

MÉTIS WOMEN | BRITISH COLUMBIA



ENHANCING MÉTIS WOMEN'S HEALTH & RESILIENCY

Narrative Therapy Tree of Life Project is about identifying all the different aspects of your identity; including your past, future goals, strengths, and support system.



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Enhancing Métis Women's Health & Resiliency

The why:

- *The effort to address COVID-19 is both extremely important for us all and poses a range of challenges for individuals and families as they respond to the demands of the situation. The situation is stressful for everyone and it is normal to be anxious and worried. This activity is designed to provide information and suggestions about how best to cope in this difficult time. It is not intended to be a resource for people who are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please contact 911 immediately or present to your nearest emergency department.*
- One in two Canadians have — or have had — a mental illness by the time they reach 40 years old. In fact, at any given time, more than 6.7 million Canadians live with mental illness. It's statistics like these that underscore the need for all of us to get involved in one way or another in support of better mental health in Canada (Canadian Association of Mental Health).
- First Nations, **Métis** and Inuit people; women; people with lower income and millennials are at the highest risk of developing a mental illness.
- It's important to note that there is no single cause for most mental health problems. The causes are varied and complex, and often result from interactions between biology, genetics, family and social environments, and economic factors. Just because some people aren't among the highest risk groups, doesn't mean that they won't be affected by mental illness at some time in their life.
- The hope is to build greater connection and coping strategies to meet these new challenges in our community.

The What:

- The Tree of Life is a narrative therapy project, designed by Ncazelo Ncube of [REPSI](#) and David Denborough ([Dulwich Centre Foundation](#)). I have adapted it for the use of Métis community groups online in a six session programme. It provides a useful structure and mix of discussion and creative work. At the end of the course, the participants also have a piece of work that they can take away with them. It can also be a good home project.
- I have attached a worksheet to guide you through the stages (see below) and recorded a video to explain how I tend to run my sessions (see end). Hand-out courtesy of Danielle Bremmer.

Outline:

Introduction:

As a youth I was struggling and I sought the advice of Métis Elder Gladue. He thus proceeded to tell me that “I just needed to find my belly-button again” with a wide grin. A little confused, I knew there must be more to that statement and thus began my education in how many metis families used to keep the placentas of their children “belly buttons” and bury them under a family tree. The purpose was that no matter where they would wander in life there was a place to come back to and find their roots in their family.

My hope is that through this “Tree of Life” project we can each discover our roots and see the tree that we are and what it holds to nourish and help us and others.

Each session will cover a piece of the tree and give opportunity for reflection/discovery and a safe place to share (as much as you would like) with other Métis women.

Importance of grounding: Before beginning

See attached handout adapted from *Seeking Safety* by Lisa M. Najavits (2002).

www.winona.edu/resilience

Session One:

- Roots & Branches
- Getting to know others-where we have come from

Session Two:

- Ground
- Day to day life-adjusting to the “new normal”

Session Three:

- Trunk
- Coping skills and strategies

Session Four:

- Writing name in trunk-encouragement from others
- Words to describe you

Session Five: Leaves/Flowers

- Important People
- Gifts given

Session Six: Storms

- Preparing for things that might threaten your tree
- Crisis planning

Please see attached worksheet to follow and also examples of completed tree projects.