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Aboriginal Health Care



This article is the first in a series which will outline the history and present system of healthcare delivery for First Nations, Inuit and Metis people in Canada. It is hoped that this series will raise discussions and awareness of the factors affecting care delivery for aboriginal people and also provoke some thought as to 'fairness' of resources allocated and potential strategies for improving care in the future. This first article will give a brief history of how the current care system came to arise for First Nations people, with exclusion of the Metis.

The 2002 Romanow Report (Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada) identifies "Conflicting views about constitutional responsibilities for Aboriginal healthcare." Such conflict has arisen from a historical separation of jurisdiction for care of the Canadian Indigenous population from that of the remainder population. This separation is built on two documents, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Constitutional Act of 1867. The Royal Proclamation, in an attempt to create an alliance between the Crown and the Aboriginal population, while containing westward expansion of the American colonies, affirmed that the Indigenous Peoples retained title to their property. Following the 1867 Constitutional Act, expansion by settlers on Indigenous lands would be settled by treaties between the Crown and Aboriginal leaders. The 11 numbered treaties that followed formed the basis of the current reserve system, whereby Aboriginal Peoples surrendered land rights in exchange for reserve land, cash, and a variety of services.

The treaties, as a precedent for determining responsibility for delivery of healthcare to Aboriginals, are very much lacking and remain the subject of conflicting arguments between Aboriginal groups and government. Only Treaty 6, signed among the Crown and the Plain and Wood Cree Indians makes any provision for healthcare of Indigenous Peoples:

"That in the event hereafter of the Indians comprised within this treaty being overtaken by any pestilence, or by a general famine, the Queen, on being satisfied and certified thereof by Her Indian Agent or Agents, will grant to the Indians assistance of such character and such extent as Her Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs shall deem necessary and sufficient to relieve the Indians from the calamity that shall have befallen them ...

That a medicine chest shall be kept at the house of each Indian Agent for the use and benefit of the Indians at the direction of such agent."

These covenants agreed to over one hundred years ago, add little to clarifying present day jurisdictional responsibilities in the complex health care arena. This is exacerbated by Aboriginal claims that such treaties were signed under threat of nation extinction caused by the American Indian Wars, the demise of the buffalo herd and widespread disease exposure associated with the arrival of European settlers.

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Aboriginal Healthcare (Continued)

In the absence of treaties made with the Metis, there is even less grounds to determine who is responsible for healthcare except as provided under the general terms of the Canada Health Act. As such, delivery of care for Metis remains a provincial responsibility as for all Canadian citizens. Despite recognition of the Metis as an aboriginal population under the 1982 Constitution, no specific legislation exists granting the Metis any healthcare services specific to the needs of our culture.

Historically for First Nations and Inuit, the federal government began providing a General Medical Superintendent in 1904, followed by on-reserve nursing stations. These were later administered by the department of Indian Health when formed under the national Department of Health and Welfare in 1944. With the establishment of the current national health system in 1970, managed jurisdictionally by the provinces, on-reserve services remained although in complement to the provincially funded services and under federal funding. As such, some recognition was given to the historical precedence of providing care to reserves.

However, introduction of the current public system, guaranteeing reasonable access to care for all Canadians, made the historical precedent begin to look irrelevant. As the provinces and territories assumed responsibility for care of all residents, there was no mandate for them to deliver specific care to aboriginal people. Such measures were consistent with the ideology of 'assimilation' which guided federal aboriginal policy at that time. Care delivery for First Nations and Inuit by the federal health ministry then changed its focus to providing health promotion and disease prevention, leaving actual treatment of clients to the provinces.

As a result of the historical separation of jurisdictions, in addition to the developing clinical literature regarding Indigenous health, one could argue that Aboriginal health has emerged as a fourth sector in Canadian healthcare. Previously, the health care literature had acknowledged three sectors, government, private/not-for-profit, and non-government organizations as those responsible for healthcare delivery in Canada. It may also be argued that this fourth sector gained formal recognition with the passage of the 1986 federal Health Transfer Policy (HTP), the result of years of negotiations between Indigenous groups and the federal government. The HTP currently provides funds through First Nations and Inuit Health (FNIH) for three types of health programs and services:

- (1) Public or community health programs;
- (2) National initiatives directed at specific health and health related issues such as the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative, the Headstart program, and the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program; and
- (3) Individual funding to provide support for prescription drugs, dental and vision care, and medical transport.

It is important to note that physician services and hospital care are excluded under the HTP. Such services continue to be provided to the Aboriginal population by the provinces and territories in the same manner as the remainder of the population, under the provisions of the Canada Health Act. There is no specific compensation to provincial or territorial governments through federal transfer payments for this provision of care, considered proportionately significant within some jurisdictions in Canada such as Saskatchewan.

Romanow aptly describes the resultant status of this fourth sector as "a confusing mix of federal, provincial and territorial programs and services as well as services provided directly by some Aboriginal communities." While efforts are being made to 'integrate' services by the federal government with the provinces and territories, the fact remains that the vast majority of care delivery is currently being funded and managed by the province.

For the Metis, no specific legislative or treaty basis currently exists that may indicate a need for provincial or the federal government to address any unique needs. While 'having a place at the table,' the Metis are uniquely excluded from any provisions of the current template for aboriginal care delivery, the Health Transfer Policy. This may or may not be consistent with the vision of the Metis people.

Dr. Christopher Ashton, BEng, MD, MBA

Dr. Ashton is Executive Vice-President and Co-founder of HarbourFront Health Group Inc. (HFHG).



Black History Month

Black History Month is a remembrance of important people and events in the history of the African [diaspora](#). It is celebrated annually in the [United States](#) and [Canada](#) in [February](#).

Most people are unaware of the rich history shared by Blacks and the aboriginal peoples of North America. If you have the opportunity, visit the Buxton National Historical Site and Museum to find out more. The museum and site is rich in history and is also an excellent site for family research.

For more information visit <http://www.buxtonmuseum.com/>

A Bit of History

Spencer Alexander was kind enough to provide us with this little known fact.

When most people are asked, "Who were the first settlers to remain on the continent of North America after the First Nations people?" they will answer the Europeans. This is not true.

In the summer of 1526, 500 Spaniards along with 100 of their Black slaves founded a settlement near the mouth of the Pee-Dee River in present day South Carolina. Disputes with nearby Natives and disease caused many deaths in the early months of the settlement. In November the slaves rebelled, killed some of their masters, and escaped to the Indians. By then only 150 Spaniards survived; they retreated to Haiti, leaving behind their Black slaves, who merged with nearby Indian nations. This would make them the first people after the First Nations people, to settle and remain in North America.



Louis Riel Day

Louis Riel Day is celebrated each year on the 3rd Monday in February in Manitoba. This is a partial image of a poster that is available from the government of Manitoba [here](#)



For those who will be attending the Olympics, visit the following website for information relating to aboriginal attractions. <http://www.hellobc.com/en-CA/SightsActivitiesEvents/ArtsCulturalHistoricalExperiences/AboriginalCultural/BritishColumbia.htm?Lev1=4>

Louis Riel

This statue of Louis Riel stands near the Manitoba Legislative Building.

The following was sent to us by Donna Meness

LOUIS RIEL October 22, 1844 - November 16, 1885

Louis Riel, a Métis, led two major resistance movements against the central government. He sought to preserve the rights of the Métis people as their homeland fell more and more under the influence of Ottawa and encroaching white settlements. The Red River Rebellion of 1869-70 took place after Riel established a provisional government in what is now the Province of Manitoba. Sir John A. Macdonald was the newly elected Prime Minister and this was his first major confrontation since the establishment of Confederation in 1867. To make a long story short, troops were eventually dispatched to enforce federal authority. This was after a very controversial execution of a man named Thomas Scott. Riel fled to the United States before the troops arrived at Fort Garry, but their arrival effectively put down the rebellion. During his period of exile he became probably today what would be termed as deeply depressed and disillusioned. He imagined himself a god-like figure and the saviour of his people. He was also elected in absentia several times but never took his seat in the House of Commons.

Eventually at the urging of Gabriel Dumont, he returned to Canada, this time to Saskatchewan to help represent the interests of the Métis. The result was the North-West Rebellion of 1885. It ended tragically with his arrest and eventual execution as a traitor on November 16, 1885.

Riel is sometimes thought of as the 'Father of Manitoba', the man who actually negotiated the terms by which the province would enter Confederation.





The Quilt of Belonging - Mi'gmaq

Using various techniques such as embroidery, appliqué and porcupine quillwork, Carol Caplin of Listuguj (Restigouche), Quebec, created the central eight-pointed star. This star is a centuries-old Mi'gmaq symbol of unity. The colours of the star represent the four races of people: red, yellow, black, and white. The number four has significance throughout Mi'gmaq culture. The points show the four compass directions and speaks to the importance of maintaining balance in the external environment and within oneself. Doubled to eight points, the design implies that there is always something more than meets the eye, a recurring theme known as "The Great Mystery" in Mi'gmaq cosmology. Elders explain the eight-point star as representing the original seven Mi'gmaq districts plus the 1752 agreement with the Crown that made all inseparable from one another.

In the corners, stitched double curves, or two-dimensional spirals, represent the positive and negative forces of nature's spiral-like movements in the currents of the wind and ocean. The blue background of the sky surrounds all.

The Mi'gmaq are believed to be the first natives ever encountered by Vikings, known to have reached the eastern shores of Canada around 1000 AD. The Mi'gmaq were original members of the Wabanaki Confederacy along with the Abenaki, Penobscot, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy. They ranged from southern Gaspé Peninsula through the Maritime Provinces, up into Newfoundland and down into Maine. Their name, Mi'gmaq (spelling variations include Mi'kmaq and Micmac), means "allies" and comes from their language *Mi'kmawisimk*, of the Algonquian linguistic family. This language was written in pictographs as seen in ancient petroglyphs (rock drawings) located at McGowan Lake and Fairy Bay in Kejimikujic Park, Nova Scotia.

A nomadic people, the Mi'gmaq used wigwams that were easily moved as they traveled to hunt, trap, fish and harvest wild berries. They also made distinctive birchbark canoes and toboggans. Now a commonly used English word, 'toboggans' comes from the Mi'gmaq word *tabagan*. They collected sap and made maple syrup every spring to use as a flavourful cooking additive. The Mi'gmaq were masters of porcupine quillwork, a technique used to decorate clothing, moccasins and baskets. The quills from the Eastern Porcupine, *madooes*, are white with black tips; traditionally certain sizes of quills were used for different types of quillwork.

The Mi'gmaq were among the first aboriginal peoples to trade with the European explorers and settlers. During the wars in the mid-1700s they sided with the French against the British and their Iroquois allies. When the British won they unsuccessfully attempted to convert the Mi'gmaq to farming in the 1760s. Unable to reconcile to a sedentary lifestyle of farming many Mi'gmaq became involved in the forestry and transportation industries. Today the Mi'gmaq population in the Maritimes is over 15,000 strong. There is also a number of Mi'gmaq communities in Quebec and Newfoundland. Many modern-day Mi'gmaq work in traditional salmon fishing.

Sponsors: Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation Council

The photo and text are from: <http://www.invitationproject.ca/region.php>

This Month In History

- January 8, 1949 Distance runner Tom Longboat died at the Six Nations reserve in Ontario
- January 14, 1993 MLA Mike Cardinal is sworn in as Alberta's first status Indian cabinet minister
- January 19, 1888 Chief Big Bear dies on the Poundmaker reserve
- January 23, 1995 \$4.4 million settlement to Grassy Narrow Indian band in Ontario
- January 25, 1870 First meeting of Louis Riel's provisional government
- January 26, 2001 Supreme Court dismisses appeal of Ontario Provincial Police Officer convicted in Dudley George shooting
- January 27, 1945 Harold Cardinal, Indian leader and author, is born at High Prairie, Alberta
- January 28, 1991 Native trapper Leo LaChance is shot and killed by white supremacist
- January 29, 1989 Hobbema boxer Danny Stonewalker wins the Canadian light-heavyweight title



Artistic Cousins



My cousin Lise Patenaude and myself, Nicole Beauchamp, have only recently been searching seriously for information on our native ancestors. Looking at pictures of our uncles and aunts we can see traits that can only hide a fascinating history. In the past these relatives talked about Sophie (Sabourin) Patenaude who lived in Embrun, ON. Sophie was a midwife and people would come to her as well for her knowledge of the herbs. There are also some unfortunate stories, the ones where in official documents Sophie and her mother were referred as "sauvages". One of those stories tell of when our great grandfather, Léon Patenaude, could not own land because he had married a Métis (Sophie) and on her death her coffin was not allowed to be brought to the front of the church, though she was a devout Catholic. It was Léon who stood up to the priest and pushed the coffin himself. Acknowledging these facts but not wanting to dwell on these incidents, my cousin, Lise and I are focusing on shining new light on native history. Taking pride in our Métis heritage and wanting to learn more. It was through my late cousin Luc Patenaude's (Lise's brother) initial research and hard work that we want to honour him and hopefully answer some the questions that have been on

our minds since we were young girls. The following diagram will show our link to what is now referred to as the infamous Marguerite Coutenais dit Frappier. In documents she is referred as a squaw from Mattawa/Lake Nippising who married Pierre Groleau a trapper. Was Marguerite Algonquin? Some have even suggested Mohawk. She married late in life, odd for the times. How and why her daughter Marguerite Groleau was born in Manitoba? What would have brought them to that province? Still many questions to be answered. But while we are searching for answers the leaning part of our journey is ongoing. I have found a mentor, Diane MacKenzie, she has been the instigator of what is now my beading passion. Diane continues to be a source of great knowledge. In turn I have taught beading to my cousin Lise. It is now a budding business. As for my knowledge of how to make smudging fans, I strongly believe it to be an inspiration from my grandmother, Marguerite, as it came to me in a dream like state and my first fan had Hawk feathers, a gift from the sky. Lise and I welcome anyone who wishes to share information and we can be reached at the following address:

Nicole: nicole_beauchamp@hotmail.com Lise: lisesahram@sympatico.ca

Genealogical chart:

Joseph Napoléon Patenaude

Sophie (Sabourin) Patenaude

Marguerite (Groleau, Groslot, Grolou or Grolau different spelling) Sabourin

Marguerite (Coutenais dit Frappier) Grolost

The Gitksan Consider Surrender

A recent newspaper article dealt with the Gitksan people of British Columbia. The Gitksan face major problems that are found on many reserves throughout Canada. One proposed solution for those problems is to give up their reserves and their status under the Indian Act, in exchange for some control over the resources within the 33,000 square kilometers which they claim as their traditional territory. The B.C. government seems to favour this idea and I'm sure the federal government would welcome any agreement that reduced or eliminated aboriginal rights. Assimilation has always been the ultimate aim of the Indian Act.

Normally I wouldn't comment on the internal affairs of any First Nation but in my opinion this proposal amounts to surrender and will set a dangerous precedent for all aboriginal peoples. Surrendering their rights under the Indian Act might solve some of their problems but the price would ultimately be assimilation and the end of their culture. Someone is putting money ahead of culture and that is a very shortsighted view.

I've been a student of history my whole life and I have no doubt that any agreement to surrender their rights would be the most important event in aboriginal history since first contact with the white man. Similar agreements would soon follow with other First Nations. Assimilation would be the inevitable outcome and in a matter of a few generations First Nations would only exist as a footnote in the history books.

There are other options and solutions that would involve changes to the Indian Act and a major restructuring of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). It's long past time for all the aboriginal peoples of Canada to speak with one voice and convince the government that the time for change is now. The aboriginal vote in Canada is huge and that leverage should be used to force change.

Surrender is not progress and assimilation should never be an option. Aboriginal culture has already been severely damaged; let's not willingly give the government another tool for utterly destroying it. Problems need to be rectified but solutions should add to native rights, not eliminate them. I sincerely hope that all First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations will do everything in their power to discourage the Gitksan people in such a foolhardy endeavour.

Art Haines, Director



Slavery and Native Americans



**Spencer Alexander,
Métis**

The Buxton National Historic Site & Museum is situated on the lands of the original Elgin/Buxton Settlement. The settlement was founded by Rev. William King who was a White, Irish born Presbyterian Minister. He immigrated to the United States as a young man and married in the U.S. when he was twenty-four years old and married into a slave holding family. As a result of marriage and other circumstances he ended up owning fifteen slaves. This for Rev. King created a dilemma. Following his moral convictions against the inhumanity of slavery he sought turning nine thousand acres of swampy forest north of Lake Erie, in the County of Kent, in Raleigh Township into a thriving self-sufficient community for the refugees of slavery.

In the beginning there was much opposition to Rev. King's plan spearheaded by a man named Edwin Larwill who was an elected political official of the area. There were mass protests held in the city of Chatham against the establishment of the settlement, but through his determination Rev. King prevailed and his dream became a reality on November 28th, 1849 when he arrived with his fifteen former slaves. The whole of Rev. King's plan was this; to provide these people with a place where they could build their homes and provide their children with an education and with these two things he was confident every blessing would come. The settlement became a final terminus on the Underground Railroad for approximately two thousand refugees of slavery.

The settlement became known for its superior educational system. When the people first settled here they were not allowed to attend the district school, it was for Whites only, so they built their own school. But when they did they opened the doors to anyone who wished to attend, making the Buxton Mission School the first integrated school in Canada. The first day of the school there were fourteen Black and two White children. Within a few years there were more White children attending the Buxton school than the district school. Shortly after that the district school closed down because of lack of enrolment. That made the Buxton school the only common school in the area, a fully integrated school, not because of a supreme court ruling, but because the Whites sought out the Black school.

Today Buxton is inhabited by about one hundred people, most of them descendants of the early settlers. In 1999 Buxton was declared a National Historic Site by the Government of Canada, signifying its important role in the Underground Railroad and Canadian history.

At the Buxton National Historic site & Museum you will find a museum with three rooms of exhibits depicting the epic journey from slavery to freedom, including children's ankle shackles. There is also an 1852 log cabin, a 1861 schoolhouse which is the only one still standing in Canada that was built by fugitive slaves and much more.

You may be asking yourself what is the connection with this article and the Native North American and the Métis. The answer is this. When the Europeans began to settle on the continent of North American they brought with them their African slaves and they also started enslaving the Native Americans. In the summer of 1526 a group of Spaniards attempted to start a settlement at the mouth of the Pee Dee River which is in present day South Carolina. They had with them their African slaves. Disease and fighting with the Native people took a heavy toll on the Spaniards, then, their slaves revolted and the remaining Spanish retreated to Haiti, leaving behind their African slaves who were absorbed into the Native tribes. Twenty percent of the people on the Trail Of Tears had Black blood in them. Interaction between Black and Native people produced children of mixed heritage. One of Chief Joseph Brant's daughters married a Black man whose descendants still reside on Six Nations of the Grand River. These are just a few examples of the connections between these two races.

The Underground Railroad Movement was probably the first human rights movement on the continent of North American and the First Nations people were involved in it.

The people who escaped slavery put their faith and lives in the hand of the Creator and the following words I think describes how they felt.

In my distress I called unto my Lord and cried unto my God and my voice went unto his temple even into his ear. He sent from above he took me he drew me out of many waters. For he shall save the afflicted people, but will bring down high looks. He delivered me from my strong enemy and those who hated me for no reason, for they were too strong for me. For by thee I have run through a troop and by my God I have leaped over a wall.

Spencer Alexander, Métis

February is Black History Month. Why not celebrate it by visiting the Buxton National Historic Site & Museum.

<http://www.buxtonmuseum.com/index.html>

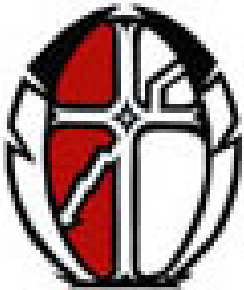


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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.omfrc.org

www.aboriginalstatus.org

New Submissions!

We are always looking for new interesting submissions to add to upcoming issues of the OMFRC Newsletter. If you have something you would like to add to the newsletter please call or email us! We'd be happy to consider it for an upcoming issue.



Keeping Warm In The Métis Tradition

Here are two pairs of mittens designed and created by one of our members, Lise Patenaude. Everything she creates is hand made and hand stitched.

The beige pair of mittens bears Lise's own design and incorporates the Métis symbol. The design on the blue mittens was inspired by a flower on the coat of Louis Riel on display at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization is located in Gatineau, Quebec, on the banks of the Ottawa River, directly opposite Parliament Hill.

Beautiful work! Thanks for sharing Elise.