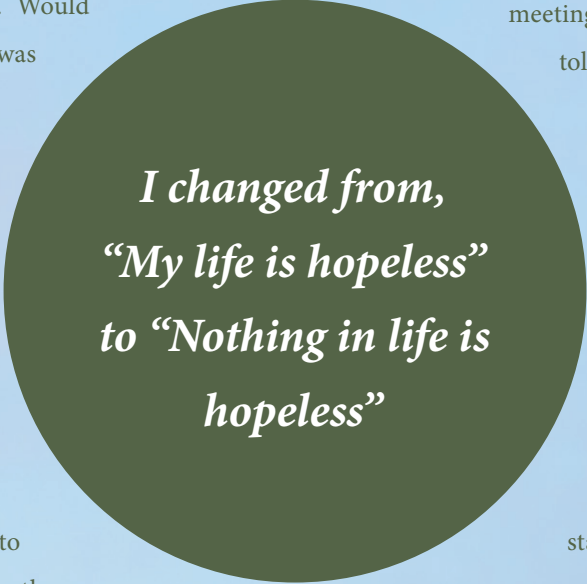
Today I see a counselor regularly. I'm working a full-time job in the education system that is fulfilling. I still experience some minor symptoms, but I now have many grounding strategies that I use to ensure they no longer impact my daily life. These days it's more like an inconvenience I need to deal with. I

have a very solid grip on reality. In a recent

meeting with my psychiatrist, they told me, "You're doing great.

You're the poster child of recovery." In March of 2020 I reconnected with an old friend, and we began seeing each other romantically. We are now engaged and will be married in a few months, with plans of starting our own family.

I still struggle with the idea of sharing my diagnosis. Only a handful of people outside of my immediate family know about my condition. Those who do know are very trusted people in my life. My symptoms affect me on a daily basis, and I sometimes feel like I am living this secret life, hiding from people in plain sight. What do I tell my employer if anything at all? When meeting new people and new friends, what do I tell them? Sometimes my symptoms cause me to have irregular behavior and I might seem weird to people without any context. I've talked to my family about



*I changed from,
“My life is hopeless”
to “Nothing in life is
hopeless”*

this, and I've decided that if I am to begin letting people know, I would start with old friends who've known me since elementary school. The stigma is real.

This past summer, my fiancé and I took a trip to Winnipeg via train to connect with my Métis heritage. We saw many historical sites, some I have personal connections to, and did other activities like music bingo, punk shows, a beading workshop, the Winnipeg art gallery, a drop-in session of Dungeons and Dragons, and met some amazing people. This trip was a massive contrast to 2019 where I saw no hope for my future, couldn't leave my room, or bear to be around others. Having support from family, friends and professionals was what helped me get back on track. My medication and counseling keep me consistently on the right path. My cultural support keeps me connected to who I am, where I come from, and to be proud of that. I am back to enjoying my hobbies, and have even expanded my interests with traveling, writing, and backpacking.

That Winnipeg trip was the biggest trip I've been on, and the furthest away from home I had ever been. I've gone from being the most dependent I've been in recent years to the most independent I've been in my entire life. The experience of this diagnosis has shifted my perspective for people who have experienced trauma, and I am more empathetic and understanding.

I'm happy to say that at this point in my recovery, even when I have 'off' days, every day feels like a triumph. ✱



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>

Do Not Perceive Me

ALETHEA CARRIERE-BLACK



MEANING - To me this painting represents the feeling of being judged or watched by others. The many eyes on the painting look like they are memorizing every detail of whatever they're looking at, even if not in a judgmental way. To me, getting to know new people can be very difficult because of the way I feel they are perceiving me, and this causes me to act differently or not myself in front of others. It makes it challenging to get out of my shell and meet new people. It is titled "Do Not Perceive Me" because I wish people wouldn't.



Blood Memory

PAUL MICHAEL ARTHUR

*Content Warning: This piece includes language use which may not be suitable
for all audiences and includes talk of ableism, bullying, and racism*

Born from rich and historical blood.

Warrior's blood spilled for their future.

Identical hearts and bodies as held by those before me.

Those holding us from the spirit world have never forgotten us.

Yet those in our living world have their tree roots severed.

A generation or two but perhaps more lost.

The mirror spirit skipping to me....

Lost with different abilities as my ancestors hold me minutes old.

Then the pedestal breaks, falling smashed.

Snatching me from their grasp.

Bricks quickly surround me to hide me.

Stereotypes and names of

DRUNK.,

FAILURE...,

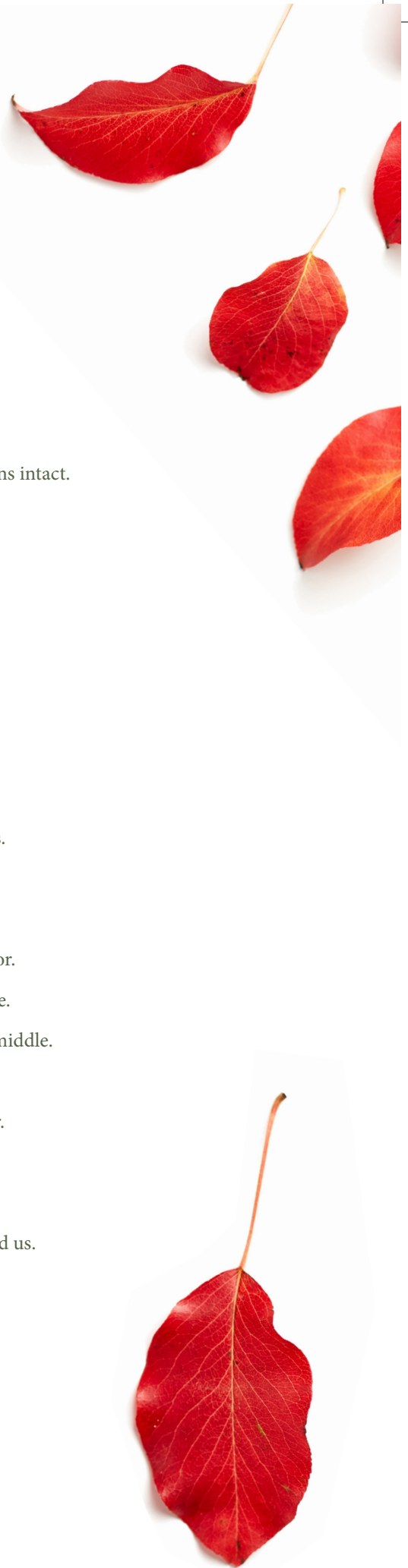
WELFARE...,

RETARD...,

John A is on a gold plate on a desk.

Like Mr. Burns rubbing his hands with a cackle.

Makeup in white, red and blue smeared all over my face.
As John A smells the air like a bloodhound.
“I smell the blood of Canada’s halfbreed enemies.”
Thrown in a van with no windows,
Taken to a home of love.
Content John A moves onto the next white washing.
Over time as I’m around Culture, Elders, communities with my veins intact.
Parents who nurture me with love regardless.
As I get older my label glue dries.
Then like leaves fall to the ground.
The bricks slowly start to crack over time.
Just enough for my ancestors to feel my presence.
Eventually the bricks explode as I flex from my cocoon.
Hearing the words “welcome home!”
As my ancestors finally surround me again.
They place a drum in my hands and my hand on our hearts.
The drum and hearts move as one.
Followed by snorting bison we sing together.
One young man steps forward and it’s like looking in a mirror.
As we both smile he wipes the rest of the paint off of my face.
He then wraps me up in a blue cloth with a white infinity in the middle.
Then the cloth transfers to my drum.
This relative who never speaks with a hand on my shoulder.
He leads me to the front of hundreds of people.
We walk, shaking the ground as we sing with our drums.
As many flagpoles are carried behind us with Métis flags behind us.
We walk to find John A hiding in a house with a swastika.
Then the mirror relative turns to me.
As he raises his fist he shouts.
“Time to banish them to the chains of hell!!!”
Then everyone shouts with fists up “We are still here!!!”



Warrior Drum

DEBORAH AUGIER

We are always dying, to ourselves

This is the path of the warrior

Put down your armor,

Daggers by the golden well

Chamber of darkness

Dragons chase alligators

All of them

Altogether

Altruism

Despite their relation

Stop fighting

Find cooperation

Nestled in your breast

Heat the lamp

Oil of oils

Fire of fires

Heart and home

Spread wings of desire

Hold onto her

Let her go

See her go

Take her back

Hold her hand

Send balloons

Her black pirate vessel

Capture sails linen

Without question

Journey

Resurrection

Decay

Glory from Shame

created March 3, 2008

Visions like Memories

KAYLA CARSON

Authors note – Although on the surface this intergenerational family story may not appear to be about mental health, it is a snapshot into the sharing and passing of trauma, how it weighs down on the mind, and how it does so in less than obvious ways.

Content Warning: This piece contains language that may not be suitable for all audiences. There are mentions of police apprehension, child loss, foster care, abuse, suicide, and alcoholism.

Red and blue lights ring silently in the background. Sirens are unnecessary for the attention of an intimate crowd. Men and cars in uniform - the universal sign of trouble. And a common misunderstanding. The red and blue are not the sign; they are the consequence.

In the BC interior, in the heat, the sun saturates all. It's dry, inescapably hot, and grassy. That straw-like grass you find in places with extended summers and limited rainfall. Sand in foliage form. Merritt in the 50s, and there was, as there still is, a lot of space, a lot of farmlands. A lot of dry, rough yard, without borders, blending into fields. There are no other houses nearby, no neighbours, and no noise. But even a troublesome sight must compete with the summer sun. And viewing through the heat, the

lights, the assumed crisis, seem surreal.

I have infiltrated someone else's memory. The child views the cop car and its lights through the yard, beyond the sand grass, with no barriers but a yellow slide between himself and the scene. Mostly space between him and this moment. The dust is still settling from the cars' movement as it is put into park. Lights still swirling. Unsure if the engine is still running. They are where they have intended to be, and that's all that seems to matter. Two cops get out. Slowly, calmly, and carefully. Mournfully. Heavily. They are not here to fight. They are not here to argue. They are here to get someone who knows it is coming.

A moment meant to be nothing more than a child and his sister's play, not meant to be a memory,

is now one. Across the yard, everything has begun to change. Consequences are coming to fruition.

Granddad passed away in 97'. There wasn't much to pick from of Ed's belongings; my Dad wouldn't have wanted a lot to choose from anyways. He kept a few pieces of furniture, a unique and well-working old lamp, and photos. Black and grey, framed - a portrait of his mother of whom I never met. Dorothy. They called her Dottie. My Dad looked like her, I thought. She also looked like my older sister. Darker skin, darker eyes. But not just that. The eye shape, the eyebrows, the cheekbones. Another photo. My favourite. Black and white as well. My Father and his sister as small children. They are standing on a wooden fence, their little arms and bodies clinging on, my Grandad beside and behind them, two more men further beside and behind. Shot from the kids' side, from slightly below, looking up at the clan. The small group appears to be watching the same scene, something to the right of the camera yielder. An almost entirely candid shot. Taken quickly enough that no one's movement but for some eyes, interrupted.

My Grandfather was white, with light hair, and light eyes. He stood out in this photo. Not like he didn't belong, quite the opposite, really. But he stood out. The kids are much darker than him. The men in the background also have dark skin, dark eyes, and thick, untamed, unruly hair. One's looks comical almost, like how the hair on the top of a baby's head tends to whisk upwards towards the sky. It's a friendly scene. It was the first time I recall being face to face with many of these people, but it

wasn't much of an introduction. "Uncle" was tossed around. They were wild. That whole side. Chaotic. Funny. Hurt. Often in flux, in movement. Granddad hung out with the wildings even after Dottie left.

This was the most I had ever seen my Dad interact with his family, despite it being a frozen interaction from 43 years previous. My Grandfather would soon take the kids from Merritt, and they would leave the McDougall name where they found it. The courts made the rare decision to award a father custody.

This one's mine. 7 or 8 years old, sitting at lunch at a town over with my parents and three siblings. My Father exits out to the busy street and returns with a woman on his arm. You can just see a sliver of Kootenay Lake in the distance, down the hill.

"Ohhh you know this is your sister," My mom says from our booth.

I might have asked who that woman was; she may have commented before we had a chance to pipe up, but I do not recall. I was unfamiliar with this woman and what to do with this new knowledge. Inadequate explanations are a force of narration in this family.

My Father's Mother left her family for another man. Had another family. The same swift strategy is used to explain my Dad's previous life: Barely an adult, he had a child, and made a young bride. She left him for another man. She had another family. This was the second woman in his life to break his heart. I'd like to add: He started another family. That second family was sitting at lunch in Nelson, looking back up at the first.



There's a cabin up in the hills. Upon a plateau, decades before the Merritt-Kelowna connector connected. In the 1930s and 40s when the runaway Mother of my Father was one of ten children. She's older, if not the eldest. The cabin. I only see it in the dark. It's not large and has wooden steps up to the front as the main floor is raised. It's worn and weather-beaten; you get more storms up in those hills. It is somewhat grimy but sturdy thanks to its solid and thick logs. Two square windows on either side of the front door. A shack does not have glass windows and a front porch to sit on. A shack does not have strong walls. There is nothing but shared space in a shack, however. Supplies for anything and everything are always scarce. It is barely manageable, somewhat survivable, bleak. Not every child here gets to grow. Their world is small.

The parents - Agnes and Joe, and sometimes some of the uncles, come and go, making appearances to drop off the newest little addition. It's hard to believe that their lives are not made more difficult by their transient tendencies. They must have their reasons. I see Dottie as always having a child in her arms. She lifts, carries, cradles, and holds. She's got them. There's been no other way. They hold feelings of injustice in their hearts and bodies without knowing the words to describe it.

Headlights here are unwelcome. They always come in the dark. In the dark you know kids are confined to the house. These lights have no competition. The clan does not wait for the greeting of strangers. The youngest are trained at first glimpse of headlights to flee into the woods behind the home. Cars never come up here but for one reason.

The ancestors and descendants are settled all over the Okanagan. Descended from the Red River area, Québec, and beyond. History forgets to mention the partnerships of many HBC fur traders. The men's resourcefulness cannot be overlooked but it was their marriages with indigenous women that guaranteed their survival and success (HBC Heritage, 2016). This continued as these pioneers moved into BC. Some pure - new to the land blood, sometimes married in. But there was safety in familiar kin. A formidable marriage often occurred just when the indigenous blood was getting watered down. That is no longer the truth. I am Métis. My children likely will not be.

Some of the main characters of this history include one of the first settlers in Merritt, Jesus Garcia (Merritt Herald, 2011), and one of the first settlers in Kelowna, John Baptiste McDougall (Robert Hayes, 2020); Great-Great-Great-Grandfather. And Great-Great-Great-Grandfather.

John McDougall's first homesteads' cabin is propped up in the Kelowna Museum (Barkwell, n.d.). One of his later cabins sits intact in Kelowna, the "Third John McDougall House" (Canadas Historic Place, n.d.). But, of course, it should be called "The Third John and Amelia McDougall House." She was there for the first and second after all. History likes to forget about the women. Rumour has it John had two daughters by another woman during their marriage. Amelia would periodically leave to return to her tribe. Colonizers, the McDougalls and the Garcias. Mutts they also were. Some moved between "town" life and the reservations, at home

in either. Innovators. Hustlers. Builders. Hunters. These families were part of a juxtaposition of society (Legault, 2012). Creators for the state but also dark-skinned immigrants, and, depending on who you talked to, Indians.

My sister chose to get Married in Merritt of all places. Right in the middle of the 2021 heatwave. As Carsons, we returned temporarily to where we left the McDougall name behind. The dry air smells of sun-baked grasses and heat bleached soil. The sun in this valley is haunting. It offers no rest.

We rented the Quilchena Hotel, a quintessential Victorian turn-of-the-century hotel for the festivities. Old-timey portrait of a ghostly looking original owner and everything. Our room on the third floor was an arduous journey as you climbed, rising with the cooked air. The hotel was a ten-minute drive from town, along the old highway. Situated with a lake in front and old farmland behind, above, and below.

Down this old highway is where a Garcia daughter married a McDougall son. They married out of the heat on a boxing day 100 years ago. One of their daughters would marry a white man 20 years her senior. With her marriage, Dottie left that cabin in the hills behind. But she could not escape futility. And as a family that weekend, we moved through time.

It's a vision like a memory again. The same grasses of Merritt also decorate the Okanagan Lake valley and hillsides. I see past the grass through the

heat when Kelowna was nothing more than a few new homesteads. Lots and lots of dry land. Lots of open space. A small cabin in the background. Sunbaked on the outside and, despite being dark, the cabin is cooked on the inside, warm and musty. The lot lacks trees. The kinds of trees that protect and decorate the home. The types of trees that you plan to see grow. He knows this home is temporary. A starter home of the 1860s (Barkwell, n.d.). I can smell it. Musty and dry, slightly like animals, but more of a tobacco and stove cooked burn. Unlike the connector cabin of his descendant's future – this dwelling does not hold weight. This one is at the beginning of its story, not at its end. The family is young. John, his wife Amelia, and his wildling McDougall children are not yet the community staple that they will become. (Legault, 2012; Legault, 2015).

The Merritt River. 1968. Agnes. I always thought this moment belonged to the Uncles' wife. Someone a bit more out of reach, someone less knowable. She's right here though. I thought it was because of an Uncle. Perhaps. But it was her husband. Someone close. Someone knowable.

A low glow of light remains from the recently set sun. By the temperate of the river, it must be early summer. It is quiet here. The water is cold enough to stimulate but not alert the senses. The river is not treacherous. The currents are tranquil and immersive. And not endlessly deep, but deep enough to submerge yourself. And deep enough to not come back up. She chose not to carry the weight any longer.

Agnes was far from the only one to have an unfortunate end. Her husband took the shotgun to himself only a few years previous. Death by guilt – an assessment that only us of the current living generation, far enough removed, have the privilege to gift upon the man. Reading between the lines of the incomplete records and memories: child illness, alcoholism, prison and foster care got to others. Is it more upsetting to find little to no records of one's life or to find that that record keeps ending before they turn 50,40,10? It was not just children living with the pain of things done to them that they did

not understand. No one was taught how to survive being the child of a broken child.

We are still here, and we still carry the weight. But not forever. Your author sits here 9 months pregnant. It is bold to – and I cannot confidently claim that all the households along my direct lineage have been riddled with alcoholism. But I can claim that my child's will not. ✱



REFERENCES

- Canada's Historic Places. (n.d.) Third John McDougall House. <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=7196#:~:text=John%20Baptiste%20McDougall%20was%20significant,labourer%2C%20middleman%2C%20and%20bowsman.>
- Lawrence Barkwell. (n.d.). Michif Architecture: John McDougall House. https://www.academia.edu/39556692/Michif_Architecture_John_McDougall_House_Kelowna_BC_
- Robert M. Hayes.(2020). Okanagan History: Meet some large pioneer families. https://www.kelownadailycourier.ca/life/article_b2150178-e330-11ea-a3fb-079cbd2d7e06.html
- Gabriel Leqault. (2015). Mixed Messages: Deciphering the Okanagan's Historic McDougall Family. <https://canadianarchaeology.com/caa/publications/canadian-journal-archaeologyjournal-canadien-darcheologie/39/2/241-256>
- Gabriel Leqault. (2012). Changing in Place: A generational study of a mixed indigenous family in the Okanagan. <https://open.library.ubc.ca/media/stream/pdf/24/1.0072681/1>
- Hudsons Bay Company Heritage.(2016). Indigenous Women and the Fur Trade. <https://www.hbcheritage.ca/people/women/indigenous-women-and-the-fur-trade#:~:text=They%20were%20an%20integral%20part,considered%20strategic%20and%20mutually%20beneficial.>
- Merritt Herald. (2011). Jesus Garcia: 1832-1916. <https://www.merrittherald.com/jesus-garcia-1832-1916/>



Raindrop Lullaby

KATHLEEN SVEDBERG

Author note: All names have been edited to protect confidentiality.

Kate thought briefly about turning back. Outside of the virtual weekly Zoom meetings, she had never met any of the people who would be at the session end wrap-up gathering. The group of six or so participants would meet in a clearing nestled up in Basher hills for a socially distanced meet-and-greet along with campfire.

The vast grey clouds blanketed the sky as her minivan gained elevation. She had no idea where she was going but knew this was the road the group facilitator Natalie had described in her emailed directions. Those understanding smiles had kept

Kate's spirits up these past eight weeks. She had looked forward to those two hours each week and, as such, decided she owed it to the group to push through her uneasiness.

In the backseat, her three year old son Beau beamed with excitement as he looked out the window. Kate looked in the rearview mirror admiring Beau's poker straight blonde hair sticking out here and there. He deserved the carefree fun exploring the grassy hills was sure to bring.

Elder Andrew, the group's resident nature guide, had been up a week prior to scope out the spot after a long, cold winter. He explained matter-of-factly to the



group that this would be a perfect gathering place with ample space and so much fallen dry wood they didn't have to worry about hauling fire wood in. Andrew had been to the clearing many times before with his own two sons, now grown men, to remove them from the bustle of city life only twenty minutes away.

"Good for the mind", Elder Andrew would say.

Kate however didn't need convincing and longed to be back in nature. She remembered fondly a time when her husband and her were still dating without children. They would spend every weekend scoping out a new fishing spot or driving the dusty, dirt back roads until the sun went down. Focusing once more on the road, Kate thought about how silly it was to be daydreaming of times gone by. She should be thankful to mother to these tiny people. Creator had a plan for her, this she firmly believed. Still, remembering who she was just a handful of years ago made Kate sad. Motherhood was not what she expected, especially after the twins were born.

Soon the dirt road became a washboard of ruts and potholes and Emily began to wail directly behind Kate's seat. Her high pitched cry filled the vehicle and startled her sister Lucy beside her awake. Lucy was such an easy baby. She closed her heavy eyelids despite the noise and her chin tucked forward to the right. She was asleep once more. As the van heaved up and down, Emily made her displeasure known to her mother. Kate wondered if she was any closer to the clearing when she spotted a white Jeep pulled off to the right of the makeshift road.

"It's okay guys, we're here", Kate said aloud

pulling her own
vehicle to the road's
rocky shoulder.

She breathed a long, heavy sigh of relief. "*That has to be them*", she thought. Emily did not seem to notice the van turn off and continued to cry in protest. Kate felt a headache coming on when she recognized Natalie's dark brown hair as the woman in front of her. As Natalie turned her body shutting the Jeep door behind her, Kate saw a warm welcoming smile come across Natalie's face. She had spotted her and was coming toward the minivan. Kate instantly opened her door panicked Natalie may hear Emily's loud cries.

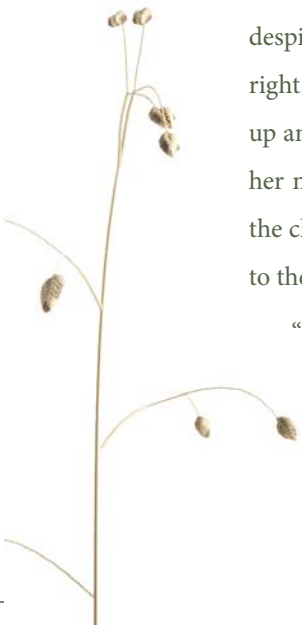
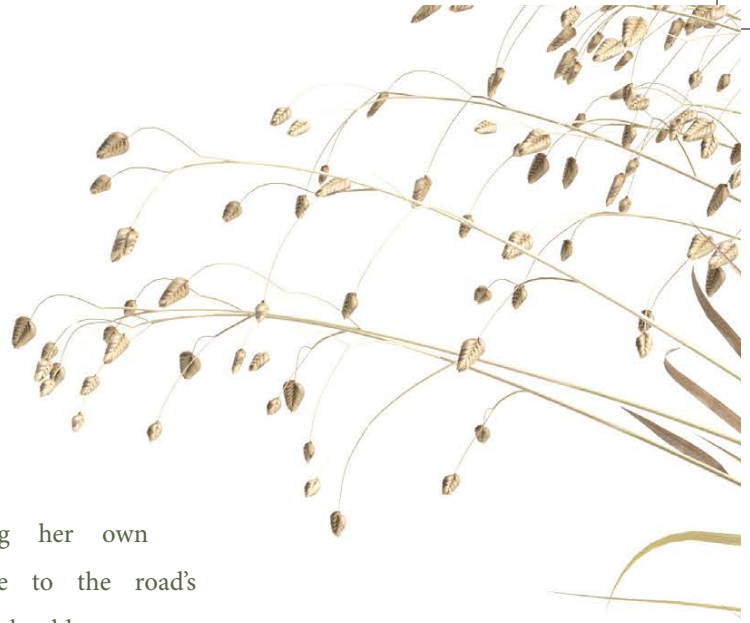
"You made it!", exclaimed Natalie excited to catch a glimpse of Beau through the back window.

"Yes, of course. Thank you for having us", Kate replied careful to make a good impression.

"How can I help?", Natalie questioned opening the automatic sliding side door.

Emily, now squirming in her car seat, was oblivious to the visitor and Kate was mortified. Why did she think it would be a good idea to bring babies to the woods? What was she thinking? How did she not plan for this? To Kate's shock, Natalie thrust her arm in the van and made quick work of releasing the car seat from its base.

"Oh, I remember how this works! It's been a while



but I've still got it!", Natalie hollered to Kate as she Emily's lungs filled with the cold, spring air outside.

Emily was now silent, eyes wide taking in her surroundings. By this time, Beau's little legs jumped to the earthy ground as Kate helped him get out of the an. Holding onto a still sleeping Lucy's car seat, Kate struggled to keep up to Natalie, Beau and Emily as they meandered down a nearby trail exposing the clearing.

There, beyond a thin row of birch trees, were the happy faces she'd come to know in her online class. Elder Lynn stood up from her chair around the campfire as soon as she spotted Natalie with the car seat.

"The twins are here!", she said gleefully clapping her hands together. Lynn's soft, grey curls framed her wrinkled face and Kate instantly felt a warmth in her eyes. Looking around Kate recognized a few other participants around the fire, its flicker and crackle bewitching her girls who snacked contently on digestive cookies side-by-side in their seats. A treat brought by Elder Lynn, no doubt, to mark the occasion.

Beau ran clear across the meadow to the edge of the marsh, his hands gripping the tall grass as he looked up toward the sky. Kate let out a laugh at her wild-haired boy. She was at peace here, blissfully unaware that in a couple short hours her oldest, Nate, would need to be picked up from kindergarten. Kate laughed more that afternoon than she had the entire year prior. The pandemic weighed on Kate who

wondered what the world would look like a month from now let alone what the coming year would bring.

When it was time to leave, Kate thanked Natalie and Elder Andrew for giving so much of themselves in the group.

"It was a pleasure to have you and the kids come out today," Elder Andrew said as he firmly shut the driver's door of Kate's minivan closed.

"I'll be back to this spot", Kate promised as she turned over the engine. Fleetwood Mac played through the speakers of the van. Descending down the grassy hills, raindrops fell on the van's roof in a soft lullaby. All three of her babies were asleep now, a welcomed effect all the crisp, clean mountain air they took in that afternoon.

The city traffic and big houses were coming closer into view now. Kate's face was flush and her eyes welled up with tears. Gratitude overwhelmed her. She did not think she would be so moved in meeting these strangers. Warm tears trickled down her full cheeks resting on her jawline as she drove. Driving away from the very place she felt so free, Kate released all her worries and fears. She didn't have the answers but she decided she didn't need them. She was enough just as she was and was exactly where she needed to be. *



Direction

APRIL PILUSO

She was
A curious young creature;
Bold and happy, with a mind
Colourful as mountains covered in
Summer wildflowers.
She followed her heart
As a compass
Onto winding paths
To places unknown,
Smiling,
Laughing,

As she walked,
She found pieces of a different
Compass, made of
Fear, urgency, resentment, money.
They led her down
The mountain, and
Away
From herself.

She was found a few
Years ago,
Lonely, fearful, angry.
A stranger -
Once lost themselves -
Took her by the hand
And walks with her
S l o w l y
Back to the mountains
With the wildflowers.



Culture Saved Me

ALEXA LIZOTTE

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 discusses intergenerational trauma, depression, anxiety, and experiences of dissociation

Up until I became a young woman, I was clueless to the stories, music, art, and cultural identity that was running through my blood. “You’re Métis” my dad would tell me, but what did that mean?

My dad kept myself and my brothers away from his home for a long time. He left his northern Métis community for the city, stayed, and never looked back. I was a quiet and anxious child who quickly grew into an angry and problematic teenager who felt no direction, no connection, and no belonging. My mom struggled with my acting out, hardly knowing that my problematic behaviour was rooted in my generational shame and pain; and it was simultaneously showing up in the same way throughout my seemingly extinct paternal bloodline. I was unpredictable, depressed, impulsive, anxious, and lived in a constant state of dissociation. I remember one of my concerned

grade 10 teachers asking me, “what happened to you as a child?”

I moved to Vancouver when I was 18 to get away from my parents and go to school. I couldn’t stand the feeling of my own skin and blamed them. In my new environment, I became curious about what it meant to be Métis. Since my dad didn’t want to tell me, I decided to attend Indigenous student longhouse lunches at school and only felt more lost. So many of the students seemed rooted in their communities, families, and



identities, and all I knew was that my dad was from a place called Fort Vermilion, grew up in a family of 12, and that I had about 300 cousins. My anger, confusion, and resentment grew.

Three years later, I found beadwork, and I found my home. A couple of years of attempted beaded projects grew into years of practicing patience and I finished my first beaded project in 2020. It was an eagle feather I had been gifted from a 2 spirit Métis Elder, Bonaventure Fabian, I had grown close to in the summer of 2019, and I was instantly captivated by an unfamiliar feeling of contentedness. I didn't want the feeling to go away, so I beaded each of my two brothers a baby eagle feather I had found at a Richmond park and about 10 pairs of earrings. "These earrings look pretty good" I thought to myself, so I started selling them on Facebook.

All of my earrings sold, so I named myself "Desert Métis" and made a business Instagram.

My name came from receiving "Desert Sage Woman" in my uncle's sweatlodge the year before and it was the perfect encapsulation to describe my childhood in the Mojave desert and my Métis heritage.

Today, in 2023, I bead Métis sash earrings and sew ribbon skirts, but I am also a workshop facilitator for youth and adults who remind me of myself as a teenager. Connecting with my heritage through art has brought me to a recovering space I never thought I could experience, and I run workshops to share my story with people. I have never experienced as much healing in western clinical counselling as I do when I listen to our people's stories. My years of resentment, heartbreak, invisibility, and rage melt away as I finally feel heard. When I gather with others to bead, sew, drum, or sweat, I am full, and I feel beautiful and free for a heavenly short period of time.

Rather than describing our people as experiencing an epidemic of poor mental health, I prefer to describe it as an epidemic of brokenheartedness and culture is key in our rehabilitation.

Hay Hay to my ancestors who led me here, I couldn't have found my periodic peace without it. *



Fellow Traveller

APRIL PILUSO

I looked for peace, but
Tired, fearful, resentful,
I settled for pain.

-

You showed me my part -
Now, willing and accepting,
A peace has found me.



ART SERIES

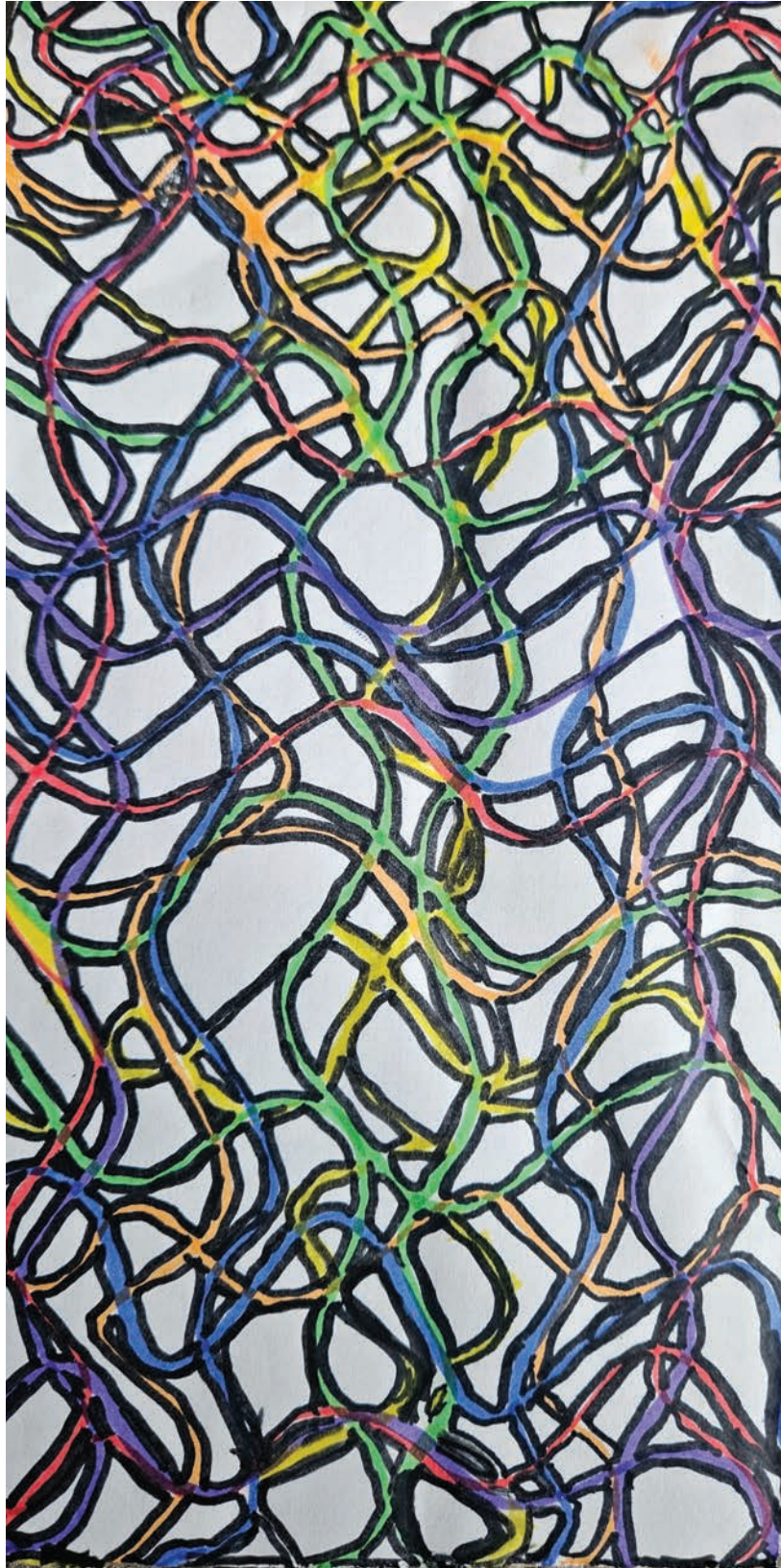
The Love People Need

TYKIEDA BEACH

Content Warning: This piece mentions self harm

Mental Health is important to me because it shows how much love a person needs. You can tell by the way they are behaving how their mental health is doing. For example, someone who is yelling, or feels like harming themselves, and not following their daily routine may need extra love and attention.









Warrior Drum 2

DEBORAH AUGIER

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.

Some don't really want to know the history of our people. Just be happy, be joyful, just be grateful, and forget about the past. How can one forget? How can one be at peace? Their blood runs through ours. What's needed is validation and understanding. Our ancestors want us to know the truth about oppression, poverty, about feeling alone, unworthy, and afraid. Please don't close your heart to the truth of many, so you can stay warm and cozy in ignorance and denial. The voices of so many stay stifled, hidden and lost. Have the courage to speak of them and speak for them.

It's time to become wild with the fire of a warrior. It's time to share our truth even if it hurts and maims. It won't stop until we regain our culture, our recognition, our Métis pride. Our sovereign truth is in front of us, beside us and within. Together we will stand and remember and ease the hearts of many. Our ancestors ask us to fight the good fight, the worthy battles. No more loneliness, no more sorrow, no more tears, no more shame, no more exclusion,

no more poverty, no more deceitfulness. NO MORE FORGOTTEN PEOPLE!

We are stronger together with truth as our shield, and faith as our salve. Stronger than ever, we will reconcile, we will reunite as a nation. A proud Métis Nation once again. We will dance and sing, and play the fiddle. We will hunt for deer, elk, and moose. We will create beadwork for our moccasins. We will reveal the love of our First Nation brothers and sisters and live in harmony with the non-aboriginals.

We must strive to reclaim and reconnect to our culture and we cannot waste any more time or all will be lost and forgotten! We must speak our language of love, forgiveness, and understanding. We are in the process of reclaiming our rights as Métis, wonderful, Métis people. So grateful for our ancestors who endured hardships beyond our imagination. We are their children, healing ourselves, loving ourselves. Much goodness is yet to come. ✱

The Hibernating Bear of Childhood Trauma

ROBERTA FRANTZIS OF NINOSHENH COUNSELING

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.

Overview



The Hibernating Bear of Childhood Trauma

The hibernating bear (bear) of childhood trauma is about exploring the theory that children create a bear to survive trauma. As adults this bear goes into hibernation and still walks with us. It is an Indigenous worldview that has been adapted from Gabor Mate's (2016) "the stupid friend".

The Child's Wisdom

- Something to respond when they are in pain
- Something protective
- Something to help them navigate tough sometimes unimaginable stuff
- Something to show up so they don't feel so alone
- Likely an adult bear is created (A Mama Bear)



The Bear's Purpose



When we feel triggered or have an activation in our system the bear will appear.

It is like they take the steering wheel. We are still there riding passenger but are no longer leading us to the destination.

The reaction comes from the bear. The bear knows us and creates the coping mechanisms we need to survive.



Hibernating as Adults

The bear knows when something familiar from childhood comes up and responds accordingly. Because the bear knows what it was like when we were hurt. It can be aggressive and courageous and survival minded. But the bear doesn't realize we have grown and learned other ways of handling things. And we don't always realize the bear is the one who grabbed the steering wheel.

This bear walks with us at all times and comes out of hibernating when we need it



Coexisting with the Bear

- Recognizing when the Bear shows up
- Acknowledge the bear
- Let the bear know when you got this and they can rest
- Take steps to react without the bear
- Know that you carry the wisdom of the bear and can access it whenever you need it



REFERENCE

Mate, G. (2016, July 16). *Be compassionate towards your "stupid friend"*. Beyond Addiction: Recover Your True Self.

<https://beyondaddiction.ca/2016/07/05/your-stupid-friend/>



Internal Concern

ALETHEA CARRIERE-BLACK



***MEANING** - This painting was originally created to represent the struggles I have gone through with my OCD and how that has affected who I am as a person, but I also believe it represents much more than that. The version of me on the top of the painting shows the inner me, the me who doesn't hold back, who is unapologetically myself and who is free to think and feel what I want. The bottom version of me shows who I am on the outside. It represents how I bottled up all my problems and guard them. It is a mask I put on so that I don't upset others around me.*

Overall, I think this painting shows how these things blend together and make me who I am.



Live Well

KATHLEEN SVEDBERG

In Loving Memory of my Mother

Loretta Rudyk 1969-2022

Live well she said, taking my hand
Life has a way of changing plans
Be proud of who you are, this much is true
My baby you are, you'll always pull through

Live well when you're down and feeling low
Be kind to yourself, leave room to grow
You can't do it all, there's no shame in that
One step at a time, you'll never fall flat

Live well when you're scared and can't find your way
Tomorrow will come, don't paint your sky grey
There's so much to learn, don't ever say you can't
Let my love and pride for you be your constant

Live well she said, her hand still pressed in mine
I know you worry but all will be fine
Live without fear, let nothing stand in your way
You only get one shot, don't do it halfway



Reflection on Resilience

JOCELYN COUPLAND

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.

You are so resilient.” This phrase is a compliment, meant to recognize the strength it takes to overcome difficult challenges. However, it doesn’t have the same feeling of accomplishment as being told, “You are so talented,” or, “Your makeup looks incredible today.” Why is that? Honing a talent requires skill and dedication. But what about being resilient?

When I was going through a period of intense chaos during my university education, I wanted to scream in the middle of the campus. I didn’t, of course, and people praised me for keeping a positive attitude. I kept wondering why it was so impressive that I was simply gritting my teeth and bearing it. Survival doesn’t feel like anything special when all your focus is on getting through each day.

And yet, persisting is what resilience is. We all have different ways of coping, and some of us have

more experience with it than others. Sometimes, coping strategies that worked for one challenge don’t work for another, and we have to figure out something new. As we endure frustration and pain, we also strive to present some sort of face to the world. What do we choose to tell people? Are we enduring through spite? Are we distracting ourselves by keeping busy with friends?

During my parade of academic challenges, I hid the true toll the stress had on me by wrapping each new disaster in the guise of a crazy story. Every time I told the tale, it felt like I regained some control over my life, and the reactions of shock and empathy from the people around me confirmed that my circumstances were not normal. And yet, the concern of my listeners brushed against something I hated to admit — I was hurting, under the humour I was using to disguise my pain.

There is a piece of wisdom I have heard that part of the process of forgiveness is having to admit that you have been hurt. It sounds obvious, but to truly examine what you have lost can bring up uncomfortable memories. Facing your pain forces you to feel it again at some level. Resilience is the same. To be a resilient person means that you have been hurt. To move forward requires some acknowledgement of the suffering, otherwise the wound festers.

Thankfully, I had people with whom I could share my genuine feelings. But as my school experience flew further off the rails, it started to feel like it was an inevitable part of my identity that more and more problems would affect me, and seemingly only me, during my program. The classmates who should have been able to relate to me the most were having wonderful times of growth and encouragement. Among my peers, it was a very lonely experience.

Praising resiliency praises the tenacity that people must keep going, even in dire straits. And yet, as we suffer, it can feel as though we aren't allowed to break down and reveal our true feelings. Between two people trying and failing at a difficult task, who would you be more likely to be described as resilient? The person who keeps cracking jokes, or the person who can't stop crying?

It's a trick question. There's no way to tell based only on those two factors. Maybe the jokester is only using jokes to deflect attention and has decided they will never complete the task; maybe the sobbing person will brush off their jeans and then try again.

My peers recognized my ability to present a professional attitude in the midst of turmoil by

dubbing me "Most resilient" of the graduating class. I still laugh when I share this detail. Really, I wish I could have been recognized for my passion for the arts rather than for pushing through adversity that I didn't feel I had any control over.

Even though their recognition was a celebration of my persistence, it was also a reminder of pain I had endured. I told people about my terrible experiences (sometimes with some dramatic flourishes to make the stories feel more palatable) and received empathy and sympathy. Unfortunately, the telling didn't restore what was lost. Always hovering around the stories... was grief.

That's the truly hard part, isn't it? Trying again and again, despite how much everything sucks. In my many difficult and sometimes bizarre challenges, I have learned that the power of a resilient mindset lies in the acknowledgement that this world is broken, pain will come, and we can get through it anyway.

Resilience is a valuable skill that I wish I didn't need. To be resilient is to be a mess, to feel like nothing will be normal again, to live with challenges every day, and to persist. I have definitely used humour in the past to mask the truth of my feelings. But laughing at our pain is a way to cope, and provides hope that one day, we will be able to share our stories for the purpose of entertainment and joy. *



Book Review:

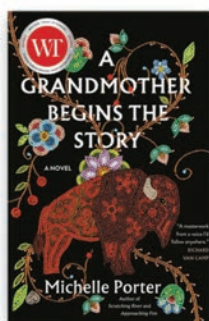
A Grandmother Begins the Story

NEVADA LYNN

One of the most encouraging things you can do on the path to reclaiming Métis identity is to read Métis authors. Curled up in the comfort of your own home reading the thoughtful words of another Métis person is both heartwarming and life affirming. Every once in a while, an author comes along with a truly innovative approach to literature. Michelle Porter is that author and if we use this book as an indicator, she is Métis to the marrow of her bones. *A Grandmother Begins the Story* is a fantastic read that will win awards, if it hasn't already.

Told from the perspective of five generations of Métis women, this brilliant work of fiction also gives voice to the land, bison, dogs, and even a car! Providing a fresh and distinctly Indigenous perspective, *A Grandmother Begins the Story* tackles many topics, identity and belonging among them.

An excerpt from the book tells of when a disconnected bison named Dee turns away when she is invited to run with the herd. A natural loner,



she initially declines until she feels the drumming of the hooves reverberating in her own heart, then the power of the herd running in unison envelops her:

Oh and they were stunning, all of them together. They were spilling around trees, flowing around the corners of the fences, lapping at the boundaries to see if the fences would really hold them all in. Dee had never run like this. She had never felt like this. She ran until she couldn't run anymore, until they all stopped, gasping, and leaning against each other, holding each other up. There were cows pressed against every part of her. The starlings dropped back down to cover their backs. She looked up and saw a flock of geese in a V-formation winging it across the sky. I know how they feel, she thought (pp. 66-67).

This beautiful book speaks poetically and poignantly about what it means to be disconnected from community and weaves a path forward for the most disheartened among us. You will read this book and swell with Métis pride. Don't wait! ✱

Reference: Porter, M. (2023). *A Grandmother Begins the Story*. Penguin Random House LTD.

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/711054/a-grandmother-begins-the-story-by-michelle-porter/9780735245372>

On Becoming a Mother

APRIL PILUSO

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 discusses pregnancy, birth, eating disorder, generalized anxiety disorder

It was just after seven in the morning on an idle Saturday. My watch began to vibrate, signaling the end of a 5-minute timer. I casually glanced to my right: two pink lines had emerged on the pregnancy test.

This was the start of my Matrescence: the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual journey of becoming a mother. I had heard from other women what pregnancy might be like but my own lived experience of being with child was a curious mix of magical and absurd.

As a woman with a generalized anxiety disorder, I knew going into pregnancy that I would need lots of support. I sought professional help to manage my fear resulting from the lack of control over my body and over the child growing inside me. I started practicing prenatal yoga to connect to my body, to my values, and to grow confidence in my voice both as a woman and as a new mother. I engaged a midwifery team that was sensitive to the needs of Indigenous women. I was open to pursuing the assistance of a doula for birth coaching. I started





asking for more help as movement became difficult, and I proactively asked friends and family to provide help and nourishment in alignment with my medical food plan for after baby's arrival.

There were challenges throughout the pregnancy: recurring nausea, physical exhaustion, emotional turbulence, body soreness, bouts of forgetfulness, my changing social identity, unsolicited advice,

non-consensual touching, bombardment by food cravings while living with an eating disorder... the list goes on. Peppered throughout these trials were delights: the unrivaled awe at growing new life inside me, feeling my baby girl move for the first time, seeing her yawn mid-ultrasound, reclaiming my power as a woman, growing my understanding of indigenous cultural practices around pregnancy



and birthing, developing a new appreciation to and connection with my own mother, celebrating new life with friends and family, etc.

In the days leading up to my daughter's birth I experienced a large amount of physical discomfort and increased anxiety, preoccupied with the pending pain of childbirth. A friend of mine reflected upon her own pregnancies and shared something with

me. "I know it's hard and you just want it to be over, but hear me when I say this: enjoy these last days of being pregnant," she said. "You'll never be pregnant with this baby ever again."

The birth of my daughter did not go as planned. We didn't make it to the hospital; we never even left the house. Thankfully, the midwives were able to come to us. Being in the experience, I don't have

a full recollection of that night but I do remember some things. I remember the birth progressing too quickly for my body to get used to the sensations. I remember increasing the L-Tens unit to its highest setting to counteract the pain of contractions. I remember involuntary movements and instinct taking over. I remember the most intense pain of my life. I also remember that I trusted the professionals around me. I remember that I trusted my body. I remember bringing myself back to focusing on deep breath and to even deeper sound-making. I remember the sweet release of it being over, and I remember my surprise when handed my baby girl to hold for the first time. I remember, in disbelief and joy, repeatedly saying, “She’s here!” I remember how small her hands were, how she flailed and whined. I remember feeling both physically depleted and emotionally full at the same time.

Today, my baby girl turns 6 months old. She has a bright personality that develops a little bit more each day. She can’t sit up yet, is easily distracted while nursing, and is still measuring much smaller than most other babies her age. At times she is inconsolable, or shrieks with delight, or makes sounds reminiscent of a small dinosaur. I am amazed by how time both stands still and flies by.

Some days I can’t stop looking at her; other days I am touched-out and ask her father to take her as soon as he walks through the door. I reserve Wednesday nights for myself to ride my bike and

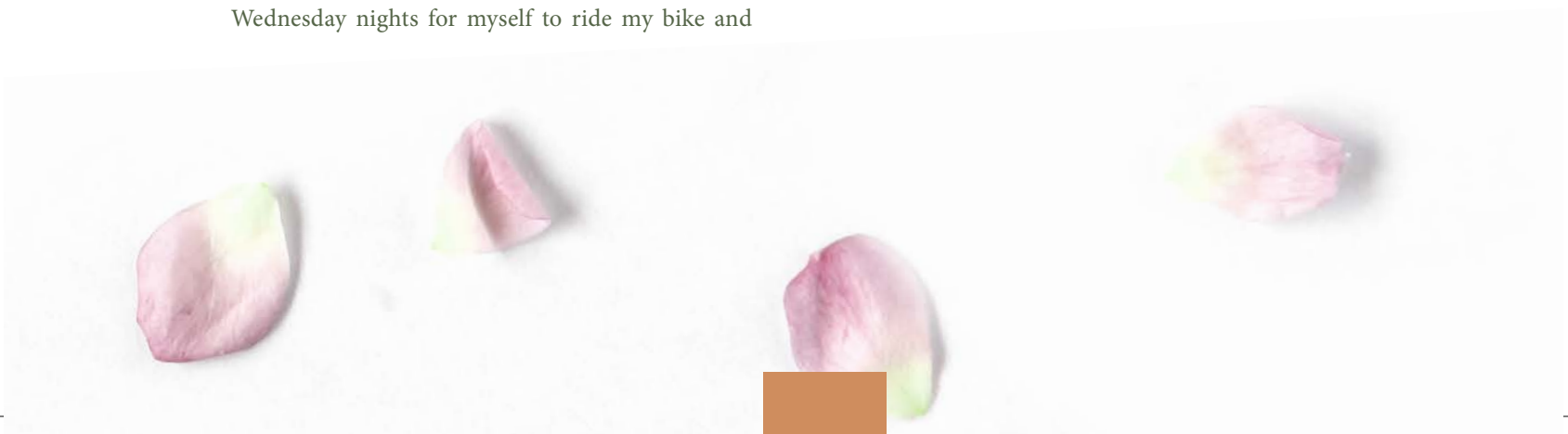
attend yoga class. I’m delighted that she’s babbling, and I grieve that she is growing so fast. I watch TV too much, distracting from the overexertion I feel both physically and emotionally. I overeat at times to numb myself from repeatedly failing to meet my own expectations. I am challenged a little bit differently every single day.

My journey of matresence continues as I navigate the challenges, joys, and complexities of raising a little one. I am grateful that I have photographs of my pregnant self and a print of our shared placenta - the organ that literally connected me to my daughter and kept her needs met for 40 weeks. I am grateful that our Doula captured those first few moments together as a new family. I look at these every so often, recalling the memories and the feelings in both my mind and my body.

I am grateful for it all. I am exhausted from it all. I am open to what comes next. ✱

Image 1: a first-time pregnant Métis woman, wearing a white lace dress, rests contently in a milk bath with flowers floating around her while she tenderly cradles her large baby bump.

Image 2: a colourful, framed placental art print; made using food colouring and a washed placenta following the birth of a baby.



Mindful Beading

DARCY SENDER

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 mentions anxiety and disruptive thoughts.



Mindfulness is a method of meditation that includes awareness of what you are feeling and sensing at the moment. It is a relaxation technique that I use to keep myself from anxiety attacks or disruptive thoughts. I named my piece 'Mindful Beading' because I do my digital art to keep my mind at peace, while focusing only on the beadwork design I am creating. I choose to design in Métis beadwork motifs to grow my connection to my culture, as I am continually reaching out to discover more.

Resilient Roots: Issue Four 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 the magazine,
please email mpadley@mnbc.ca*



NEVADA LYNN

Nevada Lynn is an interdisciplinary artist and activist studying Visual Art at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. She gratefully lives and works on the shared unceded territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation and the Lilwat7úl Nation and leverages her creative practice to serve in the realms of social and climate justice. Nevada is a citizen of the Métis Nation of British Columbia.

WEBSITE: nevadalynn.com

INSTAGRAM: [@nevadacreates](https://www.instagram.com/nevadacreates)



PAUL ARTHUR

Taanshi relatives my name is Paul Arthur. I'm humbled and honoured to be in this beautiful magazine with all these amazing Métis writers/poets. It is beautiful for all our voices to come together. I am a 2nd generation former ministry child and adopted out. I also have learning challenges and am Neurodivergent. I grew up on the traditional territories of the Namgis, Kwakiutl and Nisga'a peoples. I currently am once again a guest on the lands where I was born, on the traditional territories of the Komox First Nation, of the Sahtloot, Sasitla, Ieeksun and Puntlepe peoples. I am grateful to work in SD 71 as an Indigenous Support Worker. I have many Métis family names and a few are LaRiviere, Nault, Roy, St Germain and Lagimodiere. Marsee.



ALEXA LIZOTTE

Alexa Lizotte is an urban, mixed Métis artist who shares her story of reclaiming her Métis identity through her beadwork, sewing, and educational opportunities. She wishes to share her story of overcoming shame, displacement, and intergenerational trauma to inspire young people to do this work sooner than she was able to, and to be proud of who they are. Alexa comes from North Vermilion Settlement (Buttertown), Fort Vermilion, AB, a small Métis community in Northern Alberta on her father's side. She also has mixed German and anglo-settler ancestry on her mother's side. Her father attended Boyer River Indian Day School and she stands tall and proud to reclaim her Métis practices.



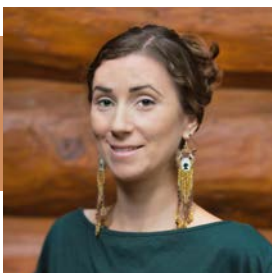
DEBORAH AUGIER

Deborah is a Métis citizen, and a mother of two adult children. She resides in Vancouver on the unceded and traditional Coast Salish territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. Deborah was raised in Wabamun Lake, Alberta, Treaty Six region by her Cree and Iroquois mother and Métis WWII Veteran father, along with eight siblings. She has written a collection of poetry entitled "When the Sun Turned Dark" and is seeking publication. Deborah is a Métis Dancer with V'ni Dansi, a traditional Métis and contemporary dance company dedicated to sharing the dances, stories and culture of the Métis.



KAYLA CARSON

Kayla is of Métis and European background, with ancestral and colonial roots throughout BC where she was born and raised. Kayla has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a New Media and Freelance Journalism Certificate from Simon Fraser University. Along with her sister Kira, she runs a blog where their creative writing can be found. Kayla and her growing family live in Golden BC where with her husband they own and operate a restaurant, bar and live music venue. Her favourite things to write about are the controversial, uncomfortable, empowering and enlightening - often with added humour.



ROBERTA FRANTZIS

Roberta Frantzis is Anishnabe from Saugeen and Neyaashiinigmiiing and Cree/Métis from the Red River and Moose Factory, as well as European heritage. She has been in the helping profession for over 20 years. As a registered Social Worker (RSW), a Mama of two boys, and a fierce Auntie, Roberta started a practice called Ninoshenh (Auntie) Counseling. Her passion for working with people started with the Youth. They have always had a special place in her heart. All of her work with caregivers is in the support of a better tomorrow for our Youth from now and many generations from now.



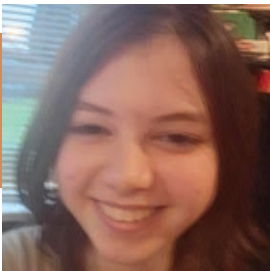
KATHLEEN SVEDBERG

Kathleen gratefully acknowledges that the land in which she resides is located on Tkemlúps te Secwépemc territory within the unceded ancestral lands of the Secwépemc Nation, Secwepemcúlecw (colonially known as Kamloops). Kathleen is of Métis descent on her maternal side and much of her extended family still resides in southwestern Manitoba today. Some of her family names are Zastre, Larocque, Leclair, Parisien, Riel, Sydor and Zaleski. Kathleen and her husband, Trevor, have four young children: Noah, Benjamin and twins Emerance and Lily. Kathleen is passionate about promoting and helping others connect with their Métis culture. She can often be found at events and workshops offered by her local chartered community – Two Rivers Métis Society. Kathleen holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from Thompson Rivers University. In her spare time, she enjoys writing poetry and, more recently, short stories.



JOCELYN COUPLAND

Jocelyn Coupland loves writing, reading, and bird watching. Having lived all across BC, she has gained an appreciation for how diverse the province is. From the temperate rain forests of the coast to the desert regions in the interior, these lands are stunning, and Jocelyn loves keeping an eye open for the birds that call these places home. While the rain or snow may seem intimidating, all sorts of creatures come out to frolic in these conditions. She believes that a little discomfort is worth it when you get to catch sight of frogs or bald eagles!



TYKIEDA BEACH

I am a Two Spirit Métis, some of my family names are McMillan, Dumas, Hogue, Ducharme. I am in high school, and Art is my passion. My goal is to pursue an education in Art after high-school.



ALETHEA CARRIERE-BLACK



DARCY SENGER

Darcy Senger is a Métis Citizen of Métis Nation British Columbia. She lives in West Kelowna with her wife and dog, and spends her free time creating digital art to keep her anxiety and at bay. Darcy has been a graphic designer for over 25 years, and enjoys working with MNBC on projects like Resilient Roots in order to feel connected to her heritage and culture.



BENJAMIN PENHALE-WILSON



Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee Members

The Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee 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 Committee have been credited previously on the Contributors page. Furthermore, not all members of the Initiative have chosen to be acknowledged in this magazine.



APRIL PILUSO

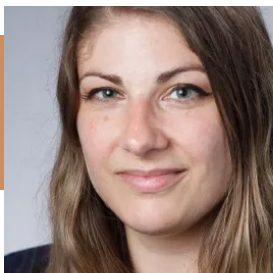
April is a first-time mother who lives with both binge-eating disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. She has spent the past 8 years growing through her personal challenges by using therapeutic counselling, 12-step groups, and various forms of creative expression. While she has made significant progress she knows no one ever 'finishes' this important work.



IESHA HENDERSON

Iesha is a Métis citizen from Vancouver and currently resides on the unceded and traditional territories of the Kázie, Kwántlén, and Semíhamoo people. She is in Year 4 of a Bachelor in Psychology degree with the goal of obtaining a Masters in Social Work, specializing in Indigenous Trauma and Resilience. Iesha works in the community focusing on substance use, harm reduction, and peer initiatives. Iesha values her involvement in the Mental Health and Wellness Initiative and the additional cultural connection it has brought to her life.





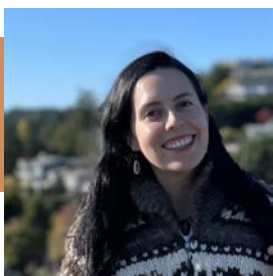
KATY CARSON

Taanishi kiyawow, Katy Carson dishiniikashoon. My family names are Delorme, Vivier, Pierce, Ross, Short, and Thibault and I have family connections to Duck Lake, SK and Saint Francois Xavier, MB. My grandma hid our Métis identity from our family for a long time, so I did not know that I am Métis until I was about 20. It wasn't until my early 30's, with great encouragement from some dear Coast Salish Elders and Mentors, that I really dug into what this identity means for me. I started learning Michif, signed up for every cultural workshop I could get my hands on, and started to ground myself in this identity. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to give back to the Métis community by contributing to this resource and working group.



LOGAN BURD

Logan Burd (she/her) is a proud Métis Citizen of Métis Nation British Columbia, with mixed Blackfoot, Cree, and European ancestry. Logan's Métis family names include Bird, Smith, Allard, and Boucher. She is honoured to have grown up and currently resides on the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Peoples, colonially known as Kelowna, BC. Logan is a first-year PhD student in Interdisciplinary Studies - Community Engagement, Social Change, Equity Theme at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. Her doctoral research will focus on centering Métis youth voices in community-driven and culturally responsive research approaches to promote and amplify Métis youth mental wellness and life promotion. Logan is deeply grateful to be involved and a member of the Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee.



MARINA BEST

Marina Best is a Métis citizen dedicated to the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge systems and their leadership in conservation planning and environmental policy processes. She supports all persons to have personal (re)connections and relationships with Mother Earth and affirms the connection of health and wellness to the lands, waters, and air that sustain us. Her life and career have focused on advancing Indigenous-led conservation and Indigenous environmental priorities. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, an MSc and an MA in European Studies, and as an Indigenous woman, uses this knowledge to bridge Indigenous and western worldviews.



MICHELLE PADLEY

Taanishi, Michelle Padley dishiniikaashoon (Hello, my name is Michelle Padley). I am a Métis Citizen of Métis Nation British Columbia living with gratitude within Secwépemc'ulucw, the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc Peoples. I am a proud mother to two little ones who I am so grateful to be bringing up within Métis culture. I join this work as the Provincial Programs Manager for the Ministry of Mental Health and Harm Reduction at Métis Nation BC. My background is in nursing where I have over 13 years of experience supporting youth, families, and adults in their mental health journey. I also work closely with the BC Indigenous Health Nursing Research Chair to advocate for and move forward Indigenous Knowledges. I have recently completed a Master of Nursing at Thompson Rivers University where my research focused on understanding youth mental wellness from Métis Elders' perspectives.



QUINN B

Quinn was born and raised in Prince Rupert. Since 2015 he has been living in Victoria, and he is currently in his final year of medical school. Quinn will be continuing his medical training to become a Pathologist. He has been part of this initiative for several years and is excited to see what kind of work may progress in the future.



RIPLEY BURD

Taanishi Ripley Burd dishinihkaashoon (Hello my name is Ripley Burd)

Ripley Burd is a proud Métis Citizen of Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), with mixed Blackfoot, Cree, and European ancestry. They are honoured to have grown up and live on the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Peoples, colonially known as Kelowna, BC. She is a member of the Métis Chartered Community, the Kelowna Métis Association.

She has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO) in 2021. Before joining MNBC as a Mental Health Navigator, Ripley worked within the community at the John Howard Society as a Community Support Worker and Tenant Support worker with CMHA. As a Métis youth, woman, and community member, Ripley is actively involved with her community as a founding member and now co-facilitator of the Métis Mental Health and Wellness Committee.

Through her experience working in her community, Ripley has developed a passion for supporting those in her community so that the communities' voices are being heard, shared, and supported.



SYDNEY L

Sydney is Cree and Métis on her father's side and a member of the Métis Nation of British Columbia. She currently is very grateful to reside on the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. She completed her BSc with a major in Health Sciences and minor in Indigenous studies at SFU in 2021. She is currently a first year medical student in UBC's MD program. She is an avid beadworker and lover of plants and books. She is passionate about Indigenous health and well-being, and has been a member of the Métis Mental Health and Wellness Initiative since the summer of 2023. She looks forward to continuing to work with the amazing members of the committee.





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



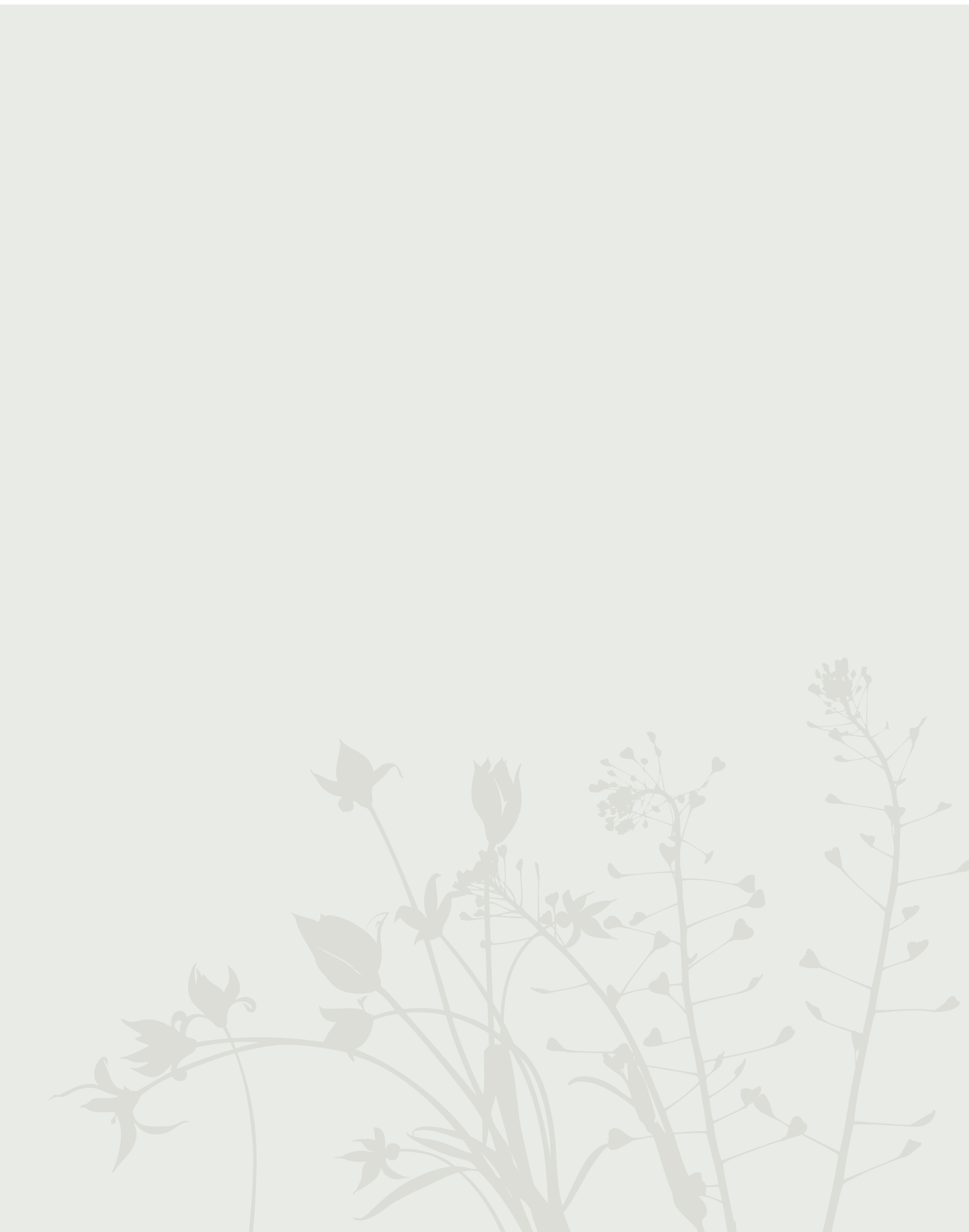
1-833-MÉTISBC

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



in collaboration with KUU-US Crisis Services







PICTURED:

*Kaija Heitland, Sheena Gering, Arlene Vrtar-Huot, Lisa Shepherd,
Carly Nabess, Jean Teillet, Colleen Lucier,
Brittany Bertrand, Pixie Wells, Justine Dion-Glowa, Amanda Spotted Fawn Strong, Moe Clark*