


Indigenous Voices for Well-being in Northern Manitoba: An Exploratory Study




Situating Myself


- ▶ “Like all of us, I bring to my work interpretations and analysis based on my world-view. I make decisions both consciously and unconsciously about what I choose to see, live and experience based on what resonates with my values, beliefs and interests. I interpret the evidence through the lens of my multiple identities,” (Russell-Mundine, 2012 p. 86).
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Diverse Communities

- ▶ 633 bands, over 2000 unique Aboriginal communities across Canada
 - ▶ 11 Language families, 53 different languages
 - ▶ Diverse legally, culturally, geographically, linguistically and socially
 - ▶ Often been viewed homogenously
 - ▶ Local understanding is needed
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Aims of the Study

- ▶ Gain Local Understanding of Issues that Matter to the People
 - ▶ Focus on Strengths, as well as Challenges
 - ▶ Do so in a way that is respectful, reciprocal, relevant and relational.
 - ▶ Contribute to the literature of micro-level studies to broaden understanding in Canada and Internationally
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Indigenous Research Paradigm

- ▶ Paradigmatic approach: determines the questions that are being asked, the tools that are used, the analysis, and the ways in which the findings are disseminated (Wilson, 2009)
 - ▶ Western Research has often “served as a metaphor for colonial knowledge, for power, and for truth,” (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008, p. 4)
 - ▶ IRP: places Indigenous peoples, epistemology and beliefs at the forefront.
 - ▶ Principles: acceptance of a non-structured fluid methodology (conversational-style ‘interviews’); reflexive; relationship-building; relational accountability; respect; reciprocity.
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Conversational Style

Unstructured, relational, sharing of stories, participatory




Findings:

Concern for Youth:


Perspective of Lower Education Quality

- ▶ Me: “Did you ever think about moving?”
“Maybe, just maybe, I was just thinking about it...so they [her young kids] can go have their education, cause they’re not getting a good education in here, like it’s slow...”
- ▶ We have nothing today, we have to give freedom to the next generation, we got to pass it on to them, if we don’t have education, we’re going down, because no one will be a leader... me, not enough education, all these jobs I had... not enough.”
- ▶ “Now we need education to do something – but not a lot of us have that because we were raised on the trapline, there’s lots of us...don’t have much education, but lots of trapping!”
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Concern for Youth: Distress Issues

- ▶ “This generation say ‘I don’t have anything’... they are not sharing... we used to share, kill a moose, even fish – I don’t sell them, I always give to elders... this generation, they don’t go to camps, they’ll go for a ride and want to go back home, they don’t even know how to fish!””
 - ▶ “Puk is not the same anymore... the violence went up more, just everything, people are just fighting one another, little crap*y gangs around here... the girls getting pregnant, they think it’s so easy... that’s all they see...”
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Governance and Development Issues

- ▶ “Unity and equality, not just development for one... not all this greed.”
 - ▶ “The current government system has been streamlined from the time of colonization, so it has in effect, become effective in what they have been trying to do and that is to keep us down.”
 - ▶ “[we are] trying to fight for our land, but a lot of issues to deal with from the back ... it is set that way and hard to change...”
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Minor Themes: Drugs and Alcohol

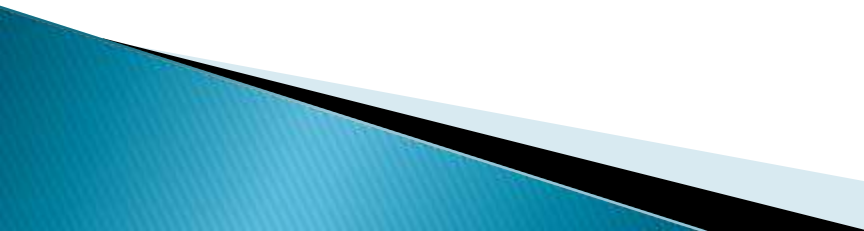
- ▶ Claire: (to Mary*), “Has there ever been a treatment centre in Puk?”
Mary: “No, you have to send them out... when they go to treatment and they get out they’ll start drinking again, I’ve seen that many times”.
 - ▶ “People start fights with each other... it’s mostly with family”.
 - ▶ “I’m brave enough to express my anger when I’m drinking... I would fight my own family, I wouldn’t fight anyone else.”
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Minor Themes: Residential School Experiences

- ▶ “I keep in touch with my friends from school, quite a few passed away from alcohol (under 50)... The ones I see back home, it’s like they aged twice... they can’t forget...they do talk to me... today I see them, they’re still the same”
- ▶ “I didn’t even know he went to residential school, he didn’t talk about it, but when I found out, I felt better, I didn’t think it was right [how she and her siblings were treated], but at least I understood”.

Minor Themes:

Revival and Re-learning of Culture and Traditions

- ▶ “I didn’t know I was an Indian... I was ashamed... because they were the ones who always died... but now I’m proud to be an Indian”
 - ▶ “I didn’t know if was half-while or whatever... I thought I was just a human being!”
 - ▶ “My grandparents spoke Cree, my mom, but my kids don’t....it stops with me... I didn’t matter before, but it matters now.”
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Strengths: Youth Cultural Continuation

- ▶ “My mom raised us to help others and don’t expect anything in return... ‘you don’t ask for anything’, she would say...”
- ▶ “There’s a confidence you feel when you’re with someone who knows what they’re doing...”



Strengths:

Positive Perspectives of Life and Community


- “The best thing about living out in Puk is you’re able to do anything you want no matter what the season is... cause it’s not just any one thing,...cause I was going to say, my one time that I get to jump into the lake, cause I make it a rule, to at least jump into the lake once... like what we’re doing now, having a conversation in the bush at the beginning of fall...” emphasizing his land-based point of view.
- “I feel freer, there is way more I can do, more than in the city, in the north, it’s a different kind of hustle and bustle.”
- “There is beauty here, peaceful, slow-paced, the chance to learn about my culture... many things to do... lots of family support”

Interrelatedness of Themes:



- ▶ “That’s where the whole residential school problem is with these kids, because I’d say it’s been about 2–3 generations now... loss of family values.”
- ▶ “I keep in touch with my friends from [residential] school, quite a few passed away from alcohol... The ones I see back home, it’s like they aged twice... they can’t forget...they do talk to me... today I see them, they’re still the same... I wish I could help them.”

Brief Conclusion

- ▶ Legacy of colonialism
 - ▶ Historical trauma
 - ▶ Evidence that Individual and community healing is needed
 - ▶ Other community-level studies point to cultural continuity & local autonomy as essential for well-being
 - ▶ Build on the Strengths – vocalize the resiliency, change the narrative
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Reflections

