

Understanding Afro-Indigenous Experiences of Gendered Violence and Healing Pathways

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Communities that are Indigenous to North America and those in the broader African diaspora, have been in relationship with each other for over three centuries, establishing communities in provinces such as Nova Scotia and Ontario, as well as across Turtle Island. These communities have long faced both shared and unique forms of historical and ongoing colonial oppression with long-lasting impacts on their mental health and wellbeing.

The unique intersections of Black and Indigenous identities exacerbate challenges for service access needs of Afro-Indigenous Peoples. The compounded effects of historical trauma, racial discrimination, and cultural marginalization lead to potential mental health issues and intergenerational traumas. Yet survivors often face barriers in accessing support services and resources as their experiences as both Indigenous and Black Peoples are frequently misunderstood, dismissed, or overlooked.

In this Backgrounder, the authors draw on findings and experiences from the [Proclaiming Our Roots](#) (POR) project, a national arts- and community-based research project that spans Northern Turtle Island (the colonial settler nation state known as Canada). The POR project explores the erasure of Afro-Indigenous Peoples presence, histories, and realities in the Canadian nation-state. This Backgrounder, however, will focus on a subset of findings to unpack the way community members in the POR project understand gendered violence in their communities. The authors employ the historic and contemporary contexts that contribute to gendered violence in Afro-Indigenous communities, while exploring how different forms of oppression intersect and exacerbate experiences of gendered violence and trauma. Lastly, they openly discuss mental health and trauma within Afro-Indigenous communities to help destigmatize such topics and share ways to promote healing, including storytelling.

This Backgrounder is guest-authored by Dr. Ann Marie Beals and Dr. Ciann L Wilson, co-investigators on the ground-breaking Proclaiming Our Roots project, where they explore and address the historical erasure of mixed Indigenous-Black Peoples on Turtle Island and around Mother Earth.

Dr. Ann Marie Beals is a Two-Spirit mixed-blood African Nova Scotian L'nu'k from the territory of Mi'kma'ki, and Dr. Ciann L Wilson is a Black scholar and mother of Afro-, Indo-, and Euro- Jamaican ancestry.

Proclaiming Our Roots is a community-based research project; as such we wish to acknowledge the contributions of our Proclaiming Our Roots community members and the POR Research Team: Kayla Weber, Sarah Flicker, Conrad Prince, Anique Jordan, Melisse Watson, and Rachel Persaud. Wela'lin Msit No'kmaq.



Historical Overview of Afro-Indigenous Communities

Colonizers have long been apprehensive about relationships between people Indigenous to continental Africa, and Turtle Island Indigenous Peoples, aiming to uphold anti-miscegenation policies and spatial divisions between what they considered “distinct racial groups” to maintain white settler dominance over land and resources.¹ Consequently, individuals of mixed Indigenous and Black heritage – Afro-Indigenous Peoples – have been marginalized in Canadian history, as they do not neatly fit into the colonial racial hierarchy that has designated Indigenous people incapable of retaining land sovereignty and has equated Black people to the status of chattel property made for brute labour who can be owned.²

Anti-miscegenation policies refer to laws that enforce racial segregation at the level of marriage and intimate relationships by criminalizing interracial marriage.

In addition to the norms forcibly imposed on Indigenous Peoples through colonial violence and anti-Black racism within a white supremacist racial hierarchy, the only federally recognized Indigenous Peoples of mixed ancestry in the Canadian nation-state are those of specific European admixture (i.e. Métis). This favoured mixing, coupled with Christianity, cis-heteropatriarchy, and rigid gender binaries, were and continue to be factors integral to creating divisions between Indigenous and Black communities and erasing Afro-Indigenous realities. These factors also aid/ed in severing these communities from their own Indigenous worldviews and ways of being in the world. This hierarchical construction of the colonizer’s “superiority” and the “inferior savagery” of Indigenous Peoples and the dehumanization of Black Peoples as “property” also coincided with the marginalization of Two-Spirit and transgender people, who were unjustly labeled as deviant, sinful, and amoral within the cis-heteronormative Christian framing.³

Despite government restrictions and societal norms, one of the primary methods of resistance for survival in Indigenous and African diasporic communities was through intermarriage and what would now be considered common-law relationships. Unions between Indigenous and Black people thrived within numerous communities.⁴

Presently, such common-law unions are widespread, evident among various groups such as the Ojibwa of Anderdon, Batchewana First Nation in the North, and the Creek, Lumbee, Creole, and Seminole communities in Southern regions of Turtle Island.⁵ Historically, romantic and sexual partnerships between African Nova Scotians and Mi’kmaw and Wəlastəkwewiyik Nations proliferated as a strategic means of shielding future generations of children from forcible removal from their families and enrollment in residential schools, an assimilative tactic rolled out predominantly in Indigenous communities. As such, the thought process here was that Afro-Indigenous children would be protected from the mass kidnappings.⁶

Additionally, over generations, the genocidal policies aimed at the Mi’kmaw and the marginalization of multi-generational Black Loyalists, Refugees of the War of 1812, Caribbean migrants, freedom seekers such as the Trelawny Maroons, and the liberated enslaved have brought Indigenous and Black Peoples together in their collective resistance, endurance, and refusal to succumb to the white man.⁷



Proclaiming Our Roots

The *Proclaiming Our Roots* (POR) project is focused on documenting the histories, realities, and geographies of Afro-Indigenous communities. This is especially important within the broader context of a Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) framework,⁸ which was adopted in Canada from work with Indigenous communities in South Africa.⁹

The objectives of *Proclaiming Our Roots* encompass gaining insight into the nuanced intersectional forms of personal, institutional, and structural violence and erasure faced by Afro-Indigenous Peoples and creating a comprehensive video archive documenting the histories, geographies, and realities of individuals and communities of African diasporic and Indigenous ancestry in Northern Turtle Island.

Grounded in a community-based participatory action research approach, *Proclaiming Our Roots* is paradigmatically rooted in anti-colonial and intersectional thinking and action. Art-based methods used in the project include digital storytelling, community mapping, sharing circles, and semi-structured interviews.

In the first phase of POR, the research leads travelled to Tkaronto (Toronto), Punamu'kwati'jk (Dartmouth) and Kjipuktuk (Halifax) for two four-day workshops and a digital story created by a participant in Wînipêk (Winnipeg). Three community launches were held—one in Tkaronto and two in Nova Scotia. In these sessions, the research team and the 18 Afro-Indigenous community members co-created knowledge as a collective. The quotes shared in this Backgrounder are from these community members.



Unpacking Key Findings from the POR Project

Proclaiming Our Roots contributes to broader conversations about social justice, mental health, and wellbeing, while also highlighting the resilience and strength of Afro-Indigenous communities in the face of systemic oppression, as a reversal of the colonial gaze. In the project, amongst many thematic topics and issues discussed, community members also shared their experiences around lateral and gendered violence. These lived realities are explored below.

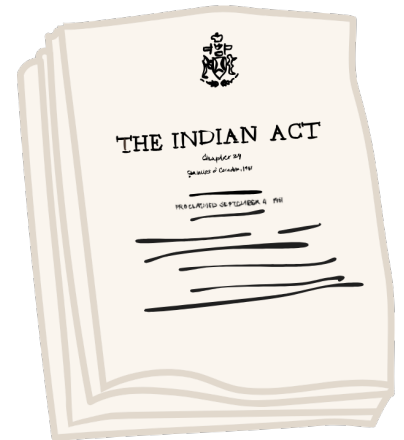
Consequences of the Indian Act

One of the key findings found in the POR project is the harmful effects of the Indian Act, which, in being a hetero-patriarchal policy steeped in white supremacy, has deleterious consequences for Afro-Indigenous Peoples, the erasure of their identities, and experiences of lateral and gendered violence.

When discussing the Indian Act of 1876, it is necessary to acknowledge its historical role as a quintessential example of systemic gendered violence that has persisted since first contact with European imperialists. POR community members attempted to unravel – through the experiences and stories they shared – the intergenerational trauma tied to government-allocated status, and the resulting lateral violence and their struggles of belonging in their Indigenous community.

In particular, Afro-Indigenous identity under Bill C-31 and the Indian Act is fraught with contention because the Indian Act introduced patriarchal, oppressive, and humiliating views of gender and sexual division imposed by European colonizers, which was influenced by rigid Victorian concepts of female subordination and male dominance.¹⁰

Prior to first contact, many Indigenous Nations were matrilineal and Indigenous governance and societies did not consider women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse members of their Nations as inferior subjects of patriarchal dominance. Within this European dominant hierarchy, Indigenous women and girls and Two-Spirit people faced blatant discrimination and violence. European men's puritanical attitudes were explicitly enshrined in the Indian Act, leading to the forced loss of status and identities of Indigenous women and their children, denying them equal partnership and access to rights within their Nations.¹¹ This has been particularly deleterious for Afro-Indigenous communities, because many Afro-Indigenous Peoples are Indigenous to Turtle Island through their maternal side.



Bill C-31

Bill C-31, an amendment to the Indian Act, sought to address the sexual discrimination manifesting as gendered violence. Before its enactment, a First Nations woman who married a non-Indigenous man would lose her status with her band, along with all rights to live on her reserve, status rights, and family and community connections.¹² This loss of family and community ties also disrupted the transmission of knowledge and caused disconnection from the land, creating additional scenarios for gendered violence and loss of identity.

As this community member from the POR shares:

“Because my mother married a Black man under the Indian Act, her children - my sibling and I became six-two Indian’s instead of six-one, the designation for full-blooded Indians. Four years ago, Bill C-31 allowed my siblings and me to inherit my mother’s six-one statute. However, my kids have six-two status because their father is Black, and their kids will have no status if their partners are not Indigenous. Breeding out the Native blood. But Indigenous identity isn’t about blood. It’s about the culture that you can’t dilute no matter the colour of your skin.”

(Proclaiming Our Roots Community Member Story)

In 2015, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), in collaboration with the Feminist Alliance for International Action Canada, found that historical sex discrimination within the Indian Act is a root cause of the high levels of violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Discrimination within the Indian Act creates vulnerabilities that increase the susceptibility of Indigenous women and girls to a myriad of violences. Moreover, the IACHR emphasized that addressing violence against women requires comprehensively tackling the underlying factors of discrimination that exacerbate such violence. Sex discrimination within the Indian Act is a fundamental factor contributing to the ongoing human rights crisis involving the murders and disappearances of Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and transgender people. This crisis persists today, with Indigenous women and girls facing a 12% higher risk of being murdered or going missing compared to white women in Canada¹³ which parallels the epidemic level rates of disappearances and murders of African American women and girls in the United States.¹⁴

Further research shows that in African American communities, 60% of Black girls experience sexual abuse by Black men before turning 18, with one in four Black girls facing sexual abuse before adulthood.¹⁵ Additionally, 30% of Black women with documented histories of childhood sexual abuse are sexually assaulted as adults, and for every Black woman who reports rape, at least fifteen do not.¹⁶ Despite widespread awareness of the gendered violence affecting Black and Indigenous girls and women, many community members remain silent.

Current statistical data on the gendered violence experienced by Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and transgender individuals is insufficient¹⁷ and obscures the true extent of the violence they face, perpetuates their marginalization, and hinders the creation of targeted interventions and support systems.

Looking deeper into the underlying mechanisms of the Indian Act, we gain a clearer understanding of its role in contributing to the erasure of Afro-Indigenous identity and perpetuating gendered violence, particularly through its inherent patriarchal biases.

“The Other”: Too Black to be Indigenous... Too Indigenous to be Black

A significant factor in the erasure and exclusion faced by Afro-Indigenous people in Canada is by virtue of dual marginalization due to their mixed lineage. Many community members in the POR project expressed complex feelings about the nuanced ways they were differently and similarly marginalized and excluded within Black and Indigenous communities, as well as within dominant broader Canadian society.

Upon analyzing the shared narratives, it becomes apparent how various intersecting factors, including ethno-racial identity and the ability to pass or not pass as Black, Indigenous, or otherwise racially ambiguous, coupled with gender, patriarchy, etc., contribute to the perpetuation of gendered violence rooted in the exotification of Afro-Indigenous Peoples and the notion of “The Other”.

“The Other” refers to the portrayal of non-western people and societies as fundamentally different and inferior to western norms and values.¹⁸ This concept, as theorized by Edward Said, highlights how western literature and scholarship have historically depicted the non-white people as exotic, backward, and uncivilized.¹⁹ This portrayal serves to justify colonial domination and perpetuates cultural hegemony. By constructing Indigenous societies as “the Other,” western societies reinforce their own identity and superiority.

The concept of “thingification,” as articulated by Aimé Césaire²⁰ is particularly relevant here, as it offers a critical lens to examine the colonial narrative that dehumanizes Indigenous, Black, Afro-Indigenous, Two-Spirit, and transgender individuals. This dehumanization is similar to what Sylvia Wynter and other pivotal Black feminist scholars have described. In this, we see the perpetuation of the colonial tactics of violence such as objectification, sexual assault, rape, and in the all-too frequent extreme cases – murder – that is not only enforced upon Afro-Indigenous communities in the maintenance of the status quo, but also within the communities.

“Who am I? Who do I say I am? I am who I think I am. Throughout my history I have been looked upon and labelled by persons of European Descent as [lists highly offensive racial slurs] and Black. As I grew and became stronger in my knowledge of self, I realized I am none of the above. I am a proud, strong, resilient, African Nova Scotian. I identify with all brothers and sisters from Mother Africa, and all points in-between.”*

(Proclaiming Our Roots Digital Story)

**Edit: The community member’s quote includes offensive racial slurs historically used to demean and dehumanize Black people and communities. The community member shares their experience of being labelled with these racist terms and their journey to resist and self-identify as a proud African Nova Scotian.*

As this POR community member shares, in othering Afro-Indigenous folx through concepts of “thingification,” exoticification, and dehumanization, colonial frameworks conceptualize land and people - Black, Indigenous, and Afro-Indigenous - as property, extending notions of ownership and control to ownership of the bodies of colonized Peoples.²¹ Ongoing processes of “thingification” perpetuate gendered violence rooted in perceived unworthiness. As such, we see across Turtle Island that Afro-Indigenous, Black, and Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people are continually marginalized and hypersexualized, reinforcing stereotypes that justify the violation of their persons.

This dehumanizing perspective sustains an environment where violence against them is normalized and perpetuated. These acts of violence reinforce the notion of their bodies as objects for control and exploitation, perpetuating cycles of trauma and subjugation. This ideological backdrop creates environments where sexual objectification and gender-based violence become tools of dominance. In other words, the colonial gaze dehumanizes Afro-Indigenous Peoples, reducing humans to objects to be exploited. This process of “thingification” strips Afro-Indigenous women and girls and Two-Spirit people of their humanity, rendering them commodities in the predatory colonial capitalist economy.

“I don’t identify as being a woman, but I identify as non-binary. Because let’s be honest, I don’t know, gender is tied with whiteness, Black women had their womanhood taken away from them, their role as a mother, they had that taken away from them. Indigenous women had that taken from them as well through residential schools and 60s scoops. They had these very western ways of beauty taken away from them.”

(Proclaiming our Roots Community Story)

This POR community member is identifying as non-binary because gender, as traditionally understood, is deeply intertwined with whiteness. Black women, for example, have historically had their womanhood and maternal roles stripped away from them through slavery and systemic oppression. Similarly, Indigenous women have faced cultural erasure through Indian Residential Schools and policies like the Sixties Scoop and child welfare systems, which forcibly remove(d) children from their families. These acts of gendered violence and assimilation have imposed, for example, white western beauty standards as the norm, denying Black and Indigenous women the purity and reverence granted to white femininity. Instead, they are often unjustly characterized as promiscuous or masculinized, which in turn has justified brutal labour exploitation and sexual violence against Black women and girls. Identifying outside the colonizer’s binary feels like a rejection of these oppressive constructs and an embrace of a more inclusive understanding of identity.

The harm caused by unresolved traumas resulting from gendered violence is significant, as noted by POR community members in expressing how a person with a “loaded” Afro-Indigenous identity experiences gendered violence not only in a colonial society, but in their own communities.



Intergenerational Trauma and Lateral Violence

Intergenerational trauma has been cited in the examination of how gendered violence originates from colonialism.²² Intergenerational traumas endured by Indigenous, Black, and Afro-Indigenous Peoples are rooted in colonialism. In this analysis, the authors delve deeper into the effects of historical traumas on Black, Indigenous, and Afro-Indigenous Peoples, which is essential for grasping the experiences and realities of members of the *Proclaiming Our Roots* community.

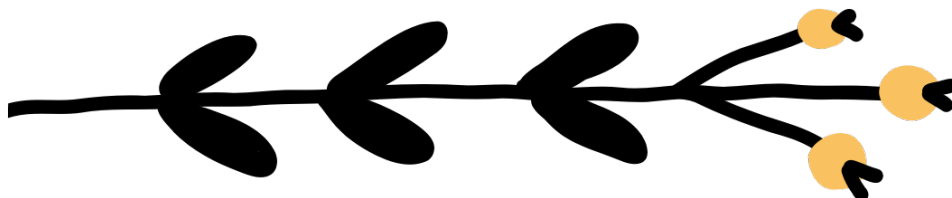
The historical origins of gendered lateral violence, stemming from colonialism, have had a disproportionate impact on Black, Indigenous, and Afro-Indigenous women and girls, as well as Two-Spirit and transgender individuals.²³ Given the current knowledge and evidence, it is clear that this hypothesis is valid as colonial violence has likely affected the lives of every Indigenous and Black person on Turtle Island. Research indicates that lateral sexual violence, in conjunction with physical violence results in injuries like broken bones, burns, bruises, and fatalities, and encompasses a range of health consequences.²⁴ These include unintended pregnancies, low birth weight infants, miscarriages, sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, as well as mental health issues like depression, anxiety, self-harm, substance use, eating and sleep disorders, and suicidal ideation and attempts, all as manifestations of gendered violence.

Health impacts of lateral violence include higher rates of physical and mental health issues, exacerbated by systemic neglect and discrimination within healthcare systems. People who suffer lateral violence often face unique challenges in accessing appropriate and respectful care, leading to worsened health outcomes. In recognizing the complex relationship of intergenerational trauma from both Indigenous and Black histories, as well as the impact of the colonizer, they vicariously encounter the anxiety experienced by Afro-Indigenous women and girls and Two-Spirit transgender folk, groups that may struggle to understand the nature of their health and wellbeing challenges and how to embark on a healing journey.



"It is such a loaded identity. There is just a lot of, there is a lot of violence in our communities, lateral violence and there is a lot of sexual violence that goes on in our communities that nobody wants to talk about, sexual violence on the powwow trail, sexual violence in ceremony. I had to navigate my whole life in these two identities when I experience [anti-Black] racism and when I experience sexual violence or just even questioning like, where do I come from?"

(Proclaiming our Roots Community Member Story)



Systemic Exclusion and Barriers to Supports and Services

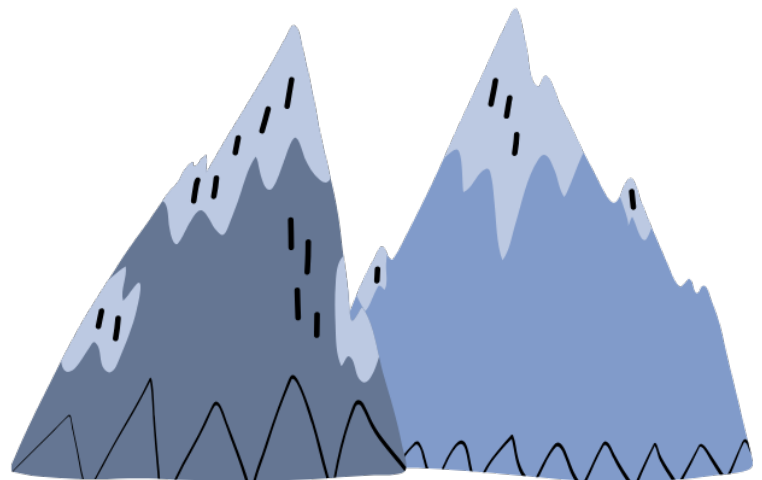
The unique intersections of Black and Indigenous identities exacerbate service access needs of Afro-Indigenous Peoples. The compounded effects of historical trauma, racial discrimination, and cultural marginalization lead to potential mental health issues and intergenerational traumas. Survivors often face barriers in accessing support services and resources, as their experiences are frequently misunderstood, dismissed, or overlooked.

“If we had a place, a center space, organization that had health care services, there could be nurses on site, there could be traditional services, low-barrier stuff, where people can come in and gather and get what they need instead of having to go face a bunch of bullshit and racism. And all that other stuff, so that’s kinda where I was coming from. Also, because we’re disproportionately represented in HIV and substance use, so providing that education and prevention around that. And there’s money around that sort of stuff, right? So, who should be involved? So I said communities, so the community should be involved in what they feel the needs are and what they need, so like community meetings or focus groups, and directly asking people ‘hey, we want to create this space, what does it look like to you?’ and then taking that information and actually delivering what they want or what they need. Making the group specific, like we can make it women’s centre, Two-Spirit centre, whatever it may look like. So how would I be involved?”

(Proclaiming our Roots Community Member, Group Dialogue)

As outlined in this quote, the intersecting barriers Afro-Indigenous Peoples experience when help-seeking include systemic racism, lack of culturally appropriate services, and mistrust of the colonizer’s institutions. This intersectional violence encompasses intimate partner violence, lateral community violence, and institutional neglect. Moreover, from a wellbeing perspective, Indigenous, Black, and Afro-Indigenous communities are pathologized by colonial health care systems that, historically and contemporarily, frame gender-based violence as a ‘trait’ or ‘characteristic’ inherent to such communities, rather than the result of systemic colonial state violence.²⁵

This perpetuation of gendered violence can lead to alienation and ostracization within their own communities and erode the trust they once had in these spaces that were regarded as safe havens. Despite this reality, the existence of lateral gendered violence is often denied. So, community members may resort to avoidance coping as a way to adapt and shield themselves from the shame, stigma, and trauma that has been endured for so long.²⁶



Moreover, acknowledging and accepting the existence of gendered violence within Afro-Indigenous communities can be incredibly challenging, as it forces community members to confront the deep-rooted traumas that underlie this violence. Amy Bombay and colleagues point out that facing the reality of abuse and violence within our communities can be overwhelming, as it requires acknowledging the traumas that have caused this violence – the abuses and intergenerational traumas that we carry in our bodies, impacting our spiritual wellbeing.²⁷ Navigating these complex dynamics of gendered violence, trauma, and coping strategies within such communities is an ongoing process in the path to healing. Mental health, spiritual longing, physical conditioning, and emotional wellbeing are intrinsically connected, and an imbalance in any direction disturbs us in our everyday lives.

“Culturally, you don’t always feel like you belong in Black community. Like I feel alienated. Like it makes sense, I grew up with my mom. I grew up with my Indigenous side and it makes sense to me why I feel like the way I do. I didn’t grow up with my Black side. I do realize I should make more effort. There just hasn’t been a catalyst to act on that... I feel guilty for choosing a side almost. It’s just especially, I don’t know, a lot of the sexual harassment I experienced has been from Black communities and that makes me very sad and that also makes me feel very alienated. And like I just draw a lot of attention to myself when I am in those groups like just for being me and like the way I look. I don’t like the attention or how I am treated...overall, I haven’t had a good experience in those communities. I just feel like that side of me, I feel guilty for that.”

(Proclaiming our Roots Community Member Story)



Healing and Wellbeing for Afro-Indigenous Communities

In *Proclaiming Our Roots*, community members are continually understanding how colonial constructs infiltrate legal systems, policies, and practices. This is evident in concepts like *status versus non-status*, *blood quantum*, and *the one-drop rule*, as well as the experiences within residential schools, orphanages, foster care, and child welfare systems. Community members also examined the ongoing apprehension of children by these systems and the historical and current abduction of family and community members. Through this exploration, they uncovered how these systems perpetuate violence against Black, Indigenous, and Afro-Indigenous Peoples, including cisgender, heteropatriarchal, and ableist dimensions, all aiming to control Afro-Indigenous identities. This has profound effects on their spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing, as well as purposeful disconnection from the land.

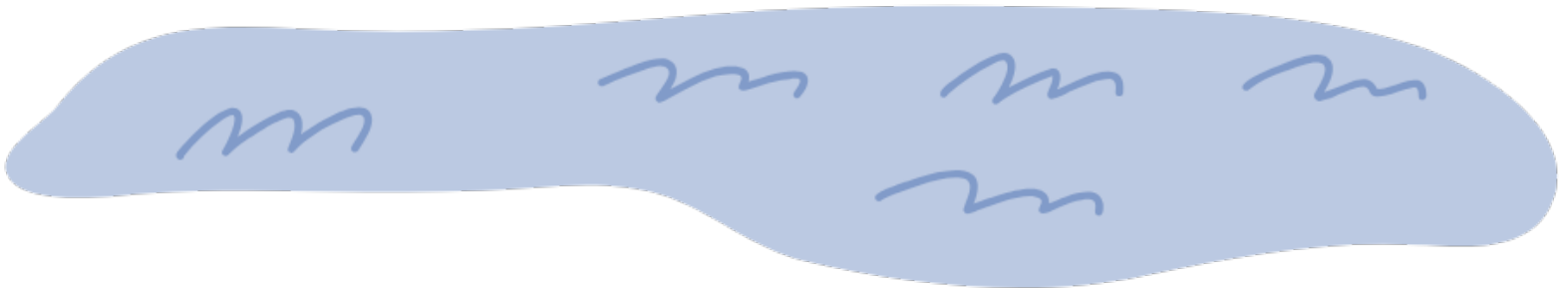


It's crucial to acknowledge that this settler nation-state, rooted in European empire conquest, is accountable for the harm inflicted upon Afro-Indigenous Peoples. As they navigate the path to healing and reclaiming their traditional ways, the POR project serves as an inspiring beacon, providing opportunities for Indigenous, Black, and Afro-Indigenous Two-Spirit, transgender, Indigiqueer, and queer individuals to share their stories authentically.

In *Proclaiming Our Roots*, four key components were identified - **Extended Kin Networks**, **Knowledge Sharing**, **Ongoing Healing**, and **Storytelling** - each recognized as an essential pathway for healing within the POR framework. These strategies work collectively to support healing and promote holistic wellbeing. By focusing on the strengths of community connections, shared wisdom, and continuous growth, these components ensure that healing is not only a personal journey but one supported and sustained through communal care and lived experiences.

Extended Kin Networks

In their model for healing, Brave Heart and DeBruyn stress the significance of extended kin networks in fostering positive identity development.²⁸ *Proclaiming Our Roots* serves as one such network, bringing together Afro-Indigenous individuals to offer mutual recognition and support, while also providing a culturally affirming space to openly discuss and process the painful emotions related to our collective grief. Eduardo Duran describes this process as "healing the soul wound," addressing mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.²⁹ Drawing on the teachings of Mi'kmaq Elder Tuma Young, we are reminded of the importance of our connections to the land and all living beings in the healing journey.³⁰ Consider how your organization can foster and support extended kin networks led by community members to strengthen connections and wellbeing.



Knowledge Sharing

Proclaiming Our Roots includes an educational component, advocating for critical consciousness within liberatory and Indigenous worldviews, acknowledging the diversity of Indigenous traditions across various lands. In embracing Peoples from many Nations, the project incorporates aspects of culture, language, history, and contemporary realities in a holistic approach to healing. As highlighted by MMIWG, “A high-quality, culturally appropriate, and relevant education is the key to breaking cycles of trauma, violence, and abuse.”³¹ Thus, sharing knowledge becomes a path to healing.

Ongoing Healing

Reflecting on healing as resistance and community care, they understand that healing from their histories and traumas is a process. Community members share that healing takes time and aiding others in their healing journey is a form of mutual resistance – we heal together. For descendants of Survivors from Indian Residential Schools, the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children, 60s and millennial scoops, and child welfare agencies, connecting personal experiences with those of caregivers and Ancestors is a necessary part of the process. We recognize the emotional and harmful impact these institutions have had on our families and communities, with some community members still experiencing these systems today.

Storytelling

Indigenous, Black, and Afro-Indigenous Peoples bear the burden of disrupted community knowledge transmission, replaced by harmful colonial patriarchal “caregiving” within these institutions. Through the *Proclaiming Our Roots* movement, community members work to break free from these intergenerational struggles for the sake of their children, kin, and communities. As we pursue healing and reclaim traditional ways, the *Proclaiming Our Roots* project stands as an example of survivance and community strength. The grassroots movement provides a platform for Indigenous, Black, and Afro-Indigenous youth and Elders to share their stories in ways that resonate with their experiences. By promoting a sense of connection and understanding, the project highlights the importance of cultural reclamation and the power of storytelling in the healing process, providing opportunities for Indigenous, Black, and Afro-Indigenous community members to share their stories meaningfully – in their voices.



We need you, reader, to acknowledge that this settler nation-state, born of empire, is responsible for the harm inflicted upon Indigenous, Black, and Afro-Indigenous Peoples, and work to rectify these injustices. This includes dismantling systemic racism, supporting initiatives for cultural reclamation, and safeguarding the wellbeing of our communities. Only through such committed efforts can we begin to address the deep-rooted impacts of colonialism if we are ever to say we thrive in an equitable society.



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