

Special Issue Introduction

Stephanie Sinclair

First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba

Carla Cochrane

First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba

As the editors we lift up those who have contributed to this special issue, Strengths of Our Community. To coincide with the World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conference, we called for papers from the presenters that would examine Culture/Language/Land, Data & Policy, 2SGBTQQIA, Youth, Creative Expression through Arts, Healing, Lived Experience, Intergenerational Connections and Community Collaborations. Suicide is still one of the leading causes of death among Indigenous people. The ongoing challenges associated with the legacy of colonization of Indigenous people across the globe still haunts Indigenous communities and steals hope for the future from our youth.

The intergenerational impact of colonization and genocide has been confirmed and is now in the consciousness of Canadians with the recent discovery of unmarked graves and mass grave sites on the grounds of former residential schools. The common theme among these articles is that they honour the voices of Indigenous people to share the healing and creation of a path forward from the ongoing oppression, racism, and colonization.

The articles and art selected showcase the strength of our communities to come together to address the issue of suicide. The healing that has happened in the community since the forced colonization and genocide is inspiring and needs to be celebrated. The revitalization of culture, language, connection to the land, importance of identity has all been shown to be effective as prevention and healing tools among Indigenous populations. So often our communities are portrayed as being in deficit, with all the negative statistics and reports that compares Indigenous people to non-Indigenous people. This journal fills a gap in the literature by promoting community

voice and solutions and celebrates the successes. The care and compassion our people use in dealing with this heavy topic is truly inspiring.

Each contributor acknowledged the importance of culture, social supports, spirituality, connection to the land, interconnection to all living things, and language in the promotion of life and living in wellness. The understanding that all individuals journey to wellness is unique and that the basic needs need to be met including the social determinants of health (housing, education, food, culture) and the need for love, purpose, and hope. The understanding that healing is a lifelong commitment and that it is our responsibility to each other to support that.

We want to acknowledge and express our deep condolences to you who have lost family, friends and loved ones to suicide. We hope these articles provide comfort in knowing that there are understanding people who are working to promote life, healing, and hope.

We would like to acknowledge that this special issue would not be possible without the commitment and guidance of our Copy Editor Dr. Gladys Rowe and Operations Manager Dr. Tabitha Robin Martens. We are grateful to these young Indigenous scholars for your dedication, insight, and love to promote Indigenous voices.

Ekosi, Miigwech, Mahsi, Wopida, Thank you

Stephanie Sinclair and Carla Cochrane, Special Edition Editors