

# We Carry Our History with Us Indigenous Wellness & Roots of Trauma

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Vancouver, BC

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# Honoring our ancestors

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- Its important to recognize our homelands, to come together here in Coast Salish territory, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, close to the mouth of the Fraser River, a source of life, foods & strength for many indigenous Nations and communities in this large watershed
- Acknowledge the ancestors for their guidance and love, and to watch over us as we do this important work

# We Carry Our History With Us

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- Full weight is rarely given to the complexity and significance of contact and colonization in Canada and here in BC
- Many indigenous people today carry intergenerational traumas from colonial histories of their families, villages and Nations
- Indigenous people were decimated by disease alone brought by European settlers;
- As Indigenous Nations were destabilized by disease relative in scope to the black plague of Europe, Wars were fought over the territories of the “New World” and Canada proclaimed itself a Nation.

## We Carry our History with Us: Indigenous Wellness & Roots of Trauma



*Indigenous sovereignty; our ways of knowing (our laws), ways of being (relations between laws) & ways of doing (living our ways)...*

**Time Immemorial** Indigenous Nations Full Sovereignty in our homelands, sacred laws, ceremonies, language, oral histories & inherent rights to self-government

Nation to Nation agreements were made, initially trade systems/ economic, commercial based

Ceremonies, healing practices & Spiritual teachings

Rites of passage/rites

Kinship systems (Mother and father clan), extended family

Local Foods & sustenance

Trade, Seasonal rounds

Language & Story

Crafts, Stories, Treaties

Consensus Based & Consensus

Decision Making

Dance, Songs

Celebrations

Intergenerational Living

We are all related, *enigmas*, but *not* *enigmas* for all that is

Healthy ecosystems

Safe community living

Healthy Relations

Sustainable Development

Waterland planning

Sustainable housing

Sustainable water

Local economy

Big love, Wellbeing

All ages are safe

Grow up strong

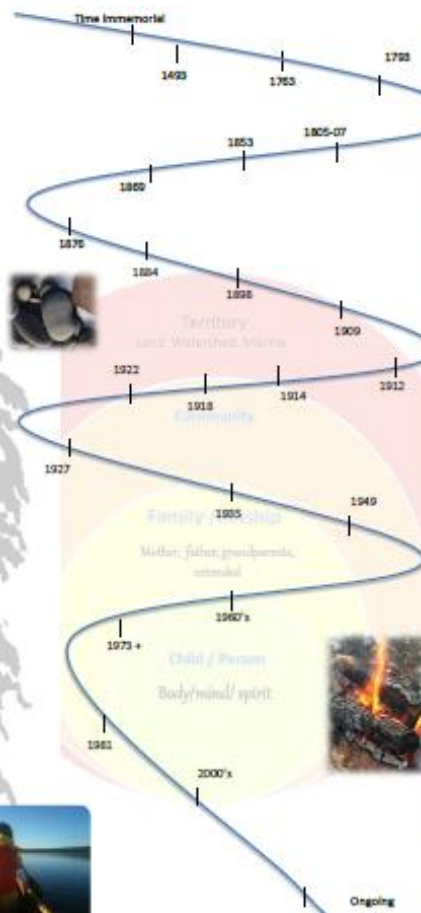
Likewise learning

Our Strengths are here

We are here to stay.

**CONNECTIONS**

**wellness**



**Policy of Assimilation** (DC lens shared)

Colonial powers to assimilate Indigenous peoples throughout our shared history

1493 Doctrine of Discovery, Terra Nullius, Papal Bulls, i.e. (Dane, Discovery (1493) and Romanus Pontifex (1455))

1670 Royal Charter for Hudson Bay Company

1763 Royal Proclamation: recognizes aboriginal rights and title

1776 small pox epidemics

1813 Douglas Treaties on Vancouver Island

1857 Nanaimo and Fort Simpson Indian schools open

1861 St. Mary's and Coquille River Schools open; 22 schools in BC over 100 years

1862 epidemics, small pox, influenza

1867 British North America Act

1876 Indian Act legislation

1880's pass system on reserves

1884 Prohibition on reserve

1899 Regulations to stop using fish weirs

1912 McKenna-Baileys Royal Commission looked at Indian reserves

1920 Indian Act: residential schools are mandatory (Canada residential schools - 100+ years)

1927 Indian Act prohibiting Indians from organizing for land claims (i.e. no more treaties)

1951 Indian Act a membership public schools; women to vote in band council elections

1960's "honor" of FN children & right to vote in Federal Elections

1970's Numerous legal assertions court action/Decisions starting with the Calder case, White Paper, Guerin, Simon, Dick, Marquess, Delgamuoch, Campbell, Marshall, Haida, Tlingit, Tsilhqot'in and many more

1982 Canada's Constitution Act R.S.1 recognizes aboriginal rights

1996 Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples

2005 Truth and Reconciliation Report

2018 Canada officially adopts UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples

2021 150th anniversary of Confederation

Oppressive state social policies continue to child welfare, education, housing, etc.

What symptoms/impacts do you see?

**DI connection**

Roots of trauma: Intergenerational, collective and vicarious trauma





# Land

- Doctrine of Discovery, terra nullius and papal bulls after in 1493 for the 'New World'
- No one lived here, the lands were empty, proceed with colonial developments
- seen as the "other" if seen at all
- We often started with commercial relations with the 'visitors'; they tapped in our extensive trade systems
- Some treaties signed in BC
- Waves of sickness quickly followed



# We carry our History with Us

- Significant LOSS of families, elders and children from waves of epidemics; small pox, influenza, measles, TB, some ceremony, cultural practices and many healers lost too

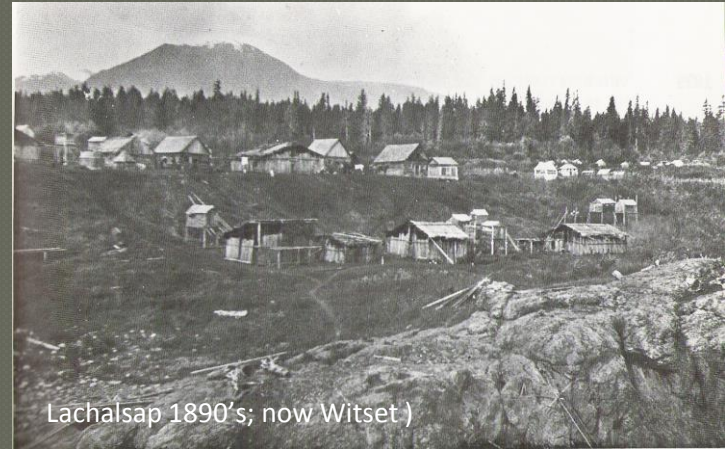
Disconnect from land, from spirit, epidemics, segregation, loss of family, grandparents, our governing system/decision making ways were challenged; so much trauma in the early days (mid 1860's onward)

Video installation still of  
'There's Blood in the  
Rocks' by artist Marianne  
Nicolson. (Marianne  
Nicholson/University of  
Victoria Legacy Art  
Galleries);  
[http://www.macleans.ca/news/  
canada/how-a-smallpox-  
epidemic-forged-modern-  
british-columbia/](http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/how-a-smallpox-epidemic-forged-modern-british-columbia/)



# Cultural Systems & Worldview

- Indigenous systems of governance, law and relationship to land were being displaced by settler ways
- Sedentary living and wage labor; push for agricultural development
- Imposed decision making processes/ Band Councils
- The oneness, life's breath, sacred balance to be replaced with focus on Christian religion, values and practices;



Lachalsap 1890's; now Witset )



Nee tahi Buhn, Francois Lake BC



## BC Indian Residential Schools



● These schools have buildings that are still standing

|                     |                              |                        |                |
|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Ahousat             | Ahousat                      | 1869-1907              | Protestant     |
| Alert Bay           | St. Michael's                | 1828-1873              | Anglican       |
| Alert Bay           | Alert Bay (John's Home)      | 1868-1903              | Anglican       |
| Amisk Lake          | A.L. Dormitory               | 1868-1977              | Roman Catholic |
| Christie's          | Rupert Island                | 1869-1979              | Roman Catholic |
| Cranbrook           | St. Eugene's                 | 1868-1970              | Roman Catholic |
| Fr. St. John's Home | Lejac                        | 1869-1907<br>1822-1873 | Roman Catholic |
| Kamloops            | Kamloops                     | 1869-1970              | Roman Catholic |
| Kilmer              | Elizabeth Long Memorial      | 1822-1864              | Methodist      |
| Lower Post          | Lower Post                   | 1811-1833              | Roman Catholic |
| Lyons               | St. George's                 | 1868-1870              | Anglican       |
| Mission             | St. Mary's                   | 1861-1886              | Roman Catholic |
| North Vancouver     | St. Paul's                   | 1868-1908              | Roman Catholic |
| Port Alberni        | Alberni                      | 1868-1973              | United         |
| Port Simpson        | Croft's Home for Girls       | 1869-1923              | Methodist      |
| Port Simpson        | Croft's Home for Boys        | 1869-1923              | Methodist      |
| Sechart             | Coqualeetza                  | 1861-1866<br>1866-1920 | Methodist      |
| Sechart             | Sechart                      | 1862-1873              | Roman Catholic |
| Volcano             | Christie/Kalakwa             | 1868-1869              | Roman Catholic |
| Williams Lake       | Cariboo St. Joseph's Mission | 1869-1913<br>1869-1907 | Roman Catholic |
| Yale                | All Saints                   | 1868-1870              | Anglican       |

# Residential Schooling

Epidemics & then close behind the reserve system (often as a form of quarantine; segregation)

1857, 1861 the first Indian schools in BC, Nanaimo, Fort Simpson, St. Mary's & Coqualeetza...

In BC, a total of 22 schools over 100+ years in BC

- BCTF; Project Heart map



# Indian Residential Schools

- Indigenous children and youth were required to attend involuntary Indian residential schooling, where they were not only isolated from their families and communities, but from wider Canadian society as well.
- In this forced isolation Indigenous children and youth were subject to what amounted to attempted cultural genocide.
- Close to 40% of the students who attended these institutions literally did not survive them. The majority of those who did survive carried extensive trauma with them;
- At least four generations of children attended IRS.



# Languages

- Residential schooling nearly succeeded in the goal of eradicating Indigenous languages.
- Indigenous children were prohibited from speaking their language or engaging in their cultural practices or protocols. Punishment was swift and cruel.
- Siblings were often split up, and children were sent to attend residential school in different Indigenous Nations where they spoke a different Indigenous language.



# First Nations

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- The Indigenous Nations were disenfranchised from their land and reduced to marginalized territories known as 'reserves' where their people were confined; pass system
- Indigenous Nations were forced to adopt a band system of governance, and were prohibited from prospering from the commercial use of resources
- Indigenous Nations were segregated, impoverished, and it was fully expected that they would expire; so there was need for further treaty making in BC; denial of aboriginal rights and title continues

## Resistance and Adaptation

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- Indigenous peoples did not simply fade into existence, we did operate solely live on reserves; many practices went underground
- During the Indian Wars, Indigenous Nations across North America struggled for a co-existence on terms other than assimilation, integration or extermination; many served in the Wars to come back home and not recognized for their immense contributes and further mistreated
- Indigenous people could not enter establishments that served alcohol, attend university;
- all status Indians had the right to vote in BC elections in 1949
- Status Indian women received the right to vote in federal elections in 1960; women could vote in Band Council elections as of 1951



# The Child Welfare System

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- After the decline of the Indian Residential School system came the emergence and rise of the child welfare system in Canada.
- The “60s Scoop,” continued maltreatment, neglect and less funding for Indigenous children and youth in care.
- Indigenous children today make up some 6% of Canada’s population, yet Aboriginal children and youth represent an estimated 40% of children living in foster care (Farris-Manning and Zandstra 2003).
- Highest number of children in care; even higher than IRS over 4+ generations; state oppression continues
- Child welfare models need to be based upon indigenous family development models; we are one

# Today

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- Since 2006, the Aboriginal population has grown by 42.5%—more than four times the growth rate of the non-Aboriginal population over the same period.
- In BC , a 38% growth rate since 2006.
- The Aboriginal population is young. The average age of the Aboriginal population was 32.1 years in 2016—almost a decade younger than the non-Aboriginal population (40.9 years).
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- Close to 44% of Aboriginals in Canada now live on reserve, and 56% of Aboriginals live in urban areas (Statistics Canada 2017). Regions vary.
- All stats are Statistics Canada 2017.
- Between 2001 and 2026, the population of Aboriginals between 15 and 29 is projected to grow by 37% compared with 6% for the general Canadian population (Hull, 2008).
- The social determinants measure many things – shares our illnesses

# Social determinants of health

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Some things are measured:

- ◉ Diabetes, childhood sickness & mortality
- ◉ Chronic disease
- ◉ Over use of prescription drugs
- ◉ Our people leave – death by suicide, self harm, addictions
- ◉ Smoking
- ◉ Hospitalization
- ◉ Some Others...?

# Intergenerational Trauma

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- Many Indigenous people today carry traumas from our diverse histories.
- Despite the diversity of histories, Indigenous people share common histories of the epidemics of contact, the disenfranchisement of Indigenous nations from their ancestral territories, the imposed reserve and band systems, residential schooling, missionization and bans on Indigenous culture, the child welfare system, health, education and the continued marginalization of Indigenous peoples and nations.



# Our big hurt

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- Our big hurt – we carry it with us
- It sits in our bodies
- Trauma impacts everyone differently
- We need to learn what It is and how we can take care of this big hurt, to not carry this shame and have more wellbeing, more indigenous wellness in our lives; lets consider that too
- There are different kinds of trauma – we have what people consider complex trauma
- Lets learn a little more about trauma



Awit zah, that's all.  
Sne cel yegh, with  
thanks!