



# THRIVING SPIRITS

MÉTIS PERSPECTIVES ON WELLNESS

AUTUMN 2025

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## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

# TAANISHI!

*EDITOR'S MESSAGE: 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.*

Taanishi! We feel deeply honoured to be sharing with you the first issue of *Thriving Spirits: Métis Perspectives on Wellness Magazine*.

Previously titled, Resilient Roots, this magazine was developed by the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative in 2019, with four issues released yearly from 2020 - 2024. In 2023, the Métis Youth Mental Health and Wellness Initiative decided to diversify into two groups highlighting the vast needs of Métis youth of different age ranges. This division led to the creation of the Atooshkayahk aansaamb chi kiikayhk (working together to heal) Committee supporting community members aged 25-35 and the Métis Youth Aansaamb ni wiichihitonaan (helping together) Committee supporting Métis youth aged 15-25. We give thanks to Michif Elder Norman Fleury and MNBC's Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Language for the Michif translation and confirmation of our committee names.

Last year, our committee made the decision to focus on the spirit, strength, and growth of the Métis People in BC with the new title *Thriving Spirits: Métis Perspectives on Wellness*. In this and future issues, we 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. *Thriving Spirits* is 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, interviews, and poetry.

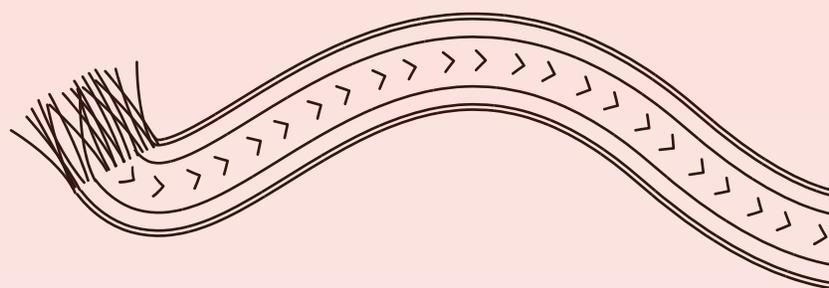
Some topics around mental health can feel heavier – but this does not mean that these stories should not be told. Be mindful of your own boundaries as you are taking in this magazine. If you need to take a moment to practice self-care and connect with your supports, please do. If you find yourself needing 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 Atooshkayahk aansaamb chi kiikayhk (working together to heal) Committee



## MINISTER'S MESSAGE

# WELCOME



Taanish, it is my honour to introduce the first issue of *Thriving Spirits: Métis Perspectives on Wellness Magazine*. Building on the spirit of Resilient Roots, this new publication continues to uplift community voices and is rooted in the themes of miyooayaan (wellness), la Saantii (health), and Shakamohta (connection) as they speak to mental health in our Métis communities. Mental health challenges continue to affect Métis People in significant ways. Yet alongside these struggles, the enduring strengths of culture, belonging, and community shine brightly. Métis knowledge reminds us that when we come together through community-based approaches, we nurture pathways toward wellness. The vision of Thriving Spirits is shaped by the principle of Kaa-wiichihitoyaahk, which teaches us that “we take care of each other.” This magazine carries that teaching forward, offering a reflection of the inherent strength, growth, and creativity that live within our communities. Every page is made possible by the voices and contributions of Métis community members across BC, and we are deeply thankful for the generosity and wisdom they share. This publication has been supported by the ongoing dedication of the Atooshkayahk aansaamb chi kiikayhk (working together to heal) Committee. I am truly grateful for this remarkable group and their commitment to lifting up Métis ways of knowing, being, and doing.

To our readers, we hope these stories bring connection, inspiration, and a gentle sense of the collective strength that surrounds us all. This magazine is an offering, a gathering place, and a reminder of the sacred threads that weave us together. Each story, reflection, and teaching carried here has been gifted by community, to community. May this magazine serve as a virtual fire to gather around, where you are held in the circle of kinship.

Pishshapmishko (take care),

Danielle Bergevin

Minister of Mental Health and Harm Reduction  
Métis Nation BC

# MÉTIS HAND DRUM AND BURNING SAGE

MEGAN FLAMAND

*For many Indigenous people, the drum holds deep spiritual significance. It is used as a way to connect with our Ancestors, Mother Earth, and the Creator. The rhythms of the drum reflect the heartbeat of the Earth, and when played during ceremonies or gatherings, they signify unity and strength.*

*Sage is one of the Four Sacred Medicines. When it is lit, it creates a “smudge,” a sacred smoke used to cleanse the body, mind, spirit, and soul. This smoke has healing and purifying properties. When used together in ceremonies—such as the sweat lodge—the drum and sage promote healing and help bring participants and community closer to the Creator.*



# UNDERSTANDING OUR EMOTIONS

GARY TÊTU

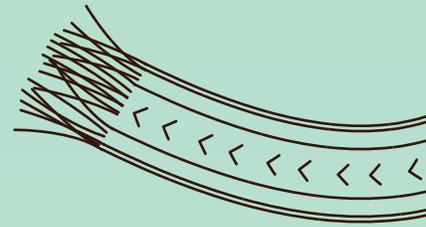
My greatest opponent in life has been depression and sudden rage due to my lack of emotional intelligence and regulation. I realized to defeat my enemy I had to first accept it then understand it and learn exactly how it operates and attacks.

I came to the conclusion that men are often taught or told not to be emotional. Not to be angry. Not to be vulnerable. Often victim to toxic views from other older male mentors and idolized figures telling us such phrases as "suck it up buttercup" or "I'll give you something to cry about" or "you baby/sissy" etc.

Many times, holding back frustration and disappointment and anger until it becomes unnoticed resentment and/or rage and is usually released in a sudden and unmanageable form of unnecessary and unhealthy "over the top" amounts. Sometimes towards others and most times unknowingly towards ourselves. This often adds to our shame and denial of our own responsibility in our anger and compounds our inability to feel pride in ourselves and in our actions and affects our ability to be vulnerable and share our innermost feelings. We can get caught in a cycle of being the victim or the hero in a situation but not being able to admit any villainous actions from ourselves due to that not wanting to pile on more shame. Likely carrying an all or nothing type thinking where we have to be perfect and if not, we are failing. We lose trust in ourselves due to not knowing how to regulate healthy dialogue and we avoid healthy conflict resolution for lack of useful and appropriate acquired skills. It's often seemingly impossible for men to find supportive community to discuss and learn the importance of these skills and importance of our emotional health and our spiritual health and the regulation of either and not shutting ourselves off to the outside world when struggling for fear of judgement or seeming weak or "crazy". We need to understand that anger is indeed a healthy emotion when regulated properly. But it's about being the "right amount of angry at the right people for the right things for the right amount of time" and not attaching any prior frustration or resentment or disappointment to something so simple as someone cutting you off in traffic or calling us an undeserved name, etc. etc., and having an unreasonable reaction instead of a healthy response. Many of us struggle with this vicious cycle until we understand the importance of our ability and reward to unlearn this and learn and implement new techniques towards that regulation. Life can change greatly for the better at that point for ourselves and everyone around us in the present and in the future. But we have to trust that we can do it and most importantly that we are worth it.

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*CONTENT WARNING: This piece references bullying, rage, and depression*





AN INTERVIEW WITH

# RITA JASPER

*Rita Jasper is a Métis author who grew up in Jasper, Alberta. She writes stories from her own lived experiences with a focus on mental health and wellness. Rita enjoys writing stories, painting and drawing with themes of rising above personal challenges. She explains that when she writes, she gets into character to write "... from my characters' perspective. As an actor, I can use their words to get into their story - but when I'm writing, I can't do that because I'm creating the words, so I put myself into character to find the words." In Thriving Spirits: Métis Perspectives on Wellness Issue 1, Rita shares a chapter from her upcoming book titled Mary and her Métis Grandma.*

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*CONTENT WARNING: This piece references death and substance use*

pink cowboy hat, Mr. Jiggs, a fiddle player and of course, the main character, Mary. They all struggle with mental health, trauma or PTSD. I think it is important to know that you can have mental health challenges and still live a productive life. You can also find that your struggles awaken strengths such as artistic abilities.

**Q // Given our aim for the magazine, what is something you would like to share?**

I appreciate that this magazine is about strength and mental health. The chapter I have chosen for the magazine highlights healing. The character, Mary, is based on my life experiences, highlighting some of my challenges and perseverance. Paying attention to our mental health is important to help us be strong. What one person does to be healthy is different from person to person. Hence, the phrase, "one shoe doesn't fit everyone". Not only are each of us unique, so are the situations we find ourselves in. We need to tailor solutions accordingly. In my book, there is this veteran who wears a

**Q // What does Thriving Spirits mean to you?**

When you're in a really hard place, it's important to hang in there and keep doing what you can to make our world better. It's helpful to know what makes you feel better. For me, that can be writing, painting, eating healthy, and hiking in nature. When I was young, I would hike, draw, and tell stories - and then go and tell my mom about it. Even if you don't think you are writing or sketching something great, it is great because it is an expression of you in that moment. Hang in there, it might get worse before it gets better, but it will get better. Try to focus on the positive. We can be there together to help each other.



**Q // What allowed you to thrive in your experiences?**

When you're healing, sometimes you heal forever, sometimes things just change. Things don't happen overnight; they take time. One of the teachings I have received is about the circle of life. Through the circle of Life, I learned that hurting another or not being kind to myself hurts me as well because we are all connected through the Circle of Life. The circle is important because together we are strong. You have a circle around you when you wear a skirt, for example. Skirts represent this strength and protection. If you do not wear skirts, you can also wear a bracelet or necklace to remind you that you are a part of the Circle of Life.

**Q // Do you have any advice or good words for Métis youth?**

Sometimes you feel all alone, like nobody cares. That is valid because that is how you feel, but if you can just weather out the storm and hang in there, you will find people who love you. It may not be your relatives; it might be a stranger who becomes your friend. I talk about street moms and street dads in the book. A couple of the characters live houseless – some people have better relationships with their street families than they do with their biological families. What's important is that they understand you and do not judge you.

You will find people who care about you. One thing I do to care for myself is: when something is happening, I ask myself, my inner child, would I allow my inner child to be spoken to or treated

like that. If the answer is no, then I would reduce my contact with that person as much as possible and find people who are nice to me.

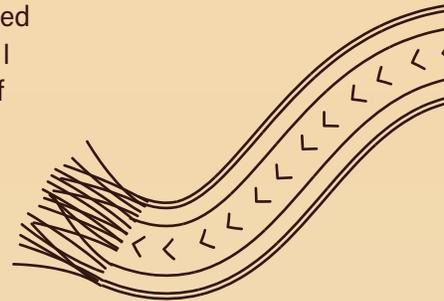
**Q // Reflecting on your book chapter, what messaging does your story give that might help others be a thriving spirit when times are tough?**

The book can be very intense, so I have balanced it out with some humour and fantasy. Mary and Grandma teasing each other provides levity throughout the book. Their humorous relationship gives some balance while Mary deals with her mom's premature death.

In addition, there is a crow and a hawk who are united as a ghostly mutant. Because their relatives didn't understand how these two could be friends and engage in an interspecies relationship, they cursed the crow and hawk. The curse charged them with finding a fiddle stolen by an Indian Agent. They had to return it to the rightful owner.

**Q // What message does your book chapter have about self-care and the connection between culture and wellness?**

I like going for nature walks. I used to walk from home to work, and I would choose a path with lots of cats and dogs so I could visit them along the way. Besides walking, swimming improves my mood as well. Listening to certain music,



painting, writing and talking to a friend or elder can improve my mood. When I went to a Métis women's meeting, I met people with similar experiences, which was quite comforting. I read a section of my book there, because I thought they needed to hear it. In the section, I share "In this dream, Mom told me, 'Do not be afraid of death. Yes, the physical departure from life can be hard, but once your spirit and soul are free from Earth's pull, the liberation is magnificent.' In the book, there are images of nature. Keep going to as many workshops as you can and align yourself with people who share the same interests or with people who are engaged in a hobby you're interested in. For example, I want to meet beaders because I enjoy beading.

**Q // What is next for you?**

I am currently working on more painting, along with another writing project. The next book is a romantic murder mystery. It's about a Métis girl who is living in the 1950s-1960s. Her mom and stepdad moved from the roadside allowance to Vancouver.

They end up living houseless, and her mother uses substances. The little girl's uncle, a travelling musician, sees the poor living conditions and takes his niece back to the safety of the roadside allowance community to live

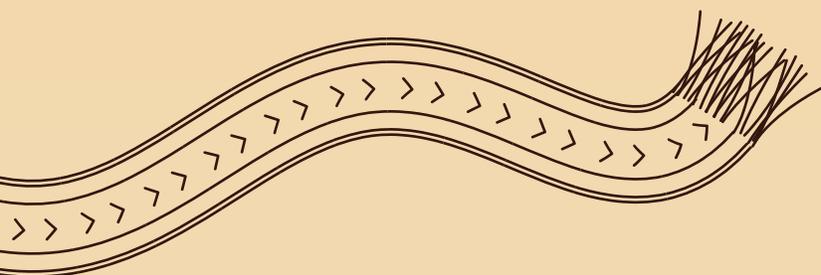


with her grandma. Both Uncle and Grandma share many traditional teachings.

This story will have a happy ending. It was prepared as a screen and radio play but is now being converted into a book.

Learn more about Mary and her Métis Grandma:

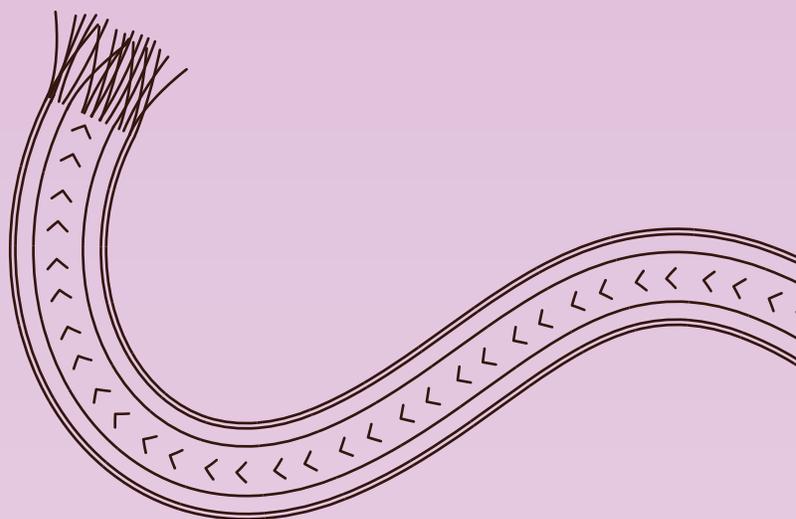
**<https://ritajasperart.com/category/mary-and-her-metis-grandma/>**



# SWEET KAHKAKIW

BETSY LULU

Don't fear my dark feathers,  
I am here to protect you.  
Oh dear one, I the raven have come.  
Honoring beautiful traditions, on sacred  
ground, the spirits of our ancestors are all around.  
Forever I will be your gentle raven,  
flying high above these glorious lands.  
Dancing in the moonlight  
taking flight deep into the night.  
As I soar high above the trees,  
my magical journey leads me toward daylight.  
Your light.  
I will always protect you, your children  
and the generations to come.

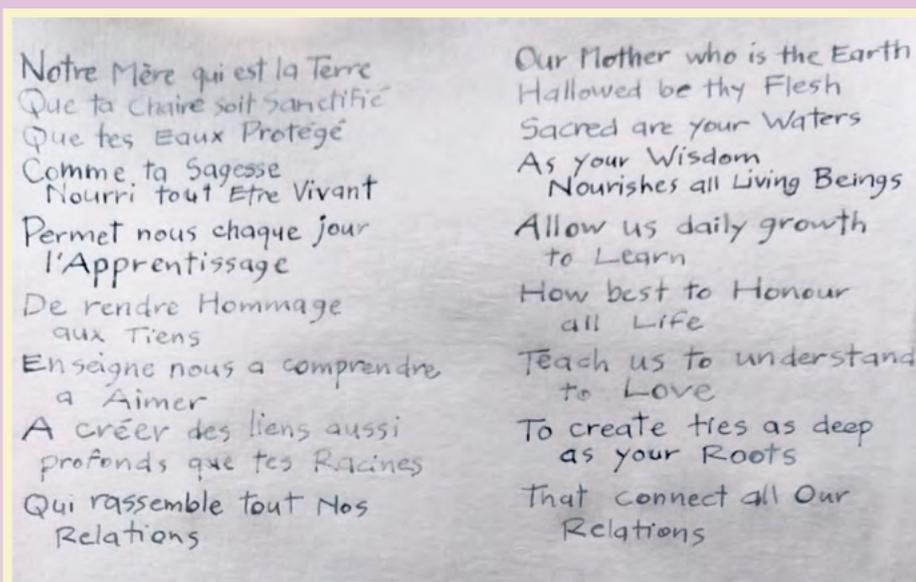


# ONE EARTH, ALL LOVE

LORRAINE LUCIE HNIDAN-KENDALL

Notre Mère qui Est la Terre  
Que ta Chair Soit Sanctifiée  
Sacrées Sont tes Eaux,  
Comme ta Sagesse Nourrit tous Êtres Vivants  
Permet Nous Chaque Jours l'Apprentissage  
À Honorer au Mieux toute Vie  
Apprends-Nous à Comprendre, à Aimer  
A Créer des Liens aussi Profonds que Tes Racines  
**Qui Unissent Toutes Nos Relations**

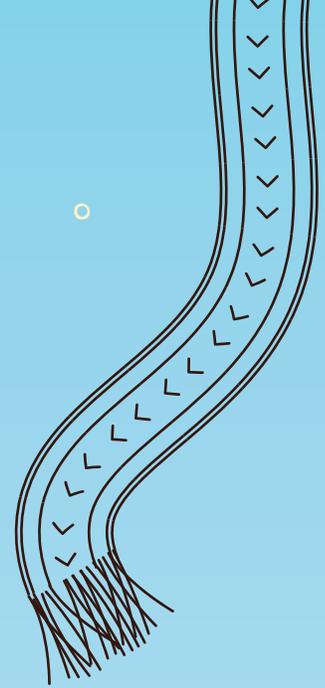
Our Mother who is the Earth  
Hallowed be thy Flesh  
Sacred are your Waters  
As your Wisdom Nourishes all Living Beings  
Allow daily Growth to Learn  
How best to Honour all Life  
Teach us to Understand to Love  
To Create Ties as Deep as your Roots  
**That Connect all Our Relations**

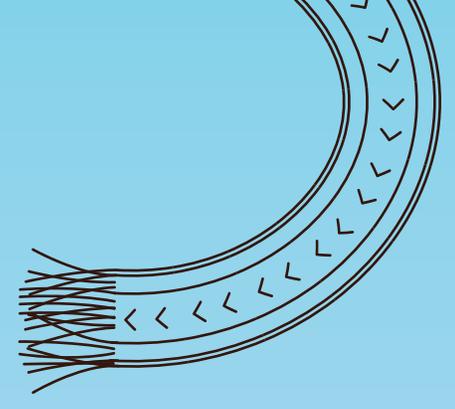




# EVERY LIVING BEING PT.1

LORRAINE LUCIE HNIDAN-KENDALL





# SEASONAL WELLNESS

**KIMBERLY HAYEK**

*"To keep a strong mental health, after a serious accident, I picked up a camera to capture the Métis."*

*The Sash is a way to identify the Métis. Weaved by the women it originally had three colors. The Sash was a tool used for many things from buffalo hunts, carrying wood, belts, a wrap for a broken bone, to pull Red River carts out of the mud and as a calculator. The Métis Sash is being sited throughout the communities on Turtle Island.*

*"My Sash Sitings will help others to learn about the diverse Métis people and their culture-both past and present."*



SPRING SASH - Water Pump



SUMMER SASH - Apples



AUTUMN - Busy catching up on books, checking and tuning in on mental health



WINTER SASH - Mother Hand



# RED RIVER RUNS THROUGH ME

ELISE AUTUMN LYNN RAYE

I was born with a braid in my blood,  
Threads of buffalo and maple leaf,  
Criss-crossed in silence,  
Split down the middle  
Like the families they tore apart  
And called it saving.

Raised in homes where the walls never knew my name,  
I learned to disappear —  
To make myself small enough to fit  
In the quiet spaces between judgment and survival.  
They told me I was trouble,  
But they didn't see the medicine in my marrow,  
Or the ancestors walking beside me  
Even when I forgot how to listen.

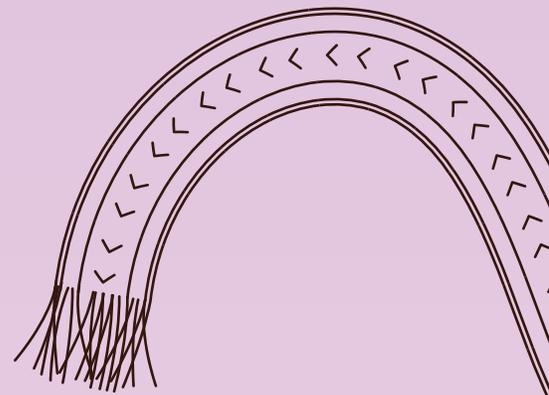
I was lost —  
Not because I didn't know who I was,  
But because the world refused to see me.

But the drum never stops beating  
Even when your ears are full of sorrow.  
Even when your hands shake from the weight of remembering.

I found myself  
In the crackle of a fire circle,  
In the laughter of aunties  
Who speak in stories and side-eyes.  
I found myself  
In the sweetgrass braid,  
In the songs that rise with the dawn.  
I found myself  
In the mirror —  
And she looked like all the women who refused to die.

I am wellness stitched with grief,  
Strength braided with vulnerability.  
I am culture that cannot be caged,  
Even when the world tries to shame me for the way I survived.

Métis —  
Not half, not in-between.  
Whole. Fierce.  
Born from resistance  
And still rising





# A SYMPHONY FOR THE SENSES, THE BODY, THE MIND, AND THE SOUL

DON CORRIGAL

Springtime in the Canadian Rockies is my favourite time of the year. I hike the local hills and mountains year-round, but this time of the year is best. This morning, I was walking down to my favourite Café and this sense of the ephemeral hit me. I walked through the main part of town – the City of Cranbrook and was taken back by the sensory experiences flooding my head.

The sun was out, no clouds in the sky, I could smell the lilacs. They were in a broad pallet of colours ranging from a deep purple to a sparkling white. They are a weed in Cranbrook, everywhere, and once they are planted, it is impossible to get rid of them. They will propagate anywhere. You can hack and slash at them, it just makes them grow more and faster.

The other remarkable thing here in spring, the cherry blossoms, & crab apple blossoms come out in a spectrum of colours from brilliant white to a deep burgundy. They line the streets, are planted on everywhere. They reach their peak in May.

In the local hills the spring wildflowers are coming out. The varieties include prairie crocus – my favourite, glacier lily, yellowbell, calypso orchid, Indian paintbrush, western wood lily, pearly everlasting, fireweed, wild bergamot, western columbine, shooting star, western anemone, arnica, yarrow, and aster.

I hike Lone Pine Hill when the flowers are in bloom. It is covered in a carpet of purple and gold, the colours of royalty. Flowers everywhere. Mother Nature asserting her dominion over the land, the change of the season and the life of the Rocky Mountain Trench.

It is a period of dramatic transformation - a convergence of the lingering grasp of winter and the first awakening of summer's breath. Melting snow, rushing streams, and the slow return of birdsong creates a sublime and paradoxical beauty - colourful valleys beneath snowcapped peaks. Warm sunshine and a winter storm within the same hour. The region inspires awe in writers, poets, scientists, and philosophers alike.

Their writing inspires me; put into words I cannot find in myself.

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*CONTENT WARNING: This piece references anxiety, depression, anger, and suicidal ideation*



It is hard to understand springtime in the Rockies without experiencing it firsthand. My five senses often get overwhelmed by its strength. I have experienced 70 springtimes all over British Columbia, 34 of which were/are here in the Southern Rocky Mountains of BC.

This is where and when I am most at home. The feel of the sun on my face, the smell of lilacs in bloom, the sight of the blossoms as they open, the sound of the wind in the forest, and the taste of a cup of spruce tea.

When I make a fire every week, my granddaughters and I make spruce tea over the fire. I get them to pick the new growth at the tips of the branches on the spruce trees. The water comes from an artesian well. It is the best tasting water I have experienced. The tips are put in the cold water, placed over the fire until the water boils. It is then steeped for five to ten minutes. What you get is this sweet, tart, refreshing tea. I like it hot or cold.

In BC's Kootenays along the western slope of the Rockies, spruce tea is consumed by my family especially during late spring and early summer when vitamin levels in the locals are low and immune systems are vulnerable after long winters.

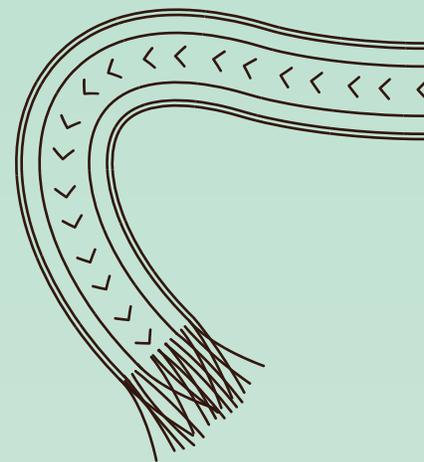
In my opinion, the best tea is typically made from new spring growth - the light green, tender tips. It has a citrusy, slightly resinous, mild pine taste, but is bright and clean on the palate. Its aroma is fresh evergreen, lemon pine, with slightly balsamic or camphoraceous presence. It will be a pale greenish gold to a light amber.

Spring tips are sweeter and milder; mature needles are stronger, bitter, and resinous, requiring longer steeping. Spruce tea is vitamin-rich, especially as a source of vitamin C, flavonoids, and terpenes. As with any tea, it is recommended to speak to your health care provider before consuming.

I have suffered from anxiety, depression, anger issues & suicidal ideation due to trauma since I was 15 years of age. My Forest Therapy has been an essential part of my strategy for better Mental Health. I will finish this with - the Canadian suicide rate for Métis men is 22.6/100,000 - 3 out of 4 suicides in Métis populations - vs 12.3/100,000 - 4 out of 5 suicides, 1.83 times higher than the general male population (Statistics Canada, 2019). If you see someone struggling with their mental health, Be Bold - Step Up and Talk to Them and take them for a hike in the forest. This is an important part of Métis Kinship and Culture & you may just save a life.

*Reference:*

Statistics Canada (2019). *Suicide among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit (2011-2016): Findings from the 2011 Canadian Census Health and Environment Cohort (CanCHEC)*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/99-011-x/99-011-x2019001-eng.htm>





# ÂSTAM KWAYÂHO

KAYLA TRACE

*My poem, âstam kwayâho, is named after the only Cree phrase that my mom, Katrina Trace, had learned it from my nimosôm, Roy Huebschwerlen, who himself learned it from his mother, Dorothy, from when he was a child. What it means is to “get your butt over here right now”, and it sounds like my nôhkom speaking through time. It represents Métis resilience, and though I never knew how it was spelled when I heard it, it really stuck with me. This poem was written in memorial for my mom who passed last year. My nimosôm also recently passed, and it hurts my heart that he didn’t get to read this poem.*

Pine trees fuel me  
In the heat of the night  
Dry air from the woodstove  
It bathes us.  
I’m startled by the sparks  
And the shadows  
Dancing behind us.

The skies are vast,  
Clouds racing through time,  
Up North,  
I can see so much further  
I can see your dreams

Wishes, prayers  
That our ancestors left behind  
A wooden cabin  
In the tall trees  
Dark foliage envelops us.

Trappers, traders  
traverse through deep snow  
wooden snowshoes drying  
mounted on the cabin wall  
next to a small window

It’s brisk outside  
Night air saps your warmed cheeks  
You can see your breath  
Looking into the treetops  
Northern lights  
They’re watching us,  
Dancing to our heartbeat.

Pinks and purples  
Greens and blues  
You’re reminded of spring  
You can feel the warmth,  
Deep in your spirit.

Beaded mittens  
And moccasins  
Dainty flower imagery  
And coloured tufts of fur  
They keep us warm.

The sky changes as the black fades  
A vibrant orange wash  
Sparkling across the snow  
I can smell the snowmelt  
And a crocus peeking at me.

# BLOOD MOON

HANAKO NAGAO

*The concept for this piece is about beauty and balance, life and death. The red stripe in the centre represents the genocide that colonialism brought, represented by the pile of bison skulls, the graves of the children at residential schools, the dead trees and decimated land. And yet - if it hadn't been for these settlers, the Métis as a people would not exist. The beauty of our land still remains, as does the spirit of our people. We must never forget the ongoing injustices facing Indigenous people in our country, but at the same time we must not get lost in despair. It is only by being aware of both that we can move forward with hope and purpose.*

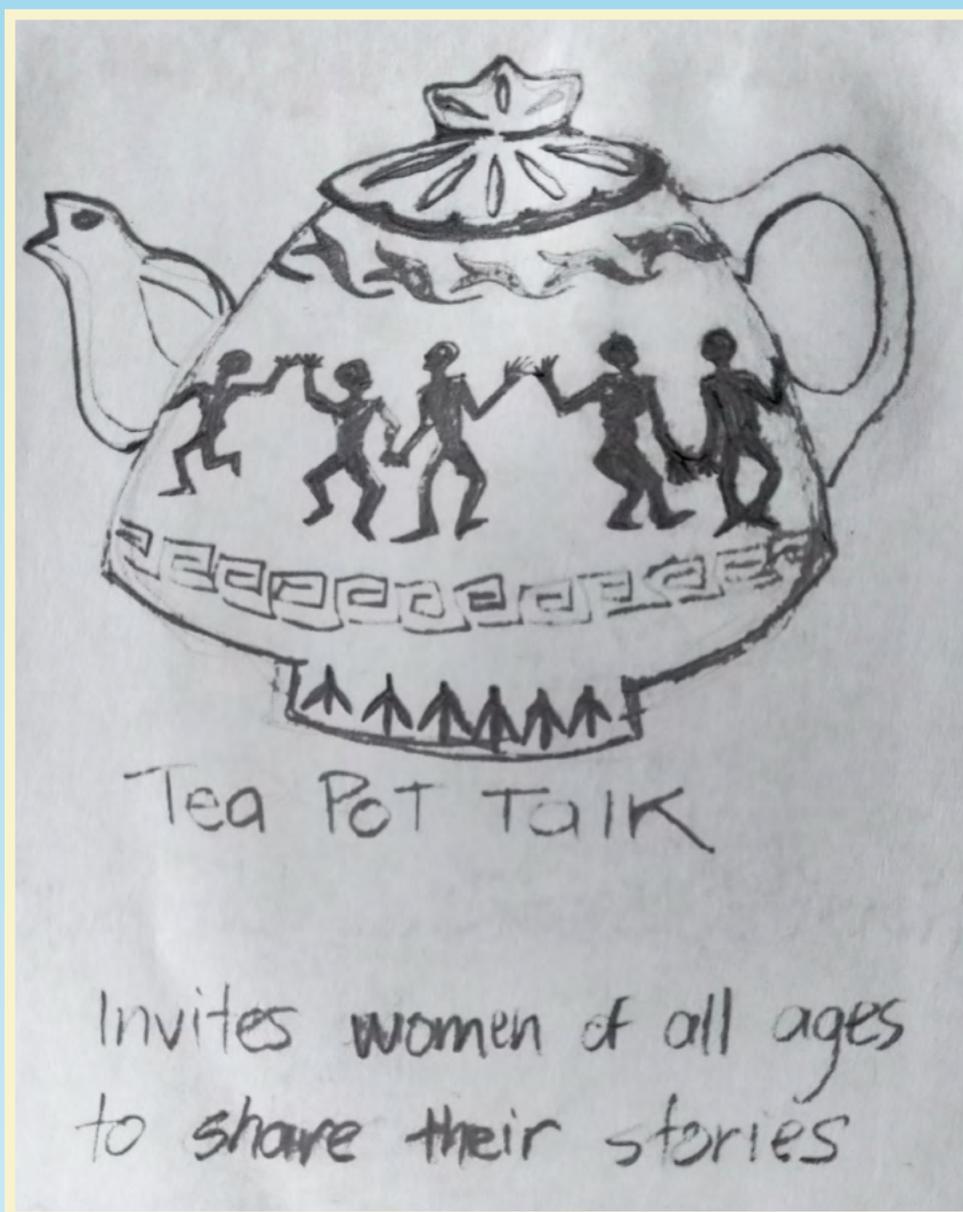
CONTENT WARNING: This piece references genocide, colonial violence including residential schools, and death

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS,  
48X48"



# EVERY LIVING BEING PT.2

LORRAINE LUCIE HNIDAN-KENDALL





# MOTHER NATURE

CHERI BAUER

"I am, I love - the stars at night, the beach sand between our toes, the gentle kiss of cool wind that brushes against your skin. The moon that beams light across the water. I am, I love - the welcome smile that greets you in the shyest way; eyes playful and filled with light. Oh the night. The colours which few truly notice. The beach, the beach - at night, I am, I love. The water that laps at the shores, kindred spirits dancing to the rhythmic waves and drumming carried from across the water. In my eyes a billions flecks of light, in your eyes the same constellations hold true. Alone to explore each other, together. Hushed, racing, slow, shy, bold, urgent, relaxed, and too long apart. And now, finally- the night sky, the beach, and you and I."

*From "The spark (of a Muse)" © Cheri Bauer*



# THE BERRY PICKERS

MADISON PERREAULT

The sun rises slow, stretching its arms over the trees,  
kissing the earth awake.  
We follow the winding trail, baskets in hand,  
feet brushing against dewy grass.

The old ones lead the way,  
their hands knowing where the sweetest berries hide.  
They hum songs older than the dirt beneath us,  
soft and steady like the river's flow.

We pick  
fingers stained deep with blue and red,  
juice running down our wrists, ink from the land.  
The little ones eat more than they gather,  
cheeks round, eyes wide,  
laughing and giggling as Kookum pretends to scold them.  
"Save some for the jam, little one," she chuckles,

At midday, we rest under the pines,  
sharing bannock, passing a tin of tea,  
letting the wind weave through our hair,  
whispering stories only the trees can understand.

By evening, the baskets are full,  
heavy with the gifts of summer.  
Back home, the pots bubble,  
the smell of warm berries filling the air,  
the taste of family  
lingering on our tongues.

And as the night wraps around us,  
we will sit close,  
listening to Kookum's voice  
soft as the breeze,  
strong as the roots beneath our feet.



# RETURNING TO OURSELVES

MICHELLE BUCHOLTZ, RTC

*DISCLAIMER: We recognize that everybody has a unique path when they navigate mental health and wellness, and all experiences are unique. These submissions are not intended to provide medical or treatment advice, but rather to provide understanding, hope, and reduce stigma.*

As a Métis woman and trauma-informed Registered Therapeutic Counsellor, I've long felt a deep yearning to reconnect with my culture, my community, and the parts of myself that had been quieted or hidden. This past year, I was honoured to see that reconnection deepen through two workshop series I designed and facilitated for my community: *Resilient Roots*, hosted by Waceya Métis Society, and *Empowering Connections*, offered to the MNBC Early Years Métis Family Connection team. These gatherings became more than just workshops—they transformed into spaces of return. For many women, it was their first time experiencing the profound power of being truly witnessed, without judgment, as they shared stories of identity, resilience, and trauma.

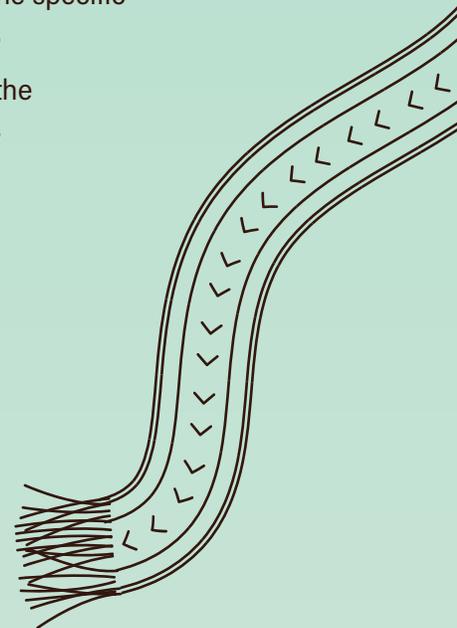
Both programs were created using a trauma-informed and experiential approach—integrating modalities I've personally practiced through my own healing—and were shaped by the wisdom and collaboration of Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and community voices. For the *Empowering Connections* two-day workshop, I was privileged to work alongside an incredible group of women: Assistant Facilitator Michelle Irnie-Smith, Cultural Facilitator Kelly Poitras, Elder Maria Reed, and Knowledge Keeper Danielle Daigneault Webber. Their guidance and teachings were essential in grounding our circles in safety, tradition, and trust. Each program was carefully tailored to address the specific needs expressed by participants, leadership, and frontline workers in the community.

*Resilient Roots*, an eight-week group counselling series, was made possible through the **Giving Voice Grant** and brought to life through the advocacy of **Anthony Wingham**, President of Waceya Métis Society and the community board members. Designed specifically for Métis women, the program integrated experiential group therapy, somatic practices, storytelling, nervous system education, and cultural exploration. Weekly themes included identity, attachment, intergenerational trauma, boundaries, and reclaiming one's voice.

A particularly impactful moment occurred midway through the series during a breathwork session. Participants accessed deep emotional layers, with reflections such as:

- *"I recognized the shame of my ancestors I carried within myself."*
- *"The most impactful part for me was learning coping mechanisms and how Métis traditions can be incorporated into healing."*

The experience was further enriched by community members like **Pam**





**Goldsack**, Wacey's Women's Representative, who led a beading activity, and **Janice Naman**, a Holistic Wellness Practitioner who shared teachings on plant medicine and connecting with nature.

What resonated most deeply with me was the way these women supported one another. While we often speak of "holding space," these women embodied it. They reminded me that when we honour each person's unique journey, we begin to heal the aloneness so often perpetuated by our individualistic society.

Feedback from participants was incredibly affirming. One shared, *"It was not only beneficial as group counselling—the Métis culture and understanding of generational trauma was amazing. It put all the pieces together."* Another said, *"Getting together and learning that no one is perfect and we're all working on something... we have more in common than we're led to believe."* The response was so strong that we have a waitlist for a second cohort of Resilient Roots.

We were fortunate to close the program in the serene setting of **Locality Brewing**, overlooking beautiful land and water. The natural surroundings helped anchor our final circle. *(Note: there was no partaking of alcohol during the gathering.)*

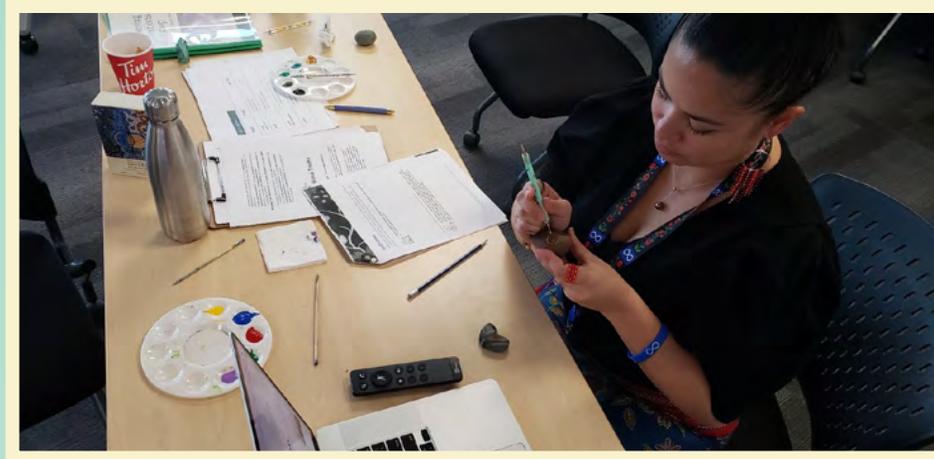
**Melanie MacInnes**, owner of Métis-owned Locality Brewing, shared:

*"It was really special to witness the space being used in such a meaningful way—full of intention, care, and connection. You could feel the calm settle over people as they arrived, like they were exhaling. Moments like that remind me why we do what we do—not just growing food or making beer, but holding space. It's about creating places where people can reconnect with themselves, with each other, and with the land. The program felt like a glimpse of what's possible when Métis women come together."*

The program concluded with a moving sashing ceremony, where each woman received a Women's Warrior Sash, gifted by the Métis Women of BC.

*Empowering Connections* was a two-day wellness and leadership workshop requested by **Heather Kelm**, Family Programs & Services Manager with MNBC's Ministry of Education: Early Learning | K-12. It was designed





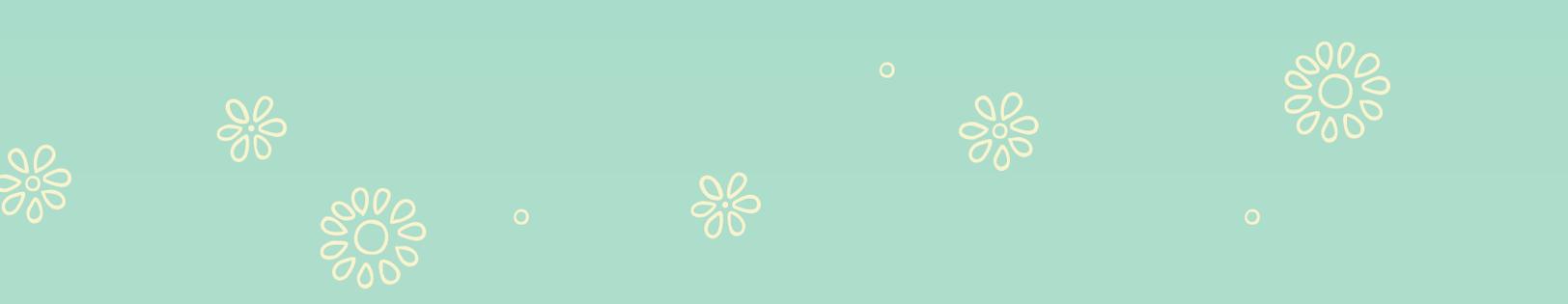
specifically for the **Early Years Métis Family Connections** team, who provide essential frontline support to Métis families across the province. Held at MNBC's Head Office in Surrey, the gathering was a pilot workshop designed to explore how it could be tailored to the unique needs of MNBC. The program offered a rich blend of professional development, personal reflection, and community-building. Given that this workshop focused less on therapy and more on servicing communities with cultural sensitivity while practicing self-care, the Navigators shared an overall positive experience of learning and sharing stories in a group setting that fostered connection.

As someone who tended to isolate and learned to be super independent with my feelings, I found my own healing was accelerated in authentic group connection. I learned that we are social, relational beings—wired through our nervous systems for connection. As attachment research, including the work of the late Dr. Sue Johnson, reminds us: we're not meant to heal alone. That's why I intentionally designed these workshops to integrate both Western clinical theory and Indigenous knowledge in group settings.

However, it's important to recognize that Métis and Indigenous families often define attachment through community, land, and cultural teachings—an understanding disrupted by colonialism, intergenerational trauma, and assimilation (Levy, 2000).

During *Empowering Connections*, we reflected on topics such as intergenerational trauma, nervous system regulation and cultural teachings such as **Leah Marie Dorion's Four Stages of Life** teachings, which portray the journey through birth, youth, adulthood, and eldership as hills we climb. Her painting emphasizes connection to land, water, and ancestors—reminding us that healing is part of an ongoing cycle, and attachment moves beyond the nuclear family.

In this context, the Navigators were invited to reflect on their own leadership roles. Their responses highlighted the importance of culturally grounded caregiving, land-based connection, removing barriers, community support, intergenerational teachings and decolonization. As someone



still learning about my Métis culture and with my young daughter enrolled in the Métis Family Connections Program, I was moved to witness the insight and heart they bring to their work—and that not only were they learning new skills, but they were also teaching me.

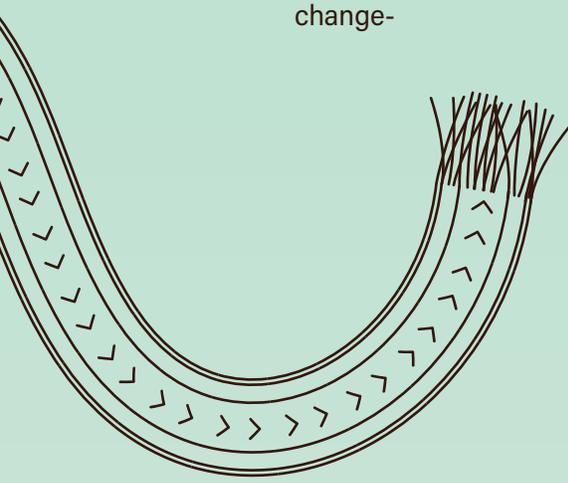
One Navigator reflected, *“This reminded me that I’m not alone. My favourite part was learning how to control my mind and not panic.”* Another added, *“I’m grateful that I get to do these events at work—yet it doesn’t feel like I’m working.”*

The **Empowerment Walk**—where each participant walked slowly between two lines while receiving whispered affirmations in each ear—was a profoundly moving experience. This bilateral input seemed to bypass the brain’s usual critical filters. As one participant noted, *“The brain doesn’t have time to argue with all the goodness.”* Many walked away with tears, smiles, and a renewed sense of being seen and supported. The program concluded with Elder Maria Reed’s closing ceremony of good words and women’s warrior song.

What stood out most was the strong sense of connection and mutual respect among the Navigators. This team of Métis and non-Indigenous colleagues demonstrated something truly remarkable: a positive, fun, and emotionally healthy working environment rooted in care, humility, and cultural awareness. It was a privilege to witness their laughter and camaraderie.

Creating spaces where vulnerability is met with safety—and where connection can flourish—is my passion. When we see ourselves being seen, feel ourselves being felt, and hear ourselves being heard, transformation becomes possible.

These gatherings reaffirmed that healing doesn’t have to be clinical or solitary. It can be creative, relational, land-based, strength-based—and even humorous. These circles weren’t about offering advice or solving problems; they were about witnessing, honouring, and gently reclaiming our wholeness. I look forward to continuing this work and tailoring future workshops for other change-makers across our communities.



As a facilitator, I’m deeply grateful to everyone who contributed. It took a strong, committed team of resilient women to bring these spaces to life with authenticity and impact. I remain wholeheartedly devoted to continuing this journey—honouring the losses of my ancestors and helping to restore healing, identity, and connection through the threads of kinship and cultural renewal.



CONTENT WARNING: This piece references childhood sexual abuse.

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS,  
60X24"

# THE BEAR

HANAKO NAGAO

*This is a deeply personal piece that came to me in a dream, following some very triggering news. Shortly before my art exhibit was to open, I learned that my childhood abuser would be coming to my hometown, and that I may have to see him face-to-face at a family event. The news hit me quite hard at a vulnerable time, and that night I dreamed of a monster with the head of a bear skull, and a young girl warrior facing it. The monster itself, though terrifying in appearance, was also a victim - created of pain and untreated mental illness. The focal point in the piece though, is the little girl. I wanted her to be a figure of strength*



# POEMS

KORA LEITH

## "A CEDAR TREE"

I know not of the man who came after me,  
Though I feel his destruction in my roots.  
He cares not for the land or its beauty,  
But he yearns for my brother Spruce.  
His feet walk heavy on the soil below,  
Never minding the destruction it may bring.  
I wouldn't wish this pain that's been bestowed  
On any living thing.

## "HALF-BREED"

To be half of something is to be incomplete.  
But how can that be when I'm fully me?  
Half made from the soil and half from the sea,  
A full glass of half is to be Métis.

## "SACRED QUESTIONS"

What if the woman I become is not from where I came?  
What if the women before me are not proud of my name?  
What if I take their worst parts and throw the best away?  
What if their sacred tobacco ends up in dad's ashtray?



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AN INTERVIEW WITH

# HANAKO NAGAO

*Hanako Nagao is an Artist living on the unceded territory of Secwépemc and Ktunaxa First Nations in Golden, BC. She is Métis on her mom's side and Japanese on her dad's side. Hanako embeds her culture in her art to highlight the strengths in connection to self, community, and ancestors. She is a mom to her 3 month old daughter, Kaya and is enjoying this new role in her life.*

**Q // Given our aim for the magazine, what is something you would like to share?**

I want to share about resilience – both from my own life and from what I've seen in others. Resilience can look different for everyone. At its core resilience is about survival and getting through things that feel impossible. However, resilience is more than just surviving; it's about finding a way to thrive.

**Q // What does Thriving Spirits mean to you?**

To me Thriving Spirits means becoming and living as your most authentic self. It is about showing up each day in ways that honor who you truly are. Thriving doesn't have to be about big things – it can be in the little moments, like caring for your family. What matters most is that it feels real and true to who you are.

**Q // What allowed you to thrive in your experiences?**

I have been able to thrive by focusing on what matters most to me; my family, my culture, and my art. I stopped worrying about the small things or what other people think.

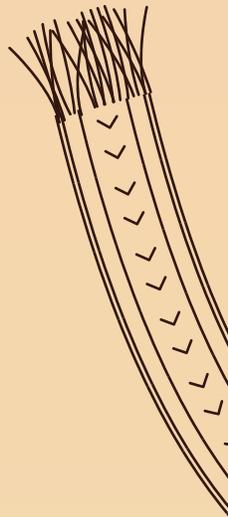
Instead, I chose to value the opinions of those I truly care about, rather than trying to meet society's expectations. For example, becoming a mom was a surprise. I have endometriosis and was told it would be very hard, maybe even impossible. There was a lot of judgement because others believed I wasn't in the right place in my life to have a child. However, I knew it was right for me, and I couldn't be happier. I am so grateful for my daughter. It is not always easy, but I truly believe we're both thriving.

**Q // Do you have any advice or good words for Métis youth?**

My advice is: don't compare yourself to others – focus on your own path and how far you've come. It's okay to not always feel okay or like you're thriving. Asking for help is a true sign of strength, and having a community and people you can turn to is such a blessing.

**Q // What helps you be a thriving spirit when times are tough?**

Having a strong sense of community and family really helps me. My parents live across town,





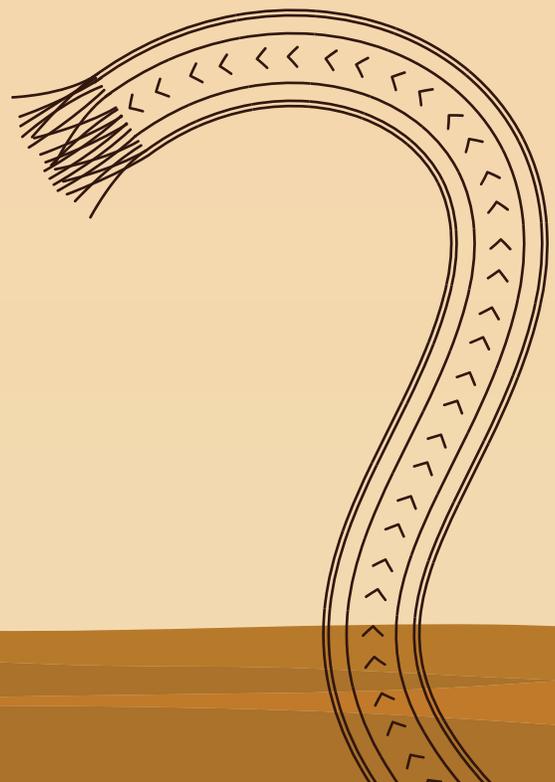
and I talk to my siblings every day. The larger community matters too, such as connecting with my Métis Chartered community. My husband is status First Nations, and the connection to his community has also been a big support. It also helps to stay connected to what brings me joy, my passions and hobbies. Living in nature, away from the big city, gives me the space to breathe fresh air and touch the earth. I think people really underestimate how powerful that connection to nature can be.

**Q // What do you do to take care of yourself?  
Does this include cultural activities?**

Creating art is a big part of my self-care. I also find that making and sharing food- feeding yourself and your family is an act of care that is both nourishing and cultural. Spending time in nature helps me, too. Hiking or being near water, like a river or lake, does wonders for my mental health.

**Q // Is there anything else you would like to add?**

My art, which I've shared with the magazine, represents thriving to me. This piece is a very personal experience I had when I was a little girl. We are so much stronger than we think we are. The glowing circle in the image highlights the community behind her, the spirit of our ancestors, and the community that we can count on. Resilience is a personal journey, and we don't have to face things alone. Our strength comes from within, and it's also deeply rooted in the support of the community around us.



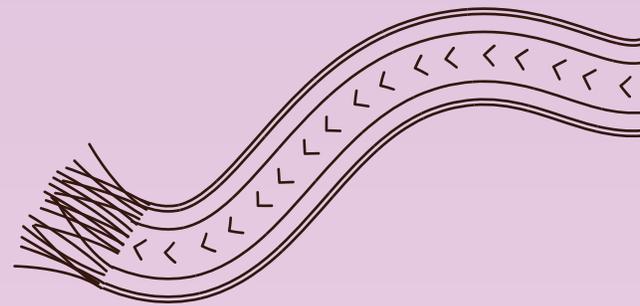


# FOREST THERAPY

DON CORRIGAL

I love the forest in winter  
Sounds fall silent, muffled by snow's gentle weight  
The air carries a sweetness, clear and sharp  
The world exhales a breath meant only for me  
Light dances - sparkling, refracting  
A million tiny prisms within each snowflake's fractal architecture

The cold bites, yet it enlivens me  
Every sense sharpens, alive, humming with echoes of its ageless hymns  
It feels as though the fabric of space and time stretches thinner here  
I can brush against its threads  
If I am still enough, quiet enough, listening hard enough  
Perhaps, just perhaps  
I can slip my hand through the fabric of the universe  
Feel the pulse of unseen dimensions around me  
And understand what lies beneath this reality.



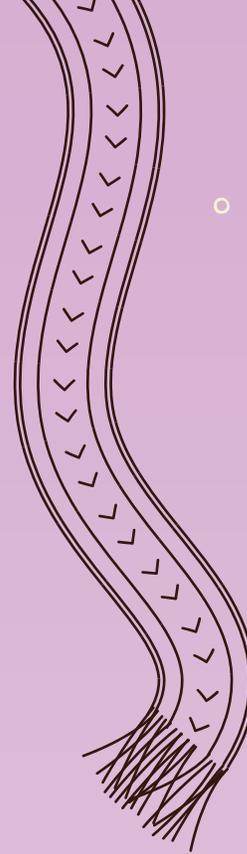


# AUTHENTICITY

CHERI BAUER

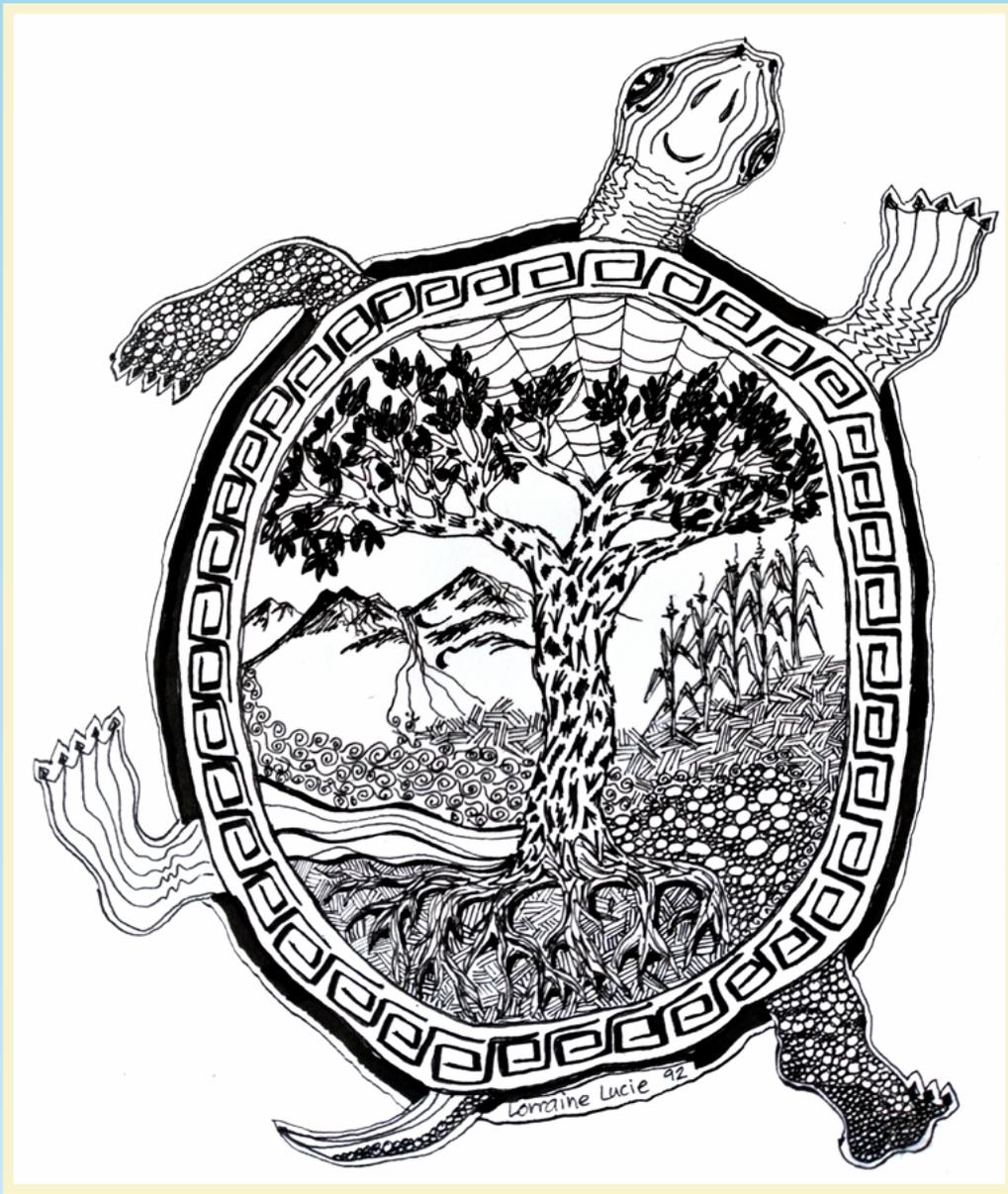
"I went looking for my voice in others people's throats,  
I went looking for my eyes in others' point of view  
I went looking for my thoughts in other people's minds  
I went looking for my ears in other people's noise  
I went looking for my taste on other people's tongues  
I went looking for a touch in other people's limbs  
I went looking for my strength in other people's fear  
I went looking for my story in other people's pens  
I went looking for my life in other people's experience  
I went looking for my hope in other people's eyes  
I went looking for my talents in others people's gifts  
I searched the World all over, to find where I was hid-  
it wasn't until my searching stopped,  
that in my heart I did."

*From "I am... Subject to change without notice" © Cheri Bauer"*



# EVERY LIVING BEING PT. 3

LORRAINE LUCIE HNIDAN-KENDALL



# MARY AND HER MÉTIS GRANDMA

RITA JASPER

*Vancouver 1986*

When I watched the bunnies at Spanish Banks, I realized they had each other for support. So, I thought, *if I am going to make it in this world, I better get my sh\*t together because it is me, myself, and I. And let's face it, sure as hell, I can't count on anyone else.* I always wanted to be an artist, but Dad always told me "Artists starve." I decided I didn't want to be such a wishywashy, whimpering artist because that's weak, but now I realize that's a stereotype too. Down, I pushed my desire to be an artist and all those sensitive feelings artists cultivate.

On one particular morning, I told Grandma Pearl that I wasn't going to pursue art and that I was going to take all the business courses I could. She responded, "I'm glad you've decided on a direction. It's good to know where you are going. Remember, you can change your mind about things." Grandma Pearl knew my spirit was fractured because part of it was an artist—maybe all of it. When Grandma talked about the spirit world, she would call it the world of shadows, and for a long time, that is where my artistic desires remained.

I went to the library to do some career research. Before I knew it, the entire day was gone. I rode home as fast as the wind because I knew Grandma would have made a good supper.

After eating and washing the dishes, Grandma started where she left off in the morning. Grandma must have been able to read minds because she said, "Your mother and her baby went to the other side, which is a good place. It's our true home." I'm sure Grandma could see my body tensing up, ready to scream louder than anyone else, but she didn't stop. "And do you remember how you felt when you realized your mom was gone and you weren't..." she paused, "...going to be a big sister?"

I looked at her, deadpan. That is all I could muster because my brain felt drained of all energy. Overloaded. Bust. Gone. Silent screeches bounced around in my head. There was no affectionate emotion to give to anything or anyone. Grandma Pearl broke the silence. "I knew this midwife. They called her Tilda Many Fingers because when she touched you, it was as if she had more than 10 fingers involved in the delivery or healing ceremony.<sup>3</sup> She's gone now. Tilda passed to the other side in 1984."

<sup>3</sup> Character inspired by *Rising Wind*, aka *Isabelle Ten Fingers*.

*St. Pierre, M., & Soldier, T. L., (1950). Walking in the Sacred Manner. New York: Touchstone, Melvin & Schuster. ISBN 0-684-802007*

CONTENT WARNING:  
Language may not be  
suitable for all ages, this  
piece discusses grief, loss,  
and death in pregnancy

NOT TO BE PUBLISHED in  
any way except by *Thriving  
Spirits Magazine*



The pounding riot in my brain stopped as I asked myself, *"Isn't that the year my mom was killed? No. What was I thinking? She passed away earlier."*

Grandma slowly entered back into the conversation. "As a midwife, Tilda's worst fear was losing a baby, so when your mom died, she wrote a poem. We used to write to each other. Your mom visited Tilda from the other side, in a dream, where your mom wrote a poem for you and asked Tilda to share it." Grandma Pearl then read the poem. Because of her age, her voice was starting to shake and crack.

*Mary Dear*

*I'm sorry I had to go*

*Please know, I fought hard to stay here*

*Don't think of this poem as a goodbye*

*You no longer need to cry.*

*There is much you need to do.*

*Just remember I'm only on the other side*

*Flying high with the horse spirits and other shadows in the sky*

*In your times of need, I'm always by your side*

*You don't even have to dream*

*It may not seem as though I'm with you but I'll be there*

*Please tell your brother and father the same*

*No need to call my name*

*I can always see you because,*

*I'm flying high with the horse spirits in the sky.<sup>4</sup>*

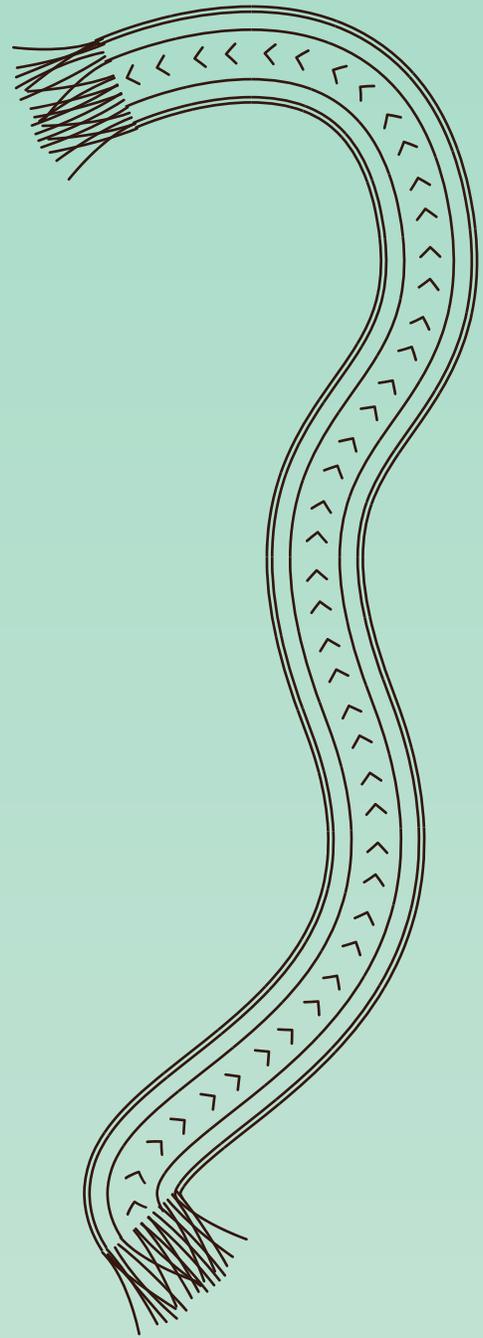
Grandma Pearl had many friends, but Tilda was very special. Grandma would say, "My friend had many names. She was very creative. Most 'medicine people' are artists of some sort. Some called her Flowing Wind, and others called her Isabelle Many Fingers.<sup>5</sup> I think she was born in 1906. So she was younger than me. I was born in 1905"

<sup>4</sup> Poem Inspired by rising Wind aka Isabelle Ten Fingers.

St. Pierre, M., & Soldier, T. L., (1950). *Walking in the Sacred Manner*. New York: Touchstone, Melvin & Schuster. ISBN 0-684-802007

<sup>5</sup> Character Inspired by Rising Wind, Isabelle Ten Fingers and others.

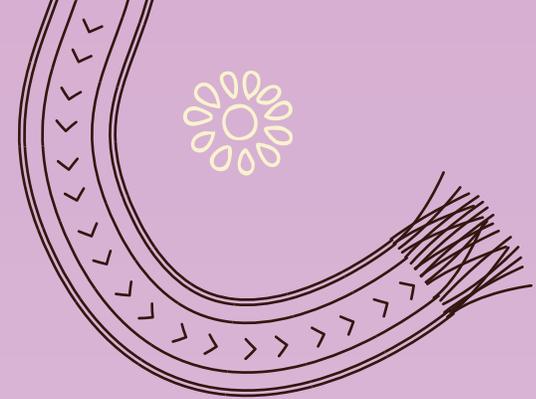
St. Pierre, M., & Soldier, T. L., (1950). *Walking in the Sacred Manner*. New York: Touchstone, Melvin & Schuster. ISBN 0-684-802007



I placed my arms across my chest. I remained still without saying a word. I was thinking, *No one is going to make me soft. Not even Grandma.* She suggested we call it a night, seeing that I wasn't ready to release my anger. We went to bed emotionally exhausted.

Grandma's place was small, so she had cleared out the pantry to make my bedroom. It had a skylight in it. Why would someone put a skylight in a pantry? I'll never know, but there it was. When I looked at the dark sky to see the stars, it was difficult because the artificial city lights drowned out most of the sparkling stars.

So, I used my imagination to remember the stars from Jasper. <sup>6</sup> Looking at the sky, I couldn't help but wonder if Mom and her baby crossed paths with Many Fingers on their way back to "the other side," to our original home, to where we all belong. I prayed, "Please God, don't make me wait until I pass to find a place where I belong".

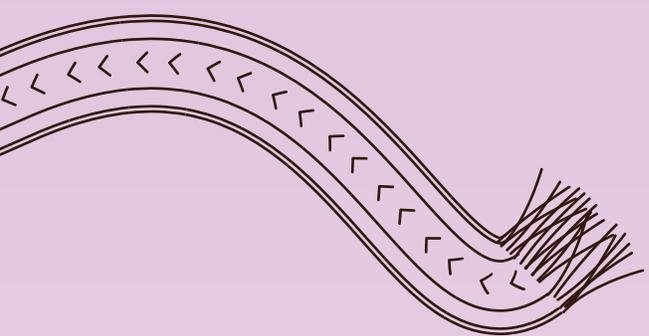


# ANCESTRAL SPIRIT

CHERI BAUER

"Not I. not I. I can not acquiesce to your request-  
I can not tie myself in the knots of your normalcy.  
I want to run, run away with the wind-swept rain.  
I want to kiss the fervent lips of reciprocation.  
I want to dance to the thunderous drums.  
I can not be your quiet little ray of sun.  
I have volcanoes in me. I have twilight's playfully cavorting.  
I have springs and autumns boldly echoing my senses.  
And I have roaring waves crashing upon the sands of my spirit.  
I will not sit in supplication while you recite the mantras  
that would change me into a quiet girl; a voiceless platitude.  
I - to be true to myself - press against the windowpane  
watching lightning, smiling, and feeling so awake.  
The wildness in me is not to be tamed."

*From "The spark (of a Muse)" © Cheri Bauer*



# MINI MEDICINE POUCH

LILA LOGAN

*A photo of my mini medicine pouches! I take pride in making them. I also include the medicine which I harvest. I make them stylish to wear and they are about the size of a toonie.*



# WET OUR LIPS

KAYLA TRACE

Words rain down, stories wet my braided hair.  
I read history books, but my mouth dries.

European heroes of yesteryear—  
now they're statues,  
put away in the dank storage rooms of today.

I've become dehydrated, with the sun beating  
down  
I'm thirsty to share, to hear those words left  
untold.

My skin dries up, and I'm grasping for a glass  
of water,  
but truth ain't cheap  
and white lies come free.

Our waterways have been eaten away,  
assaulted by a black gold deemed more  
valuable.

Spilling, leaking  
into our histories and the stories passed down.

Rewritten in a language that isn't ours  
stripping the liquid from our souls.

As these words are written down,  
and read to school children

My tongue becomes sandpaper and my throat  
a dried creek bed.

My hair crinkles, turning to yellowed grass  
blades  
kicked from the baked dirt.  
Looking for the stories that will heal chapped  
lips.

My body is droughted.  
Tell me the stories of our land, recite ceremonial  
words—

Speak to me, in the native tongue that's been  
lost  
to people of continents far away.

Who remembers our connection to the trees,  
the mountains, the flowing water?

On our territory, we were one.  
Still, the land welcomes our spirits, wanting to  
flourish

We only need but a crack in the dam,  
to wash away the black liquid that smothers.

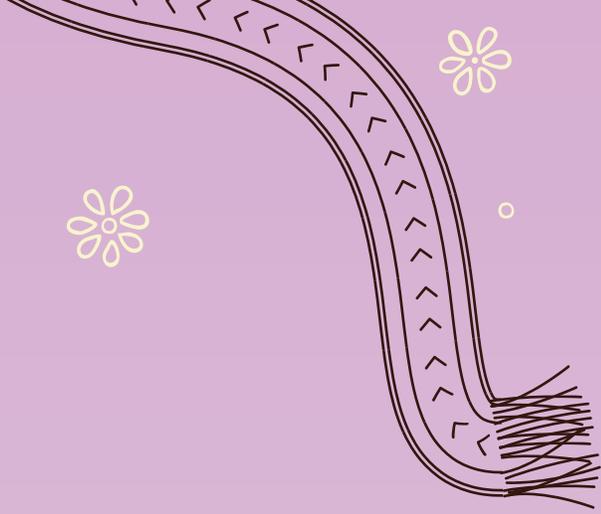
Let the rivers flow, let the lakes swell  
Creeks rush outward, rising.

Words rain down,  
Wetting cracked skin, craters in the dirt,

Tell our stories, water us with the truth,  
Let our roots spread and branches reach  
skyward,

Feed our souls that have been emptied,  
Re-ignite our history.

Decipher the words that have been written over,  
erase the stories that lay thick,  
and read the faded words that they think we've  
forgotten.





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*CONTENT WARNING: This interview discusses substance use and intergenerational trauma*

AN INTERVIEW WITH

# KAREN MILLS MAY

*Karen Mills May is a proud Blackfoot-Cree-French-Greek Métis woman living in Victoria BC. Though she only discovered her Métis heritage about 15 years ago, that revelation sparked a powerful journey of reclamation, healing and purpose. With twenty-six years of lived experience navigating substance use, mental health challenges, and homelessness and now twelve years sober, Karen has transformed her story into a force for change.*

*Her life today is filled with meaning and momentum. She is the founder of Peer2Peer Indigenous Society, created 2.5 years ago to address the gaps she saw in support services - especially the absence of Métis voices in mainstream systems. Through this work, Karen has become a tireless advocate for the overlooked Métis population, particularly Métis women, who are frequently underserved and underrecognized.*

*Karen's work is not just about recovery, it's about reclamation, representation, and building a future where every Métis woman sees her worth, her strength, and her voice reflected in the systems meant to support her. Karen states "I give back to my community every day, I am grateful I listened to my grandmother's stories as a child, it makes sense what she was really talking about."*

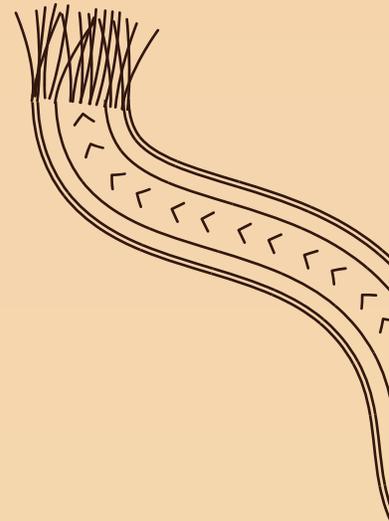
**Q // Given our aim for the magazine, what is something you would like to share?**

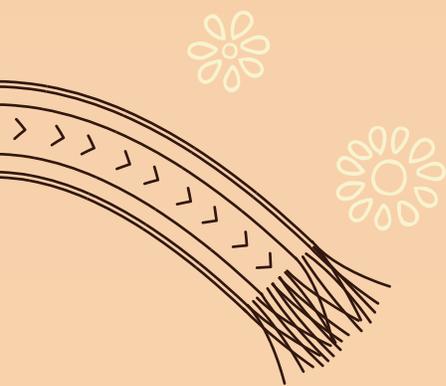
Mental health is everything. When our mental health isn't well, it affects our physical health, our relationships, really every part of our lives. I work with a lot of folks from diverse backgrounds, many of whom live with concurrent disorders, things like mental health and substance use challenges at the same time. It's something we don't talk about enough, but it is very important. Because I work directly on the streets, I hear a lot of heavy stories. That kind of work takes a toll, so I make it a priority

to take care of my own mental health. If I don't, I can't show up the way I need to for others. I've learned to check in with myself, if something starts to feel too heavy, I stop. I take a breath, go for a walk, and ground myself before jumping back in. We know ourselves best, and part of this work is learning how to listen to that inner voice.

**Q // What does Thriving Spirits mean to you?**

Acceptance starts with ourselves. For many of us, the journey has been long. Some are still discovering who they are, and some have reached what feels like the end, only to realize





it's really just another beginning. Wherever we are, it's so important to be gentle with ourselves. I believe in giving back to the community and staying accountable. I carry a responsibility to advocate, not just for myself, but for those whose voices haven't been returned yet, especially women who've lost their voices along the way. Gratitude keeps me grounded. No matter how busy or challenging things get, I stay centered in why I do this work.

***Q // What allowed you to thrive in your experiences?***

There was a time in my life I was deep in addiction. My ex-husband and I struggled with alcohol, and after we separated, I started using harder drugs. I ended up living on the streets of Nanaimo, and my three children were left behind. Even in my absence, my kids never stopped loving me. I could feel that love, even when I wasn't present, and that is what kept me going. Eventually I reached a point where I knew I couldn't live that way anymore. I needed help. That is when I met an amazing outreach worker who kept me accountable. They reminded me of what I was fighting for; I wanted a relationship with my mom, my family, I wanted a home. I was somebody before all of this and I wanted to be that person again. That outreach worker helped me get into a recovery house for 90 days. While I was there, I finally had space to talk about my trauma, to understand how I ended up there. That process of opening up, of unloading all the pain and weight I'd been carrying, allowed me to start breaking from generational trauma and begin healing my own traumas. I felt free and was able to focus on my recovery. Before that,

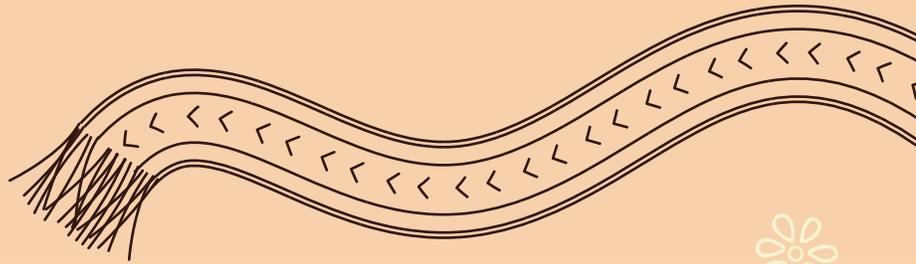
I had felt helpless. When I let go of what was weighing down my spirit, I stepped into recovery and I've never looked back.

***Q // Do you have any advice or good words for Métis youth?***

When we're young, we just want to belong. We get around our peers and want to be cool, to fit in and sometimes that means letting go of parts of ourselves. A lot of us end up pushing aside our culture and beliefs just to feel accepted, without realizing that those are the things that truly connect us, ground us, and help us belong. My message to youth is this: hold onto your culture. Stay close to your family, your circle, and your community. Be proud of who you are. Take part in land-based healing, join groups, and stay connected to your Métis community. Your culture is your strength. Be brave. Stand up for yourself and if you find yourself drifting or getting off track, don't be afraid to come back. Reach out to your family, your Elders, your community - anybody who can help ground you in your roots.

***Q // What helps you be a thriving spirit when times are tough?***

Every morning, I smudge and thank the Creator - for my sobriety, my mental health, and all the blessings in my life. I do a lot of self-care such as spending time in nature, connecting with culture and land-based healing. I also have a supportive partner who helps keep me going when the world feels really heavy. It's important for me to be grounded. If I'm not feeling like I can face the heaviness, I take time to rest. If I'm not 100% then I can't give 100%. Working on the frontlines



keeps me connected because I've been there. I share my story because people want to know how I did it. I tell them: "I wanted to do it. That was first." I stay close to my culture and advocate for Métis voices. When you're homeless, you're not thinking about culture, so I bring it to those I work with. Smudging, making medicine bags, being there when my people need me. That's what keeps me thriving.

**Q // What do you do to take care of yourself?  
Does this include cultural activities?**

My self-care is spending time with my children and grandchildren. I also find getting tattoos relaxing. Every tattoo tells a story. That is a part of how I heal. I smudge, I am learning Michif, and I sit on several boards for Indigenous peoples. Often, I'm the only Métis person at the table, and I am grateful to be there. It's so important to have that Métis voice, because we walk in two worlds and are often not recognized for our culture and our contributions. I bring my big loud voice everywhere I go. For rest and reflection, I take cedar baths, drink cedar tea, and attend events focused on advocacy, harm reduction, housing events, and supporting the Indigenous Street Community. I speak at conferences from a lived experience perspective. I'm grateful for how far I've come and the only person to be thankful for that is myself because I wanted it that badly.

**Q // Is there anything else you would like to add?**

As a mental health worker, I see the full range of what people go through and I've lived it in my own life too. There is still so much stigma,



especially when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis. I'm often the first to respond, and I can see how anxious and unsure people get. A lot of that fear comes from not understanding mental health, and social media only adds to the stigma. Mental wellness affects every part of us; physical, emotional, and spiritual. That's why culture plays such a big role in healing. For me, having my voice heard as a Métis woman in this space is not just important, it's necessary even if sometimes I feel like a little pea in a big pot of soup.





CONTENT WARNING: This piece contains heavy themes of mental and spiritual pain, trauma, and depression.

# TORMENT

DEB HOUDE

*The piece is called "Torment" and shows my battle with depression after surviving childhood and adult trauma. My journey has been a long, hard road but now that I am finally learning about my Métis heritage, I am finding new ways to find peace.*

Pain is searing my soul  
 No relief is in sight  
 It is taking its toll  
 And dissolving my fight

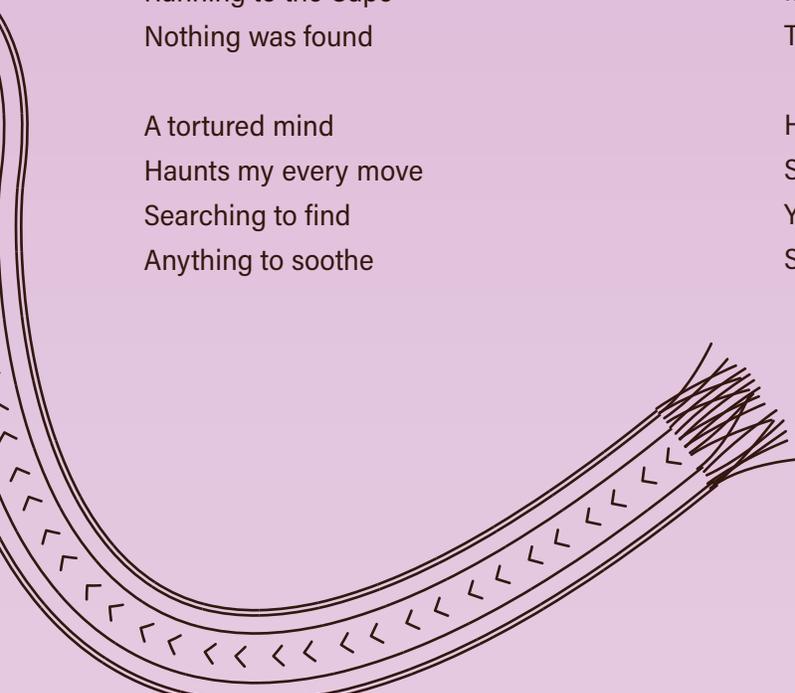
There is no escape  
 Just despair all around  
 Running to the Cape  
 Nothing was found

A tortured mind  
 Haunts my every move  
 Searching to find  
 Anything to soothe

Seeking and praying  
 There has to be hope  
 Hurt and betraying  
 Hard to just cope

I want to succumb  
 Need free of this pain  
 My soul is just numb  
 There is nothing to gain

Heavy in heart  
 Soul gone astray  
 Yet I cannot depart  
 So tormented I stay



# 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

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in collaboration with



# DOTS OF FUN

MICHELLE BUCHOLTZ, RTC

I was raised in a family where being Métis was either silenced or erased, tucked away behind shame, denial, or simply not spoken aloud. The voices of my ancestors were quieted long before I was born, but their presence lingered in the spaces between—the longing for belonging, the deep sensitivity to the land, and the artistic impulses I couldn't explain. As a daughter of immigrants and descendants of Red River Métis people whose identities were hidden for generations, I now walk a path of reclamation—one filled with humility, healing, and hope.

And now, I get to walk that path with my children.

Norah is 8, neurodivergent, and fiercely proud of her Métis roots. She is one of the few children at her small private school who speaks openly about her Indigenous identity. Though her school doesn't yet have an Indigenous support worker, we've done our best to create those cultural touchpoints ourselves—through ceremony, community, creativity, and conversation.

She knows the chants. She was gifted a drum by Ashley Baresinkoff, Neurodivergent Representative for Waceyá Métis Society. When I brought it home, Norah immediately began chanting. I was mesmerized. An hour later I sent the video to Ashley and texted "oh my god she's been chanting since we got home!" She had learned the Women's Warrior Chant from her previous Aboriginal Support Worker in the Langley School District at her former school. Since then, she has attended drumming ceremonies at community events, and even entered an art competition using Métis dot art and rock art—a beautiful fusion of cultural identity and self-expression.



She proudly wears her sash at youth golf tournaments and recently painted her golf balls with Métis dot art flowers, which she donated to the upcoming MNBC Golf Tournament. Her pride is unmistakable ... and contagious!

One of the people who's made a lasting impression on Norah is her Family Connection Navigator, who sends her packages filled with books, teachings, and Métis resources. Every time a package arrives, Norah opens it with the excitement of Christmas morning. These small but meaningful gestures have



played a big role in keeping her connected to culture in between events and in everyday life.

One of our most meaningful shared experiences came through Cultural Facilitator Kelly Poitras, who led a dot art mural project at Foundry Langley. After connecting there, Kelly invited us into her space, offered us bannock and tea, and gently introduced us to Métis teachings. For Norah, it felt like time with a beloved aunty; for me, a sister. That day, culture didn't feel like something we had to study—it felt like something we could come home to.

Since then, we've started making greeting cards together for birthdays and special occasions using the dot art we've come to love. It's become a ritual—a grounding practice, a shared language, and a quiet form of healing. I first experienced dot art at the Empowering Connections workshop I facilitated. When the paint touched the paper, I was struck by a wave of *déjà vu*. I was like "wait a minute" when the flashback hit me. As a neurodivergent child in the 1990s, I used to take white Costco napkins and dot inside the floral imprints with felt markers. I got in trouble at school for doodling flowers everywhere (among other things—but we won't go there ;)). Looking back, I realize I was regulating. I was remembering.

Now I watch Norah slow down through this same practice. In our fast-paced, overscheduled, screen-filled world, these dots have become medicine.

This journey has also been meaningful for my 21-year-old daughter, Jada, who attended Langley Fine Arts School (LFAS). With the support of an Aboriginal Support Worker, she was able to explore and learn about her Métis heritage—something I wasn't aware was mine until my early 30s. At the time, she knew more about being Métis than I did. I wasn't on a reclamation path yet. But watching both of my daughters engage with their culture has been a powerful reminder that healing doesn't always start with us, but it can ripple through us.



As a Registered Therapeutic Counsellor and facilitator of trauma-informed, culturally grounded workshops, I've dedicated my work to helping others find connection, voice, and healing. As a trauma survivor, mother and wife, I've put in a lot of time to heal, but for the first time in my life, I feel like I'm walking an authentic path—one that honours my innate and inherited gifts, passed down through a lineage of healers. But this journey with my girls has deepened that work in ways I never expected. As someone who can be hard on myself when I fall into old coping mechanisms or feel I'm not "doing enough," it's also reminded me of this truth: I can't heal generations of loss in one lifetime alone. I can only do what I can. My responsibility is to pass along what I've learned, knowing that my children will walk their own paths in their own time.



Inspired by this reconnection, Norah has continued engaging with our local Métis community. She attends Waceyá Métis Kids Days, has made friends with other children, and learned jigging steps. Jada recently received her first Sashing ceremony at the Waceyá Métis Women's night by MWBC's Chair, Carmen Carrier. Meanwhile, I keep showing up in the ways I can, and we have the unwavering support of my husband who is not Métis, but a strong advocate.



On Red Dress Day, Ashley Baresinkoff and I joined the Women's March in Langley, and our presence was featured in the Langley Advance News. The voices and stories shared that day stirred something deep inside me, something ancestral.

This spring, I enrolled in the WHEAT Institute's first-ever Métis Cultural Arts Certificate Program, funded through MNBC's STEPS initiative. This marks a profound turning point in my life—an opportunity to develop traditional creative skills, reconnect with traditional teachings, and adopt healthy, culture-based coping strategies I can pass on to Norah and Jada, and also those whose healing I'm supporting. It's a reclamation of what was once withheld from me, an opportunity to give my daughters what I didn't receive.

Reclaiming our Métis heritage hasn't been a linear path, but it has been deeply meaningful. We don't make it to every event. We're still learning how to live in alignment with traditional values in a modern world. But the grace extended by our community has been unwavering. We show up as we can. We create, we listen, we share. And every dot, every card, every chant, and every sash Norah and Jada wears feels like a thread in a much larger tapestry—one that connects us to our ancestors and to future generations.

It is a gift to say now what many of my ancestors perhaps could not:

We are proud to be Métis. And we're just getting started.



THRIVING SPIRITS:  
MÉTIS PERSPECTIVES ON WELLNESS

# CONTRIBUTORS

We are so deeply grateful for all contributors who have chosen to share their work with **Thriving Spirits: Métis Perspectives on 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](mailto:mpadley@mnbc.ca)

Additional contributors include Gary Têtu, Madison Perreault, Lila Logan, Karen Mills May and Deb Houde



## NEVADA LYNN

Nevada Lynn is a Michif artist and MFA candidate at the University of British Columbia. Her work combines symbolic portraiture, beadwork, and material-based practices to explore Indigenous methodologies of care and kinship. She lives on the traditional territories of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw Nation and the Lílwat Nation in Whistler, BC



## MARA KERSEY

Mara Kersey is a mixed-media Métis artist, residing in Campbell River. Her family names are Fraser, Brazeau, Beaudry, Brabant, Chastellain and Lucier. Mara's work is deeply rooted in her Métis culture, mixing traditional mediums and patterns with a contemporary flair. You can find her on social media: Mara Kersey - Michif Artist.



## BETSY LULU

*Betsy Lulu is a writer currently living in New Westminster BC- She loves to inspire others through her words and creative stories. Betsy is very proud of her Indigenous heritage and holds the culture close to her heart.*



## MICHELLE BUCHOLTZ

*Michelle Bucholtz is a proud Métis woman, Registered Therapeutic Counsellor based in Langley, BC. She blends somatic, trauma-informed therapy with Métis cultural teachings to support individuals and communities in healing through connection and creative expression. Michelle is the founder of Open Space Therapy and aspiring Métis artist where she explores Métis dot art as both a cultural practice and a path to personal transformation. She is currently completing her Métis Creative Arts Therapy Certificate through the WHEAT Institute. Her work is rooted in reclaiming identity, ancestral healing, and fostering spaces where Indigenous voices can thrive.*



## KORA LEITH

*Kora Leith is a novice poet and Métis woman living outside of Vancouver, BC. Through her poetry, she explores the complexities of being an indigenous woman, delving into the rich layers of heritage, identity, and resilience. Drawing from her Métis roots, her work captures the nuanced experiences of navigating a world shaped by both personal and collective histories. Her writing invites readers to reflect on both the beauty and the challenges of living between cultures, offering a powerful voice to the indigenous experience in contemporary society.*



## KAYLA TRACE

*Kayla Trace is Cree and Métis and was born and raised in Northern B.C. Her Métis and Cree relatives were established in Northern Alberta, and her family names are Gladu, Gray, Redhead/mihkostikwân, Tchowis, Badger and Michel. She is an alum from Vancouver Island University with a B.A. in Women and Gender Studies and Philosophy. Kayla's poetry has been published in local publications such as Sad Girl Review in 2022 and Sea and Cedar Magazine in 2023. The poem, Wet Our Lips, was awarded 3rd place in the annual Indigenous Arts & Stories of 2018, but has since been re-edited for this magazine.*



## KIMBERLY HAYEK

*Kimberly Hayek is Métis with Cree, Scottish, and French ancestry. She is a writer, a poet, and an artist.*



## DON CORRIGAL

*I have over five decades of experience in Environmental Public Health, Métis Cultural Safety as a curriculum developer and teacher. As a citizen and previous employee of Métis Nation BC, I have dedicated my career to improving community health, and anti-racial systemic equity across British Columbia and Saskatchewan. I led initiatives to integrate Métis perspectives into healthcare education and data governance. This extends to anti-racism policy development as a member of the BC Anti-Racism Data Committee, and MNBC's Data Governance Committee, representing MNBC in the healthcare sector, advocating for justice and self-determination for marginalized communities. My career reflects a lifelong commitment to health, cultural integrity, reducing structural and systemic racism in BC, and excellence in service to the Métis Community and the public at large.*



## CHERI BAUER

*Cheri is a Métis woman, artist, writer, creator. She currently resides in the Okanagan.*



## MEGAN FLAMAND

*I am Megan Flamand, Métis, Cree, Mohawk, French, Scottish, and English, with roots in both Six Nations and Red River, and identify as Two-Spirited with the chosen name Ohonte Oka:ra, meaning "Green Eyes" in Mohawk. My healing journey from intergenerational trauma and addiction has led me to walk the Red Path and serve my community through Indigenous youth care, mental health, and cultural advocacy work. I am in a loving relationship with my German Mi'kmaq partner, who continues to support and inspire my path. As a lifelong artist, I express my experiences through painting, creating and storytelling rooted in cultural reclamation and healing, creativity, and connection guide both my personal and professional life.*



## RITA JASPER

*Growing up in Jasper, Alberta, was amazing, not only because of the wondrous surrounding nature with all my wild animal friends, but also because my Métis mother encouraged me to write stories and paint or draw pictures for her; she was my first teacher. In some ways, it was a quintessential Canadian story; some would even say enchanted, but like all fairy tales, demons or monstrous events often inhabit the stories. My narratives are about how one can rise above challenges.*



## LORRAINE LUCIE HNIDAN- KENDALL

*Tremendously grateful to share life in Gitxsan Lax Yip where kin support each other; love unconditionally, eat abundantly, enjoy clean waters in fresh air. Rules of respect, kindness and honouring community who work together, held firmly in Matriarchy. The learning curves steeped with playful curiosity, an inclusivity allowing for our unique perspectives, ebb and flow generously.*



## ELISE AUTUMN LYNN RAYE

*Elise Autumn-Lynn Raye is a Métis poet, writer, and frontline worker living on the west coast of Canada. Her work explores themes of identity, intergenerational healing, and the lived realities of Indigenous womanhood. Drawing from personal experience, she writes to reclaim voice, memory, and spirit. Elise works in community-based mental health and addiction support, centering Indigenous approaches to healing. This is part of her journey toward resistance, reclamation, and storytelling.*



## HANAKO NAGAO

*Hanako Nagao is an Artist living on the unceded territory of Secwépemc and Ktunaxa First Nations in Golden, BC. She is Métis on her mom's side and Japanese on her dad's side. Hanako embeds her culture in her art to highlight the strengths in connection to self, community, and ancestors. She is a mom to her 3 month old daughter, Kaya and is enjoying this new role in her life.*

THRIVING SPIRITS:  
MÉTIS PERSPECTIVES ON WELLNESS

# EDITORS

*The Atooshkayahk aansaamb chi kiikayhk (working together to heal) 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, not all members of this committee have chosen to be acknowledged in this magazine.*



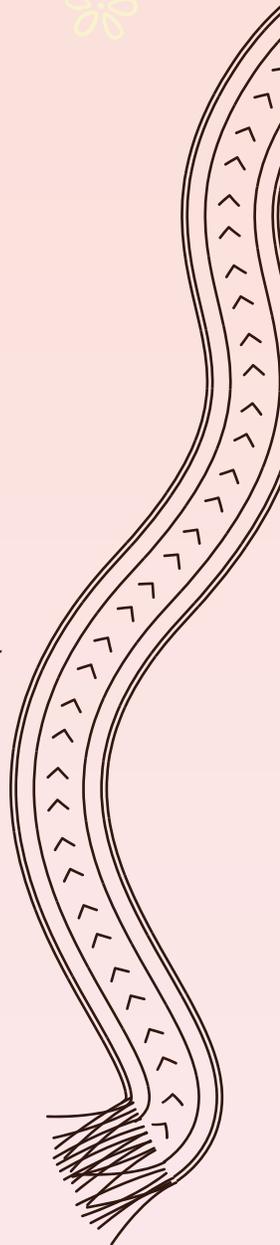
## APRIL PILUSO

*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.*



## LOGAN BURD

*Logan Burd (she/her) is a proud Métis Citizen of Métis Nation British Columbia. Logan is honoured to have grown up and currently resides on the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Peoples. Logan is a PhD student at the University of British Columbia Okanagan in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies – Community Engagement, Social Change, and Equity program. Her doctoral research explores how Métis youth conceptualize life promotion and how Métis youths' understandings can inform upstream youth suicide prevention. Logan is deeply grateful to be involved and a member of the Atooshkayahk aansaamb chi kiikayhk (working together to heal) 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.*



## MELISSA GROUNDS

*Melissa Grounds is a Métis woman living in the traditional unceded territory of the Lhleidli T'enneh, colonially known as Prince George in British Columbia. Melissa has a Bachelor of Arts in Politics, History, and Economics, with an employment history working frontline with people experiencing homelessness and behind the scenes administering federal funding for social service organizations. She is currently working on her Master of Social Work with a focus on developing clinical social work skills in trauma counselling and psychoeducational group facilitation. Melissa is passionate about providing low-barrier mental health support for individuals experiencing trauma symptoms as well as her own wellness and work-life balance. When Melissa is not writing her final paper she enjoys spending time on the land hiking, kayaking, running, gardening, berry picking, and spending quality time with her partner and dog. Melissa has been part of the Métis Mental Health & Wellness Committee since summer 2023.*



## MICHELLE PADLEY

*Taanishi, Michelle Padley dishinihkaashoon (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 Knowledge Translation Manager for Mental Health and Harm Reduction at Métis Nation BC. My background is in nursing where I have over 15 years of experience supporting youth, families, and adults on 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 am currently in the PhD in Nursing program at the University of Victoria where I aim to continue exploring Métis experiences of wellness.*



## SYDNEY LANDRIE

*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 third. 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.*



COVER ART: "Buffalo Magic" by Nevada Lynn