

Summary Report

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network Kausattumi Grants Program, 2019-2020
DANIELLE ROOT, PHD INTERUNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

Exploring Mi'kmaw child rearing practices and caregivers meaning of fostering healthy connections between children and their families in Mi'kma'ki

Description of Research

Traditional Indigenous childrearing practices are documented but the impacts of dominant frameworks for understanding child development, including attachment theory, are little understood in the context of contemporary Indigenous childrearing practices. This is worrisome because Indigenous children continue to receive less equitable access to systems of education, health and justice.

The research that I am proposing aims to gather the voices of Mi'kmaq caregivers on their experiences and values on childrearing. It is important for this research to have the voices of Elders as well, to get an *Inu* perspective on traditional Mi'kmaq childrearing practices and the impacts of assimilation, including residential schools and the child welfare system. It is imperative to conduct Indigenous research that honours all our relations, but that also adheres to the academic standards; an approach known as *etuaptmumk*. 'Nothing about us, without us' is a common sentiment within Indigenous communities and scholarly circles. In order for the research to benefit the Mi'kmaw communities, it is essential to explore and develop the research questions in collaboration with Mi'kmaw Elders and community members of Mi'kmaki. The stories shared by Mi'kmaw Elders will provide a framework for the literature review, which will guide the development of research questions on contemporary Mi'kmaw childrearing practices and systemic impacts. Once the research questions are developed, they will be explored by honouring Mi'kmaw oral traditions through oral stories of Mi'kmaw caregivers, told through sharing circles.

Research Outcomes

There is a paradigm shift where Indigenous ways of knowing and being are becoming more of a priority in society as is seen in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and Treaty Education in Nova Scotia. In 2015, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has put forward 94 calls to action to address the systemic intergenerational impacts of assimilation practices imposed upon Indigenous peoples by the Canadian government. Identified as priorities to act upon, include Child Welfare, Health, Language and Culture, Education, and Justice. In 2015 as well, the Province of Nova Scotia has entered into a Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU) with the Mi'kmaw Grand Council affirming Mi'kmaw Treaty Rights, and in 2018 the Nova Scotia Department of Education has mandated that Treaty Education be implemented in the provincial education framework for grades primary to twelve. Initiatives such as the TRC and Treaty Education are promising and are fostering space for Indigenous, and more specifically, Mi'kmaw worldviews in dominant western systems, including that of academia.

The implications of my proposed research are highly relevant to every facet of the TRC and Treaty Education. Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and being, including the concept of Msit No'kmaq, are at the heart of reconciliation. By exploring contemporary Mi'kmaw childrearing values and practices and using a Mi'kmaw tribal methodological approach will have broad impacts, but also more specifically in the context of Mi'kmaki, the research will inform the Treaty Education Framework in Nova Scotia's public-school system.

Knowledge Sharing

- In the education system: as Mi'kmaw Education Coordinator
- Foster Care and Assessment working group - KMKNO Mi'kmaw Rights Initiative

Completed Project Deliverables

- All class work except GEDU 9004
- Initial portfolio submitted

Forthcoming Project Deliverables

- Coursework to be done by December 2020
- Portfolio artifacts described and submitted for proposal defense in Winter 2020
- Begin proposal development for proposal defense

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Activities Outside of Your Research

- Summer institute for new teachers - MSIT No'kmaq dans la vie quotidienne
- In service professional development for teachers - Msit No'kmaq dans le milieu scolaire
- Treaty Education Speakers Bureau - speaker

Future Plans

My future plans include: defending my portfolio (Winter 2021); building my proposal (Winter and Summer 2021); continuing to develop educational platforms for Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and being, treaty education, as well as Elders and Knowledge Holder's voices.