

Bi-culturedness Effects on the Mental Health of Indigenous Peoples

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Introduction

Indigenous Peoples in North America have faced colonization, forced relocation, racism, Indian residential schools and boarding schools, and, many have also faced the loss of their Traditional ways, including the inability to use cultural and Traditional rituals and ceremonies as well as their languages. For many Indigenous Peoples, they must navigate two cultures; Euro-centric and Indigenous. Navigating between the two cultures has been labelled 'bi-cultured' by Brown and Smirles (2003). Indigenous Peoples, regardless of where they live, now exist in a modern world where the dominant society or world order has been mostly derived from historical imperial political structures that brought colonization violences and capitalism upon Indigenous cultures. An ethnocentric and Eurocentric culture in the Americas, particularly in North America, has dominated Indigenous Peoples social orders. Indigenous Peoples today are restoring their practices within their cultures but are still working and living within the Eurocentric culture. This may lead to internal conflict in terms of spirituality, social relations, and economic patterns that may also lead to negative behaviours that contribute to mental health and health problems. This paper explores the topic of bi-culturedness and its effect on Indigenous Peoples in North America.

History

Many scholars highlight the various forms of historical trauma that have caused mental health problems for Indigenous Peoples in North America and cite various relationships between European newcomers and Indigenous Peoples as confusing, primarily one-sided, and detrimental to Indigenous Peoples (Duran, 2006; Gone, 2008; Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo,

2003; McCabe, 2008). Treaties, laws, and policies between Indigenous Peoples and Europeans really were created to enhance the lives of European settlers and to rid them of the pestilent 'Indians' that resided on the land they wanted (Perdue & Green, 2007). Language was a barrier as all Indigenous Peoples did not speak any European language at the time of contact, so learning to understand the needs and wants of the Europeans was difficult (Perdue & Green, 2007; Yazzie, 2000). Learning about a new language and culture created barriers to communicating and advocating for Indigenous cultures, languages and traditions. Illnesses brought by the Europeans created fear and havoc amongst Indigenous nations (Waldram, Herring, & Young, 2006). Further, Indigenous Peoples were being forced away from areas that they settled in for hunting, fishing, or gathering of foods and family (Barman, Hébert, & McCaskill, 1986). Change came briskly for some Indigenous communities.

With settlement and manifest destiny moving forward, treaties, policies and laws established by European colonial settlements and later governments, greatly disadvantaged Indigenous Peoples because of language, cultural differences, and worldview. The nation state laws created for the countries of Canada and United States catered to the Europeans granting them access to the lands that Indigenous Peoples called home - where First Peoples hunted, grew sustenance from the lands, and lived (Perdue & Green, 2007; Jones, 2006; Yazzie, 2000). The treaties provided some form of payment for the lands, but many Indigenous chiefs and Elders did not understand what they were signing would be legal documents binding them forever in their signatures to an agreement and in most cases this meant they sold their territorial lands and would no longer be able to migrate and move freely on their lands as necessary due to legal restrictions implemented in the treaties (Perdue & Green, 2007; Yazzie, 2000). Many scholars have wrote that the

European settlers believed that over time, Indigenous Peoples would be assimilated or die off and would not continue to be a burden on the creation of the North American nations of Canada and the United States of America (Jones, 2006; Roubideaux, 2002; Yazzie, 2000; Perdue & Green, 2007; Stonechild, 2006). After a few decades with minor decreases in Indigenous populations, and little movement toward assimilation, both countries created residential schools and made it illegal to practice cultural rituals and ceremonies (Perdue & Green, 2007; U.S. Congress, 1986; Barman, Hébert & McCaskill, 1986; Stonechild, 2006). These attempts to assimilate First Peoples in the Americas were very effective as many languages diminished and even disappeared, many cultural ceremonies were forgotten, and many Indigenous Peoples across the Americas grew up in Eurocentric institutions, not knowing their culture, language, or historical family teachings as well as their Indigenous community (Gone, 2008).

The Indian residential and boarding school experience played a significant role in creating traumas both physical and mental. Most Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their families and communities by government representatives and sent to live in residential/boarding schools (Stonechild, 2006). The schools were created as a way for North American governments to rid themselves of the 'Indian problem' (Stonechild, 2006) by educating their children in the European worldview. This plan of schooling would start the assimilation process of the next generations and included forcing Indigenous children to learn English by physical punishment for using their Indigenous languages or ceremonies. The governments did not care about the quality of the education given nor the living conditions for those Indigenous children that resided within the schools - only that they may assimilate these children into the dominant Euro-centric culture and force the denouncing of the Indigenous culture through a 'brainwashing' process that

rewarded citizenship to the Indigenous children that behaved well within the residential schools and learned English and Euro-centric Christian cultures (Stonechild, 2006; Yazzie, 2000). The Indigenous children that were forced to attend these schools lived in conditions that were abhorrent; such as the sharing of beds, clothing, and linens which promoted mental and physical illness (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2009). Many Indigenous children died from illnesses that were curable (pneumonia, tuberculosis, pertussis, polio, whooping cough and infections for lesions), while others became majorly depressed and committed suicide or died trying to escape the residential school to find their home (Stonechild, 2006; U.S. Congress, 1986; Gone, 2008). Sexual and physical abuse by many of the staff at the residential/boarding schools was also rampant, and in Canada, the continued support of the existence of Indian residential schools was based on reports from Indian Affairs agents, such as the Davin Report¹, and other political discussion papers (e.g. John Taylor's *Development of an Indian Policy for the Northwest 1869-79*). Indian residential schools began in the early 1800s in Canada and the final one was not closed until 1996 (Stonechild, 2006).

Current Findings

As Indigenous youth returned to their communities after spending years at residential schools, they were ill-equipped to understand their culture and live within their home communities (Stonechild, 2006; Gone, 2008; Kunitz, 2004). Families torn apart by the forced abduction and Euro-centric education of their children witnessed many of their family members finding coping strategies for their pain through the use of alcohol, drugs, and in some cases, suicide (Bornstein & Cote, 2006; Call et al, 2006; Cochrane, 1992). Indigenous children at the boarding and

¹ The Davin Report (1879) recommended that the Canadian government introduce residential schools for all Indian children in hopes of 'civilizing' and creating 'good' citizens.

residential schools learned English, Christianity and Euro-centric culture (Stonechild, 2006). Indigenous children also lost how to be a daughter or son as they did not have a chance to interact with their parents – they only had school officials to interact with in their surroundings (Stonechild, 2006; Cochrane, 1992). Without the normal familial interactions, Indigenous children did not learn how interaction between parents and children were conducted (Cochrane, 1992). Children at residential school did not receive the normal love and care and affection that is between parents and child and this created other emotional and mental health problems when they tried to ‘grow up’ and become adults, regardless of their place of residency (Blackstock, 2006). These children, who did not know the love of family members, developed mental health issues that include lack of self-esteem, remorse for learning another culture, and not knowing how to join the two cultures that they knew (Gone, 2008; Yazzie, 2000; Blackstock, 2006). Still today, many turn to alcohol, drugs, gambling, crime, or other methods to self-heal and lessen their internalized guilt and trauma, but this internalization only creates further oppression and opposition within Indigenous survivors that create more community level mental health problems to perpetuate the cycle of traumas (Stewart, 2008; Gone, 2008).

Further stress and assimilation tactics occurred in the 1960s, especially in Canada, where child welfare professionals scooped Indigenous children from their families and placed them for adoption far from their homes, even in other countries (Blackstock, 2006). Many Indigenous children were again forced or forcibly taken from Indigenous families and communities to be raised in Euro-centric Christian homes that would teach English and the Euro-centric culture and completely denounce and reject the Indigenous culture that the child came from (Blackstock, 2006). Many Indigenous children were adopted out before their fifth birthday, and as adults this

created a sense of longing to understand where they belonged as many did not look or feel that they belonged with the family that was raising them (Blackstock, 2006). While these children did not experience physical, emotional or sexual abuse necessarily, they were left with an empty feeling that created mental health problems like depression, anxiety, lack of self-esteem and they too turned to self-healing through drugs and alcohol (Yazzie, 2000; Blackstock, 2006; Gone, 2008; Stewart, 2008; Jervis et al, 2006).

After decades of residential schools, not legally being able to practice cultural rituals and ceremonies, forced relocation, and governmental interference such as adoption (Sixties Scoop, child welfare issues, inadequate housing, funding for Indigenous problems, and major health concerns), the 1950s and 1960s saw policies and laws changed in both countries which allowed Indigenous Peoples more freedom, and a return to their culture and language, but not their lands (Weaver, 1981). The mid-century changes to the laws and policies had already done their damage to Indigenous Peoples, and when they returned to their families and communities, many did not know how to cope with the physical, mental and sexual abuses they had suffered through at residential schools. Even if Indigenous Peoples did not attend residential schools, family and community members were further injured by the perpetuation of traumas in their communities that compounded on the already fragile Indigenous cultures (Jervis et al, 2006).

Through the twentieth century, food sources changed from wild game and fish to a market diet (Willows, 2006). This had a significant impact on Indigenous Peoples' everyday life as money was the only way to purchase the goods and food they needed to survive and that required a high level of interaction with the dominant Euro-centric culture while maintaining an Indigenous

worldview, culture, values and beliefs. The stress from all these changes, including historical trauma, and the postcolonial stress disorder (Duran (2006) calls the soul wound) all worked in synergy to cause Indigenous Peoples to feel outcast.

Jervis et al (2006) argue that historical trauma creates a historical consciousness as it is passed around communities and through generations: “Historical consciousness denotes individual and/or group awareness of the past, whereas historical trauma refers to the lingering and presumably negative effects of traumas experienced by previous generations on contemporary peoples” (Jervis et al, 2006, p. 529). According to Jervis et al’s (2006) description, historical consciousness will remain in all Indigenous Peoples regardless of where they live or their affinity and affiliation to their tribe as long as they have learned about their culture. For example, Cherokee people that were forced to relocate in Oklahoma from their homelands in Georgia have passed the experience on through oral and written traditions, so regardless of where a Cherokee person resides today, they would have a historical consciousness of the trauma and negative effects that the forced relocation called the Trail of Tears and how it impacted their Peoples and their family (Perdue & Green, 2007).

One avenue to create awareness about historical trauma and its effects would be through formal education like the Euro-centric system in North America (Jervis et al, 2006; Stonechild, 2006). It is possible that if the historical knowledge is not reflected accurately and correctly, further trauma may occur, but further trauma could also occur if the trauma is ignored (Jervis et al, 2006) - by creating a historical consciousness through secondary traumatising Indigenous Peoples will feel connected to the initial trauma of their ancestors and may internalize that while

they interact with and within the dominant culture and society (Gone, 2008; Stewart, 2008).

Since almost all Indigenous Peoples attend formal education at some point in their lives, they are re-introduced to the original traumas that were felt by Indigenous Peoples throughout North America, but are likely not going to advocate or express their true emotions about the trauma within the formal education setting as it is very Euro-centric and is one place in their lives where they must navigate between the two cultures delicately (Stonechild, 2006; Gone, 2008; Stewart, 2008). This is much more traumatic if the Indigenous learners are comprised of a small number of students within a larger formal education setting, in which the Indigenous learner wants and needs to be a part of this group for their future employment (Barman, Hébert, & McCaskill, 1986; Stonechild, 2006; Blackstock, 2006; Jervis et al, 2006).

It is necessary to remember that Indigenous Peoples in North America make up approximately 2 or 3 percent of the total population (U.S. Congress, 1986; Tjepkema, 2002). Therefore if they want seek employment, live, or learn in the mainstream culture, they will likely hide their emotions about historical trauma in fear that it will place them in an outcast position within their community (Jervis et al, 2006; Tjepkema, 2002). It is likely that Indigenous Peoples internalize this struggle between two cultures and this will create health and mental health problems because Indigenous Peoples feel a need to appear to 'fit in' if they want to succeed and have money for food, shelter, and clothing, which is all controlled by the Euro-centric culture. Indigenous Peoples may oppress their Indigenous culture in certain situations, but this only oppresses everyone within the society as new problems occur (Duran, Firehammer, and Gonzalez, 2008). Therefore it is not hard to understand that healing Indigenous Peoples is not just an individual healing, but a family, community and societal healing (Duran, Firehammer, and Gonzalez, 2008;

Stewart, 2008; Gone, 2008). Indigenous scholarship is one example where Indigenous Peoples may hide or oppress their culture to feel that they fit in with the academy, where they would like to be employed (Deloria, 2005).

Advocacy and political rhetoric are the cornerstones to policy and legislative change in North American society. Until the 1970s, Indigenous Peoples in North America had done little to advocate for better living conditions regardless of their place of residency (Weaver, 1981). Since the 1970s, Indigenous Peoples have created pan-Indigenous organizations² in both Canada and the United States that have advocated for better living conditions, greater autonomy and self-governance, better funding, treaty rights, return of lands for hunting and fishing, better human rights, and organization of institutions to be able to heal from all the historical trauma (Weaver, 1981; Mashford-Pringle, 2008). Indigenous Peoples in Canada received an apology from Prime Minister Stephen Harper in June 2008, which is only one small step in the healing process. As the Canadian society begins to understand the historical trauma and the current living conditions, another step in the healing journey may be considered complete, but Indigenous Peoples must work on the individuals, families and communities that have been affected by historical trauma and ensure they understand how to live within the dominant culture without losing their own culture, language, and traditions. While healing the historical trauma is important, there must be some emphasis placed on healing the historical trauma by using traditional healing methods and cultural activities (Stewart, 2008; Duran et al, 2008; Gone, 2008).

² The National Indian Brotherhood, now known as Assembly of First Nations, was created in 1969 after the White Paper. The American Indian Movement was created in 1964 and both organizations continue to advocate for Indigenous people in Canada and the United States respectively.

Indigenous Peoples in the 21st century must learn how to continue their cultures, languages and traditions as well as instil their worldview with its values and beliefs for their children and grandchildren, all this while managing navigate the Euro-centric dominant culture that still threatens to end this knowledge and way of life by blindly ignoring it or diminishing the issues that have occurred (Yazzie, 2000; Brown & Smirles, 2003; Gone, 2008). While attempting to revitalize and carry on with an Indigenous worldview, all Indigenous Peoples must also find work, advocate, educate, and live within the mainstream society that does not have the same culture, language, traditions or worldview (Gone, 2008). Many Indigenous Peoples and organizations have begun to build the necessary infrastructure for a return to Indigenous and traditional healing (Duran et al, 2008; Gone, 2008). For example, Anishinabe Health Centre in Toronto provides both traditional and Western mental health professionals and practices, which allows Indigenous Peoples the opportunity to work in both cultures and not have to compromise either (personal knowledge).

Stonechild (2006) argues that education will be the new buffalo, or the way to provide food, shelter and clothing for Indigenous Peoples now and into the future. If the new buffalo is education, then Indigenous Peoples need to work with educators, politicians, and society to recover their Indigenous history, which will help with the healing journey as well as help both Indigenous Peoples and the rest of society to navigate between the two cultures. This may in turn reduce the health and mental health issues that currently plague Indigenous communities. Using the formal education system, Indigenous Peoples need to learn how changes in curriculum occur and advocate for changes in the counselling psychology realm to include Indigenous healing methods (Stewart, 2008; Stonechild, 2006; Jervis et al, 2006). Duran et al (2008), Gone

(2008), and McCabe (2008) express a concern that Indigenous healing is not held in the same prestige as other psychology therapies and this further oppresses Indigenous culture and Peoples as they have no place to heal that is uniquely Indigenous and positive. Duran et al (2008) also note that everything is political, and without support from the Euro-centric governments (both Canada and the United States) to support traditional Indigenous healing methods, there is likely to be continued suffering and mental health problems within Indigenous communities. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation was established in Canada to help Aboriginal people that had attended residential schools to begin to heal from the traumatic experiences (physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually), but the federal government only funded the organization in hopes of avoiding the residential school survivors and acknowledging that the past governments had played a large part in the trauma.

In Canada, the federal government understands the need for Indigenous healing methods, but has not supported or endorsed these methods either in policy development or funding levels (personal knowledge). Duran et al (2008) suggest that the current power structure does not have enough Indigenous Peoples to advocate from a political standpoint, and therefore little effort is placed on dealing with historical trauma, which in turn does not help with the healing of Indigenous individuals, families or communities. To heal, Indigenous Peoples need support from external sources like government as well as having a strong sense of how to navigate between the Indigenous world and the Euro-centric world (Gone, 2008; Stewart, 2008; Jervis et al, 2006).

The Canadian government has not been pushed to understand the needs of Indigenous Peoples in Canada for their healing. The 'soul wound'³ cannot be healed without support, encouragement,

³ 'Soul wound' is a term established by Eduardo Duran, American Indian psychologist and scholar, to denote the impact of historical trauma on Indigenous Peoples' mental health.

and understanding of the alternative ways of healing that do not follow a bio-medical Euro-centric model.

In the United States, the federal government under the self-governance rhetoric has begun to shift funding and policy development to individual tribes. This comes with major concessions that limit access to medical services, funding (like Medicaid or Medicare) that are afforded to American citizens in need of medical benefits that they would not otherwise have, and increased accountability for what Congressional funds are being used for (DeJong, 2008). By advocating for self-governing American Indian tribes, the United States government *ducks* when it comes to responsibility for healing historical trauma, and places the need for Indigenous traditional healing at the hands of tribal governments, and does not have to provide additional funding to create traditional healing spaces and places (Gone, 2008). Indigenous Peoples are forging ahead to establish traditional healing practices that use traditional knowledge *and* Euro-centric methodologies, which may work better as Indigenous Peoples are forced to live a bi-cultured life in North America (Gone, 2008; Jervis et al, 2006).

Both federal governments have effectively left traditional healing to Indigenous Peoples to 'sort out' and find solutions to fusing two very different cultural and worldview therapies (Duran et al, 2008). Neither country through their health care funding has provided payment for traditional healing services rendered by and to Indigenous Peoples, nor have they advocated on behalf of Indigenous Peoples for formal education programs that would incorporate or be wholly traditional healing methods (Duran et al, 2008). Gone (2008) expresses concern that more work

needs to be done to have traditional healing treated with the same respect as contemporary psychotherapy.

Stewart (2008), Duran (2006), Duran, Firehammer and Gonzalez (2008), Gone (2008), and McCabe (2008) all argue that to begin to heal mental health issues for Indigenous Peoples, it is necessary to use Indigenous cultural practices within the therapy. While Duran (2006) provides some great examples of using cultural practices within mental health therapy, but he has somewhat neglected that there also needs to be some therapy looking at how to live and negotiate between the Euro-centric and Indigenous cultures. None of the scholars mentioned above have discussed the effects that living in two worlds can have on mental health, yet it is the very essence of why historical trauma continues to cause such mental health and health problems.

Gone (2008) noted that Indigenous Peoples followed a seasonal resettlement, which is defined as moving from one land base to another based on the season and what could be acquired in an area. For example, Algonquin people in northern Quebec would move along the Ottawa River during the summer months when fish was plentiful and move inland during the winter when big game was easily available (personal knowledge). Seasonal resettlement is no longer available to Indigenous Peoples as urban areas have overtaken some physical spaces that used to be used for other purposes like family gatherings or food gathering, while other lands have little or no game or fish available anymore and are useless for their traditional purposes (Perdue & Green, 2007; Gone, 2008). The idea of moving about the vast North American lands to take what was needed was very much a part of traditional Indigenous cultures and played an extremely important role

in their mental health and health as foods differed by location as well as ceremonies and traditional healers (Gone, 2008; Duran et al, 2008; Willows, 2006).

Gone (2008) further argues that different traditional healers were available in different locations depending on the season and that different physical landscapes provided different healing powers. In the current context, Indigenous Peoples do move between urban areas and their home communities regularly to attain employment or education, but this is no longer for culture, tradition or healing (Levesque, 2003; Gone, 2008). The Indigenous Peoples that move between urban areas and Indigenous communities may move for many reasons, but there is no research about the effects that migrating between locales has on the health or mental health of Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, it could be speculated that such moves not only improve the material wealth of Indigenous Peoples, but also provide some forms of healing that may not be available in both locations.

When Indigenous Peoples move now, it is likely brought about for employment or post-secondary education, which is another intersection that the two cultures are trying to negotiate and heal for the good of Indigenous Peoples (Stonechild, 2006; Gone, 2008; Jervis et al, 2006). The freedoms that Indigenous Peoples may have had moving between physical spaces in the past has certainly been contained and legislated, which may put more stress on Indigenous Peoples who are required to move for employment or education. Gone (2008) also suggests that the physical space in which they need to move to in the Euro-centric culture may further oppress Indigenous culture, language and traditions, which further strains an Indigenous individual trying to navigate within the two cultures.

Gone (2008) stresses the importance that land has in Indigenous culture. Land, or Mother Earth for Indigenous Peoples, has its' own therapeutic qualities and if the physical landscape changes, health and mental health problems will occur (Gone, 2008). Large skyscrapers, vast university campuses, miles of roads with millions of automobiles is not soothing for many people and can have negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples as they settle in new and unfamiliar areas to attain employment or education. Watching Niagara Falls is far more soothing and healing to the soul than seeing thousands of cars crossing at the Rainbow Bridge and speeding down the highway towards the Golden Horseshoe's many different workplaces and universities. Travelling Thunder, interviewed by Gone (2008), explains that many Indigenous Peoples would migrate to locations for the apparent healing powers of the physical landscape and that as those landscapes change and become more urbanized, Indigenous Peoples try to find new healing spaces that may not exist. Travelling Thunder further notes that Indigenous Peoples try to work with the Euro-centric culture to utilize traditional healing methods of physical landscape, but are drowned out by the constant buzz and noise of 'progress for progress sake' (Gone, 2008).

As Indigenous Peoples navigate where they can attain traditional healing spaces and physical and mental landscapes for healing, they must work around and through the legalities put in place by the dominant Euro-centric culture, who do not understand the need for such spaces (Gone, 2008). Stopping Indigenous Peoples from being in physical spaces, or disallowing them from practicing traditional ceremonies or gatherings has been linked to health and mental health problems like addictions, suicide, obesity, heart problems, and family violence (Gone, 2008; Stewart, 2008). Physical spaces and the traditional healing powers that these spaces contained are now gone

without acknowledgement from the newcomers (Gone, 2008). Indigenous Peoples have advocated, argued, and tried to work with the political process to rectify and find solutions as even the governments⁴ see how physical landscapes can have an impact on everyone, not just Indigenous Peoples. More is being done about environmental issues, lakefront properties, and maintain natural beauty than in the past - this is another route to healing, but one in which Indigenous Peoples have had to share traditional knowledge and denounce Euro-centric cultural beliefs about land and material things (Gone, 2008). There is no internal conflict for Indigenous Peoples when negotiating physical space because the idea that physical landscapes, especially those with traditional healing properties, are damaged, it is well known that they cannot be brought back (Gone, 2008; Duran et al, 2008). Therefore Indigenous Peoples do not try to acculturate or understand the dominant culture's views about physical landscapes or places, but rather resist and try to oppress the beliefs about regeneration of physical and natural resources.

Duran et al (2008) argue that Indigenous Peoples must join the two cultures as opposed to walking between them to heal the historical trauma and begin to create a positive historical consciousness. Much like Stonechild (2006), Duran et al (2008) argue that creating awareness amongst all of a society about the historical trauma and current issues through a formal education setting is the best way to heal the society and create a positive space for Indigenous Peoples to learn about the dominant culture without oppression, which leads to health and mental health problems. Duran et al (2008) recommend that the formal education system for mental health professionals must embrace cultures and traditional practices to heal individual clients and their

⁴ Environmental Assessments completed by governments about air quality, population density, and resource growth are examples of governments trying to understand the physical landscape. There is grey literature in Canada that further examines why lands must retain their natural 'beauty' as opposed to building or creating more density.

families, not just represent one cultural norm like that which is currently taught in many psychology programs in North America. Mental health professionals need to learn how to navigate between two cultures to provide the best possible therapies for their clients (Duran et al, 2008). This could reverse the situation, if the mental health professional was taught about other healing paradigms, not just those paradigms found in the dominant Euro-centric culture (Duran et al, 2008). The mental health professional could utilize the knowledge acquired through formal education in Euro-centric healing methodologies and further expand their knowledge by learning Indigenous healing methodologies to be used with Indigenous clients (Duran et al, 2008; Stewart, 2008; Gone, 2008). The more understanding and awareness of how living in two cultures affects mental health by creating binaries and that Indigenous individuals must navigate the binaries on a daily basis, is necessary for appropriate healing therapies that will truly help Indigenous individuals to heal as they understand that they are not the creators of their internal conflict.

It must be noted that Indigenous Peoples attempting to walk their red path⁵ in a good way⁶, which is how Indigenous Peoples believe they keep balance in their spiritual, physical, mental and emotional realms⁷, will encounter resistance. The resistance can come from employment, education, oppression of culture or identity, or past historical trauma and consciousness, which will further oppress them and can lead to addictions, depression, suicide and a host of other

⁵ Red path is a traditional way to discuss how your life will unfold from an Indigenous perspective. Many Elders counsel Indigenous Peoples about their red path and how they must remain true to their Indigenous culture while working their way through their lives.

⁶ Good way is an Indigenous term that means that individuals speak, move, interact, or action with good intentions and while there are sometimes bad events from good intentions (e.g. accidents), that if an Indigenous individual is trying to move along their red path in a good way, they are trying to be conscientious, courteous, and culturally accepting.

⁷ In many Indigenous cultures, there are four directions that are believed to represent the spiritual, physical, mental and emotional parts of an individual. For more information: Bopp, Bopp, Lane & Brown (1984). *The Sacred Tree*. New York: Four Directions World Project Publications.

health and mental health issues. While there is little scholarly work about how living in two distinct cultures affects Indigenous Peoples' health and mental health, as an Algonquin woman, I see the difficulties of understanding and marrying the two cultures within one person.

Indigenous Peoples are forced to look at binary opposites on a daily basis as their daily lives are affected by both cultures and traditions in every decision, thought, word and deed that they engage in. Scholars have wrote about physical space and place (Gone, 2008), the need for cultural practice within healing therapies (Stewart, 2008; Duran et al, 2008; McCabe, 2006), and even about how historical trauma can be quantified to determine the historical consciousness that Indigenous Peoples have about historical trauma (Jervis et al, 2006). But, there is no research addressing how Indigenous Peoples must negotiate in two cultures and the effects that doing this daily exercise has on their health and mental health.

Indigenous Peoples face internal conflict in their daily lives by choosing where to live, how to live, which cultural norm will prevail in a situation, and so on. Therefore Indigenous Peoples need to have mental health therapies that will not only help to heal the 'soul wound' that Duran et al (2008) write about, but that will also help Indigenous Peoples to find their 'red path'.

Indigenous healing methodologies have existed for hundreds of years, just as Euro-centric mental health methodologies have existed for over a hundred years, but a combined therapy that will assist Indigenous Peoples to work on the historical trauma as well as internal conflict created from 'walking in two worlds' is absolutely necessary now and into the future.

Future Research

Research needs to further examine how Indigenous Peoples live in two worlds and how living in the two worlds affects their health and mental health. The idea of being bi-cultured could be expanded as some Indigenous Peoples live in more than just the dominant culture and Indigenous cultures, so it would be beneficial to determine how this affects their everyday life and how they perceive and utilize the cultures.

Everyday decisions from where to live, marriage, having children, what job to take, and what clothes to wear, are all made more difficult if an Indigenous person wishes to fit in to the Euro-centric culture when in the presence of Euro-centric individuals who then try to “walk with moccasins” when around Indigenous Peoples. Each life decision requires a melding of cultures, or at least the acknowledgement that the two cultures exist within the Indigenous person, family and community, and that certain traditions and customs cannot be followed for a variety of reasons (legality, space and place have changed, and politics).

Indigenous Peoples and organizations have only been in existence for the past forty years, which has not been enough time to see if they can negotiate within the two cultures and produce results that allow Indigenous Peoples the rights and legalities to follow their traditional teachings, which is a part of the healing process. Further research needs to look at how advocacy and political will can change policy and legislative developments and further address healing of the ‘soul wound’. It is also recommended to examine how Indigenous Peoples are navigating in their everyday lives within the two cultures and the impact that has on their health and mental health.

Internal conflicts likely exist because of historical trauma that has forced Indigenous Peoples to negotiate between two distinct cultures that are sometimes opposing.

Walking with one moccasin and one loafer is a delicate balance that can sometimes push Indigenous Peoples to find self-healing methods to hide from the everyday struggles of life. Mental health professionals must be cognizant of the bi-culturedness of their Indigenous clients and use a cultural therapy that helps the client to learn to walk in both worlds as well as heal from historical trauma and create a positive historical consciousness. There is much work to do in formal education to have this happen.

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