

## **Understanding participant driven intervention research through three vignettes.**

Elizabeth J Cooper

*University of the Fraser Valley*

**Keywords: Intergenerational Research • Narrative Ethnography • Women • Girls •  
Indigenous • Canada**

### **Abstract**

Explaining the challenges and successes of participant driven intervention research with Indigenous families through the use of narrative ethnography provides an opportunity for a more nuanced reflection of results than other methods often used to depict qualitative results. Within this paper, findings from an intergenerational, multi-week research workshop exploring the concept of wellness are portrayed through the lens of a girl, mother and grandmother. Each of the vignettes is situated at different point in the intervention. This approach serves to explore post-reflexivity while highlighting participant engagement and resistance.

## **INTRODUCTION**

I sat at the table across from my academic advisor, a final meeting before my oral dissertation defense for my PhD degree. The feedback from participants, community members, and academics about my dissertation research, an intergenerational participatory study exploring perspectives around health and wellness with Indigenous women and girls in Winnipeg, Canada had been positive, yet I was struggling personally with what I felt was an overarching challenge. I asked my advisor: how can people doubt that Indigenous families can have financial stability and still face challenges? How can I cross this perceptual barrier within both academic and general population contexts? Why does it seem to be difficult for people to understand that girls can voice nuanced thoughts and opinions? Participants said that they want people to see them as families who live, work and love one another. They said that people have stereotypes about who they are as Indigenous women and girls. The feedback I received within public and academic contexts, even when providing direct quotes and using photographs, do perpetuate negative colonial stereotypes. I do not want study findings to be misconstrued because of potential societal biases. What should I do differently to move the discussion towards cultural responsiveness, in line with participant wishes?

My advisor suggested that I create a composite sketch of participants in an attempt to make the participants 'real' to the reader. I decided that three narrative ethnographical vignettes about the study would provide an opportunity to move readers to a space that would highlight nuances that could not easily be captured in other forms of academic writing. Narrative ethnographies are texts presented in the form of a story with an emphasis on ethnographic and empirical data. This writing format offers an opportunity to engage with patterns and reflexivity in a responsive manner (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Caulley, 2008; Diversi, 2008; Gubrium & Holstein, 2008; Rinehart, 1998).

Through creative writing, such as the vignettes presented below, it is possible to create a space to begin new dialogues and further academic discourse that already exists. It is possible to understand the context of the research environment in a more visceral way and to begin to envision possible changes to research, education and social work practice. Participants consistently stated that they wish that people will see them for who they are, rather than racially motivated preconceptions. Through this different envisioning and reporting of results, an attempt is made to honour the wishes of those who participated in this study.

## **METHODS**

My dissertation project was conducted in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada (University ethics number H2015:169). I ran three, seven-week long weekly workshops with Indigenous women (n=24) and girls (n=36) age 8-12 within their care. Each seven-week workshop involved unique groups of participants. Sessions took place weekly for 2-3 hours during which participants and the facilitator (researcher) completed a variety of activities based on arts, sports, participatory, and Indigenous research methods. Consent related to what would and would not be included in research findings was continuously highlighted to ensure ethical practices were followed. Participants were recruited through posters and word of mouth. Recruitment criteria included self-identification as an Indigenous woman/girl, and ability to participate with a female family member for the duration of the workshop. One of the key features of this study was allowing space for participants to take ownership of the study. This happened in many different ways, including changes to the recruitment criteria to include any Indigenous woman who lived in the city. Participants explained that due to the nature of Canadian taxonomy for legal identification of Indigenous peoples, it is possible that a mother may identify as Metis, while her daughter identifies as part of a First Nation

community. Participants also explained that the overarching research goal was not specific to a cultural group but applies to all people, and thus recruitment should be pan-Indigenous.

The study was based on a strengths-based approach (Greenwood, 2004; Rountree & Smith, 2016). I highlighted Indigenous methods with a focus on reflexivity and relational space (Battiste, 2013; Fortier, 2017; Kovach, 2009; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2006; Wilson, 2008) as a way to address historical trauma (Duran, Duran, Yellow Horse Brave Heart & Yellow Horse-Davis, 1998; Maxwell, 2010; Mohatt, Thompson, Thai, Nghi & Tebes, 2014; Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 1999). The overarching research goal was to answer the question: what does it mean to be happy, healthy and safe, and how do people ensure girls grow up to be happy, healthy and safe? The Manitoba Metis Federation- Health and Wellness Department were initial partners on this project and helped identify research objectives. These included assessing community priorities and exploring the legacy of colonialism. Research goals were developed with participants within each workshop group. Participant identified goals were consistent between the three workshops. Participants wanted the study to be an intervention that would provide a platform for intergenerational relationship, capacity, and skill building opportunities. Data collected included photographs (n= 877) videos (n=99, total time 3 hours 15 minutes and 39 seconds); audio recordings (n=19, 7 hours and 4 minutes) and participant observation (60 hours) including detailed field notes.

Knowledge exchange was central to the research study (Banister, Leadbeater, & Marshall, 2011; Boydell, Gladstone, Volpe, Allemang, & Stasiulis, 2012; Estey, Smylie, & Macaulay, 2009; Jardine & Furgal, 2010). Initial findings were returned to participants on the final week of the study, as per participant request. These incorporated participants' suggestions. Each family received a personalized story, certificates of participation, and a workbook that provided details about weekly activities (Cooper, 2017). A video was disseminated after nuanced data analysis was completed, and a formal community resource manuscript based on study findings will be published by Pemmican Press in 2018.

## **RESULTS**

The three vignettes highlight different periods of the study and commonalities that were found between participants. The first vignette highlights the voice of a mother deciding if she should participate in a research study. While girls provided assent and helped shape the study, it was ultimately the caregiver who decided if the family would participate. The second vignette

involves a girl writing in a diary at the mid-point of the intervention. Many of the girls wrote in journals and shared these journals informally during data collection. While this entry is longer than what a nine-year old would write, it captures many of the themes girls were exploring in their journals, conversations and art projects. The final vignette is a dialogue between a social worker and a grandmother two weeks following the completion of data collection. After data collection had completed, I received phone calls from social workers commenting on the positive value of the study and asked if there would be opportunities to for other women and girls to participate in the study. While I was unable to secure ongoing funds, I later found out that participants had kept the program running in an informal capacity within their communities.

#### VIGNETTE 1: RECRUITMENT- A MOTHER CONSIDERS

Kate got pregnant at seventeen. After leaving her group home, she got her own apartment with the support of the government. Kate still often couch-surfed; she did not want to be alone. As a young parent finishing school was difficult, but she did it. Kate secured childcare, went back to school, and completed her GED (high school equivalency) by the time she was 21. She went on to get married and worked as an office administrator. She had her own home, a car and could afford family vacations if she planned for them. She prided herself on helping family and friends. Kate also prided herself on not being like the parents you see on the news, and she knows she is not living the stereotypical life the public often imagines when they hear the word “Native”. She has three children, Julie, Abby, and Daniel and they all have the same father. Everyone is fed, clothed, attend school, and are signed up for extracurricular activities. Her kids have never been apprehended by child and family services although she does have a social worker, since the kids sometimes miss a lot of school. She is proud of her ability to own her own home and hold down a regular job. Lately, she is not even living paycheck to paycheck. Kate often reflects on how far she has come since her days of couch-surfing with a baby as a teenage mom.

Kate’s eldest daughter, Julie, is now a teenager. Kate had wished she could save her child from the pain of losing friends to suicide, overdoses and murder. For her eldest, however, it is already too late for that. Julie is not going to school very often anymore, she is making dangerous choices and Kate is unsure what to do to help her. Whenever she tries to bring up her concerns, her daughter will walk away, leave the house, and Kate will not hear from her for a few days. She is not quite sure why Julie is making the same choices she made as a teenager. After all, none of

her children have been in foster care. They have always had food to eat and parents who love them. Kate suspects that the way she raised Julie when the girl was ten or eleven, led her to be the teenager she has become. She wants her younger daughter to follow a different path.

Kate has always wanted a different life for her children than the one she had. She wants her daughter to have opportunities and choices. She also wants her to be proud of her heritage, something she has struggled with over the years. Kate is trying to learn Michif so she can teach her daughter the language her grandparents spoke. Since her mom never learned these languages, Kate never learned, but it might be possible to change things for her children.

Many of the cultural programs offered within the city do not allow parents to come with their children. Abby, her ten-year old, comes home from her after school program knowing things that Kate, herself never had a chance to learn. Kate will often be asked by her children if something is true or not, but often she cannot answer. Her second daughter, Abby, makes fun of her for not knowing the stories, for not knowing how to cook food or how to do the crafts she learned. Since no one has ever taught Kate these things, she does not know. She asks her daughter to show her, but her baby boy starts crying and her teenager, Julie, is in trouble yet again. There is often no time or space to learn all the things that her middle child now knows.

Kate sees a poster for a research project. She has been involved in university research over the years, in studies that check to see if she has diabetes, answering questions about whether she uses condoms or not, but she has never done one where people ask you about being happy and healthy. She desperately wants to do something special with Abby, and this poster has pictures of people doing stuff that her daughter might like to do. Kate calls to find out more information. She is told that she will help decide the focus of the workshops and to make sure that they do the things she really wants to do during the evening. This seems scary. Kate does not have the chance to make decisions at work, and her husband makes most of the choices at home. Kate figures she can try: after all, she has nothing to lose. If she does not like it, she just will not go back.

However, Kate comes the first day and comments to another mom that she has never been in a space that is so beautiful before. She looks around the room and points out the Indigenous art to her daughter. She shows Abby the moss bag that hangs proudly on the wall and says, "I had one of those for you, my girl". She sits down in a circle and hears a little more about what they will be doing for the next few weeks. Her daughter climbs into her lap to listen. She absently begins to braid Abby's hair. Looking at the other moms, Kate sees that they are just as nervous as she is.

This makes her feel a little less alone. She whispers to the woman next to her about how hungry she is and that she did not eat lunch because she was nervous about coming to the workshop. The other woman tells her that she is hungry too, and that she also did not eat lunch that day.

The dinner looks good, and Kate's daughter looks really happy. "Did you hear that, Mommy, we get to play games together, you and me," Abby whispers. Kate had been thinking that she was just going to see what the program was like, and to have a free dinner with some other moms, but now, looking at the grin on her daughter's face, Kate decides to give this "research" thing a shot. Who knows? Someone here might have ideas about how she can break some of the patterns she seems to share with her own mother, her cousins, and now her oldest daughter: dropping out of high school, having a baby as a teenager, and experimenting with substances. Kate hopes she can help her daughter have a happy and safe future.

## VIGNETTE 2: THE STUDY- A GIRL REFLECTS

Dear Diary,

I just got home from "Girls Night Out" with my mom. It's soooo much fun. I mean, like really fun. We have gone every week for a whole month now. I really like that when Teacher Liz says that she will do something, or that we will do something together, that we always do. Teacher Liz says this is a workshop, and that she's not a teacher. She says she is a researcher and that we are learning together. I know she is really a teacher. My grandma taught me that good teachers also learn from you.

Teacher Liz at "Girls Night Out" is so different from my teacher at school and the teachers at the other girls programs I go to. Usually adults say something like: "we are going to do a craft." Then we don't do the craft. I hate that. At "Girls Night Out" we learn about respect and we learn that when you make a promise, you should do what you say you will do. Sometimes I think adults don't respect me very much. Maybe that's because I'm a girl. My cousin says they don't respect me because I'm Indigenous. I think that's stupid. If someone is a good person, you should respect them no matter how old they are, what they look like, or what their culture is.

Last week Teacher Liz said that we were going to go play outside tonight, even though it's winter and there is snow. Mom said Teacher Liz didn't mean it when she said we would be playing outside since it is winter, but I knew she did, so I wore my ski pants and warm mittens. Last week we talked about things we really like to do, and lots of the girls said they like to play outside at

recess. Some moms said that they like to go ice fishing and most people said they like to go for walks outside. Teacher Liz asked us what kinds of things we would like to do if we go outside, and we told her some of the games we like to play, like tag. She said there is a park that is close to “Girls Night Out” and it has a field we could walk to. We thought that sounded like a good place to go and said so last week. I knew we would go to the park tonight even if Mom didn’t think so, and we did! We played tag outside. Even Mom played tag. It was so much more fun to play with my Mom and the other moms and girls instead of just with the girls. Teacher Liz knew that some people might not remember that we were going outside, and they might not dress warm, so she bought mittens, hats and scarves from a store and let people borrow them. She says she will donate them to charity and asked us where we wanted them to be donated to. We talked about different places that will take donations. The moms had so many ideas. We decided to give them to an Indigenous shelter and drop-in centre. After we decided about the mitts, we had Chili for dinner. I didn’t even know I liked chili! Maybe I just liked putting cheese on top.

Did you know there are lots of people who don’t even know what to wear in the winter to stay warm? And some people don’t know what to do in the summer to stay cool? Even some of the moms and girls at “Girls Night Out” don’t know. Teacher Liz says that the posters and commercials that tell you about that are called “health messages”. I’m going to ask my teacher at school tomorrow if she knows what “health messages” are. I bet she doesn’t. There are lots of things my teacher doesn’t know. That’s why mom and dad say it’s okay for me to skip school and help take care of my brother and my cousin’s baby.

You know, my cousin Kayla and her baby girl still stay with us. Kayla is almost 16 now. Her baby will get to go to Head Start in a few months when the baby is 2. Mom says Head Start is really awesome for babies because they get to learn real things, they get snacks, and they get to learn about their culture. I already know about my culture a little. I go to powwows and dance sometimes. We also have sweet grass over the picture of my other cousin who is missing so that the creator will help her. I wish we knew where she was. Kayla says that when I’m 14 I’ll probably have a baby too, or that maybe I will run away like my other cousin did. I don’t ever want to run away. Some of my friends at school are already talking about running away and we are only in grade four. I think that is so sad. They say that people are mean to them. I don’t know if people are mean to them or not. My friend Amber wants to run away. She doesn’t always have food to eat at her house, so she just always comes to my house. Mom says she can always come to my

house, and she should never be left alone, and she shouldn't be at home when her mom and stepdad are having parties. Mom says that nine-years old is too young to be alone and around that stuff. I'm not sure what 'that stuff' is and Mom won't tell me. Maybe I'll ask Kayla. Mom says that if Amber wants to run away, she should just run away to our house. Mom also says whenever Amber comes over we need to tell her family so that they aren't scared when Amber doesn't come home. Last week Amber came with to "Girls Night Out". She had so much fun, but it was kind of sad. We were talking about things we like to do with our Moms and all the Moms were saying things they love about the girls and Amber's mom wasn't there. That was okay. My Mom said why she loves Amber. This week I asked if I could take some chili home for Amber since she didn't come with. Teacher Liz said if it was okay with my Mom, I could.

Also, I don't care what Kayla says. I don't want to quit school, even if I don't go all the time. I love science and learning new things. I want to go to High School. My teacher talks about the cool science experiments you get to do when you are in High School. I don't want to have a baby until I'm at least 20. You know, only some High Schools have daycares for babies. I want to go to a good school with a science lab and not have to only think about schools with daycares. My Grandma say I need to graduate from High School. I really love my family and I want them to be proud of me. They know I'm strong, smart and try really hard, even if they never say so out loud. Next week at "Girls Night Out" Teacher Liz says we get to pretend to be astronauts and that we get to help cook dinner. That is going to be sooo cool. I bet she brings vegetables. She always brings vegetables. Since we started to go to "Girls Night Out" I learned that I love vegetables and now Mom buys them all the time. I really like cherry tomatoes. Did you know a tomato is a fruit, not a vegetable? Abby's mom, Kate at "Girls Night Out" told me. I still call them vegetables.

I love my mom so much. I'm so glad she said we could go to "Girls Night Out" after Auntie called to tell her about the poster she saw at the Friendship Center. One time I was sick and I couldn't go, and I actually cried. Kayla said I was being a baby, but I don't care. Mom says being strong means crying when you have to. Anyway, I can't believe I wrote so much! Now it's way too late! Dad is going to be mad if he sees I'm still awake... so good night Diary!

Love Destiny xoxoxo



### VIGNETTE 3: POST STUDY- A FAMILY CAREGIVER MOVES ON

Lorraine sat in a chair. The armrests were torn and gum was stuck to the cloth on the chair next to her. She carefully caressed the small, coil bound book in her lap and waited to be called in for her monthly meeting with Nadia, her social worker. She crossed and uncrossed her legs, looking at the toddler table where a little boy was flipping through a colouring book, his support staff sitting close by texting, rather than interacting with the child. He was probably there for a visit with his family, sometimes the only place children can legally see their families is at the social work agency with someone to supervise the visits.

“It’s too bad when the little ones have to have arranged visits to see their parents. The least they could do around here is get some crayons to go with that colouring book” she muttered. “What was that?” The receptionist asked. “Nothing” Lorraine replied, looking back down at her hands. “Lori, you can come in now” her social worker called from the doorway.

Lorraine got up slowly and shuffled towards the door, head down. She signed and whispered, almost too quiet to hear “My name is Lorraine, not Lori” but her social worker, Nadia, was not listening. Nadia was preoccupied with thoughts of the toppling pile of incident reports to review and court appearance on her schedule for the afternoon, never mind the fact that her coverage partner was away for the next three weeks. He left her a post-it note that said “thanks” rather than anything useful. She found out earlier in the day that none of his cases were up-to-date and was dreading the challenges that were bound to come up because of that. For the next three weeks, she would be managing a caseload of 140 families, a task that seems impossible to do. She hoped there were no new crisis that came up during the day, and that this check in with Lori was uneventful. She did not have time for any more fires that needed to be put out.

They got into the meeting room and Nadia sat across the table from Lorraine. “So, how’s it been going? How are the girls?” Nadia asked. “They’re okay. Crystal had a nosebleed this morning, but it stopped.” She looked down, crossing her arms across her chest. “And you’re getting them to school ok? They’re eating ok?” Nadia asked, trying to get Lorraine to open up a little more. Lorraine just looked at her, and then looked down. “Yes, I know you are doing your best.” Nadia said, folding her hands on the table, looking at the clock. They were only a minute into the meeting.

“If I could have found the money, I wouldn’t have asked to be their foster parent. But my daughter, their Mom, is in jail. That no-good husband of hers can’t take care of the kids because

he is in jail too. I always feed them and make sure they do their homework and go to school” Loraine said defensively.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean anything” Nadia said, trying to not let Loraine see how overworked and exhausted she was. “So... when you were here last month, you were telling me about a research study you joined” Nadia said, trying to figure out a way to ease the tension in the room. These grandparents who are taking care of young children are some of the hardest foster parents to meet with. They always seem to act like they are under investigation. They do not seem to realize that these days, social workers would always prefer to keep families together than rip them apart. Many of the grandparents, like Loraine, were part of the sixties scoop, and they don’t trust social workers easily. It’s to be expected. It’s hard to trust the people who took you out of your parents’ arms without any cause when you were a toddler because of a government decision that Indigenous parents were not fit to raise their own children. Often, when foster parents come in, or agency staff come in, you often cannot get a word in edge-wise. For family taking care of younger children, especially grandparents who have children in jail, it was usually a different story. Nadia sometimes felt like pulling teeth would literally be easier.

“Yup.” Loraine said, responding to the question about the research project. “So, is it still going on? How is it?” Nadia asked. Loraine had been holding a book on her lap since she sat down in the meeting room. She carefully slid it across the table to Nadia. “It’s done” she said. “They gave me this.”

Nadia started reading the document. It was a story about Loraine, the Super Grannie. It was filled with photographs of the girls doing activities with Loraine and it shared the hopes that Loraine had for all of their futures.

“Wow, this is amazing” Nadia said. “Ya. The researcher, she always asked us questions and we talked about what really matters.” Loraine said. “I care about what matters to” Nadia said.

Loraine just looked at her. No words had to be said to understand what Loraine thought of Nadia’s remark. Nadia put the book on the table and pointed to a picture, “what were you doing here?” she asked. “That day we sat in a circle on the floor around a star blanket pattern that is inlaid into the hardwood floor. It is such a beautiful library. Have you been there? I don’t know why all the places I go to can’t be so nice. We deserve nice places that show our traditions and cultures” She paused, looking poignantly around the barren meeting room.

Nadia re-directed her, asking about the picture once again. “That week we all shared about what respect means. The Anishinaabe seven sacred teachings are important to me. I didn’t know it was so important to other First Nations and Metis women. My girls knew about the teachings already. I didn’t know that they knew those. But I never asked them before I guess” Loraine said, her voice getting softer as she talked about her grandchildren.

Nadia flipped the page, “and this one?” she asked pointing to a picture with Loraine holding both of her granddaughters on her lap. “Oh, we were telling stories about the old days when we were girls. I told them that I want them to be proud of who they are, and to believe in themselves. I wasn’t always proud of being Anishinaabe. They told me they love me, and that they will always take care of me. I said I wish their mom was there to take care of them and see how strong and beautiful they are. Carol told me it’s okay, they know if she could, she would.”

“That must have been a hard conversation to have. I hope they are proud of their culture.” “It was hard. I know those girls miss their Mom. I miss her too. I didn’t have my mom around when I was growing up, and I wasn’t a great mom to my kids, I wasn’t always sober then. I started going to Sundance’s about fifteen years ago now. After I danced, I changed my life and haven’t looked back. Got clean. But I couldn’t get my kids to stop with the gangs. Some of the other women at the group said the same thing. But they also said that Crystal and Carol never need to start doing that kind of stuff.” Loraine said, looking Nadia directly in the eyes.

“I had no idea” Nadia replied, surprised at how much Loraine was suddenly sharing. “You didn’t ask” Loraine replied, in a matter of fact tone. That’s true, I didn’t. Nadia thought to herself. “Why does it say Super Grannie in the book?” she said out loud, trying to change the topic from her role as a social worker and back to Loraine. “Some of the other girls in the group said that’s what I am.” Loraine paused before continuing. “There are too many of us who are raising our grandchildren. We raised our kids the best we could, but it wasn’t enough. Too many things happening in those days. Residential schools where churches took children away from our families... sixties scoop where government took children from our families... we couldn’t even vote until 1960”. She paused, Nadia waited for her to continue. “Now we have to raise our kid’s children because their parents can’t. Too much healing still to do for them. Too many things the government has done to us.”

“How does that relate to being a super grannie” Nadia asked. “The girls said that grannies who are raising their grandchildren are called super grannies. I don’t feel like a super hero. I said

that. But some of the women at the workshop with their children said that I am. I am teaching the girls about their culture, I am asking for help to make sure they get what they need. That's why I am a foster parent instead of just their grannie, and I am doing what I can to make sure they have a better life. They said that makes me a super hero".

"I'm sure Crystal and Carol think of you as their super hero." Nadia said. Loraine shrugged. "So, where do you go from here?" Nadia asked. Loraine looked at her thoughtfully. "In the research group we talked about change. There will still be racism, there will still be hard times, but we can make changes. Crystal and Carol can finish school, they can stay out of bad things. They can be the people the creator wants them to be, and the grandmothers in the spirit world, will hold them close. Even when they have trouble, even if I lose them too like I did their mom, the grandmothers will hold them in their arms. We need to keep our culture strong, but we also need to be okay with modern things like cellphones. The kids learn from those things too. We just need to teach them how to listen smart." Loraine stopped talking suddenly, as if she felt that she had already said more than she intended to say. "What do you mean listen smart?" Nadia asked. "I mean, ask questions and keep asking questions until you get the answers you are looking for. Keep going to school. Get a good job. Maybe go to University. Never stop learning."

Loraine pushed another document across the table to her social worker. "We each got this." she said. Nadia turned it over, it was a certificate of participation from the university. "This is great. What are you going to do with this?" Nadia asked. "Frame it." Loraine said matter-of-factly. "And I'm going back to school. I'm going to get my GED and frame that too. We talked a lot about how girls need to see anything is possible and that it's never too late to make a better choice with our lives. Carol says she will help me with my math" Loraine said chuckling. "Well, that is amazing news" said Nadia. "Do you need help finding programs to do your GED?" "Already done. One of the other participants from the research helped me. She's gonna watch the girls while I go to class in the evenings. They can play with Destiny, that's her girl. We're helping each other. I'm teaching her our language in exchange." Loraine said proudly.

"That is great Lori. I really mean it. I look forward to seeing you next month to hear how it's going. If you need anything before that, you just let me know". Nadia stood up, indicating the meeting had come to an end. "You know, we are going to be fine. I don't know about my girl in jail. But me and these grandchildren of mine, we are going to be fine. We are going to be proud, and brave, and honest. And we are going to change the future for the next seven generations."

She took the certificates and her storybook. She walked out the door without looking back, saying loudly, “And my name is not Lori, it’s Loraine. I will see you next month.”

## **DISCUSSION**

The intent of this narrative ethnography is to provide context to this intergenerational intervention research with Indigenous women and girls. The stories are intended to re-think conceptual positionality and provide a space to begin a critical conversation about the role of decolonizing research, and intergenerational research practices. The vignettes also highlight participant experiences with educational and social services. This provides a location through which further discussion can occur about the strengths and challenges of these systems. By writing a narrative ethnography situated at different points in data collection and from participants of different ages, it is possible to contextualize some of the challenges and strengths participants spoke about within the study in a way that cannot be captured in quotations or photographs. These aspects are important to consider, especially when exploring potential meaning attributed to participation in participant-driven research projects. All of the information presented in the vignettes is drawn from data collected within the study, however the characters presented do not represent any one individual. The final draft of the vignettes was circulated to trusted Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues and friends to ensure that I was being true to the decolonizing path that I try to tread. As the contact information I have for most participants is no longer accurate, participants did not read these vignettes. Participant requests about what to include and exclude have been honoured.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a scholar with settler Swedish-Sāmi, Polish and British ancestry who has worked in Indigenous community-based research for the past decade I am acutely aware of harms that come with misappropriation of culture and stories. While narrative ethnography provides an element of freedom of expression, the question could be raised about the authenticity of the voice presented, especially as I am not part of the community I was working with (Bae-Dimitriadis, 2016; Burnette & Billiot, 2015; Vagle, & Hofsess 2016). To this potential critique related to my own positionality and authority to write such vignettes, I would reply that this is not an attempt to ‘speak for’ the participants and the vignettes are not intended to be an authentic voice.

The purpose of the vignettes is to provide a point for contextualization and discussion for researchers and practitioners involved in Indigenous social development contexts in a more nuanced way than is possible with standard approaches to presenting qualitative and participatory results. The vignettes also provide the opportunity to highlight the wishes of participants. They identified a need people to see beyond the superficial stereotypes of Indigenous peoples as perpetuated by popular culture. Participants said that they wanted people to realize that Indigenous women and girls lives are multifaceted, diverse and complex and that Indigenous peoples have insights into what is needed to continue to move forward towards a place of happiness and wellbeing within their communities. Through the use of narrative ethnography, it is possible to begin to accomplish these goals.

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## **AUTHOR NOTE**

### **Elizabeth J Cooper**

Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Fraser Valley

#### *Contact:*

Telephone +1 (604) 504-7441 ext. 2228

E-mail: Elizabeth.Cooper@ufv.ca

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank the women and girls who participated in this study and acknowledge the families and community members who supported their participation. I would like to thank the Manitoba Metis Federation Health and Wellness Department and the Manitoba Indigenous Cultural Education Centre Inc. for their support of this study. I would also like to thank Dr. Heather Castleden, Dr. S Michelle Driedger, Dr. Tuula Heinonen, Alexis Keter, Rebecca Major, Jessica Numminen, Dr. Josée Lavoie and Idalia Alegria-Van Steeland for reviewing earlier drafts of this paper.