Finding the Common Thread: An Exploration of Gender-Based Violence Against Métis Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Folks

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Who are the Métis:

The Métis Nation originated from the northwest of Canada during the late 18th century (Métis National Council, 2021). Considered a distinct Indigenous group, the Métis people are descendants of First Nation women and European fur traders who have their own culture, language (Michif Dialects), and collective nationhood (Métis National Council, 2021). The Métis National Council regards a Métis person as someone, *"who self-identifies as* Métis*, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic* Métis *Nation ancestry and who is accepted by the* Métis *Nation"* (MNBC, 2019; RCAP, 1996; Métis National Council, 2011). There are 587,545 Canadians who self-identify as Métis, making up almost two percent of Canada's entire population (Statistics Canada, Government of Canada, 2016).

Presently there are 39 Métis Chartered Communities in British Columbia. A Chartered Community is a Métis governance body whose purposes include connecting with Métis community members and providing direct cultural and social services. It is integral to have multiple Chartered Communities so that Métis people can be in relationship with local support folks and services providers. Knowing the supporting people who provide help ultimately lowers the barriers to overall service provision.

Distinct Indigenous People:

Historically, Métis have faced many colonial adversaries throughout the history of Canada. Forced residential schooling, The 60s Scoop, an overrepresentation of Métis children within government child protection systems, as well as land displacement strategies and subsequent houselessness are some examples of such hardships (M.D. Auger, 2019; Logan

2015). The Canadian government, both historically and at present, implement racist policies

that discriminate against Métis, including the scrip system and exclusion from treaties (Fiola,

2015). Métis continually face policy and jurisdictional gaps in Canada; many of the funded

programs for Indigenous Peoples specifical target First Nations groups while excluding Métis

(Logan, 2015; Waldram et al., 2006); The literature supports that Métis people experience poor

outcomes when engaging in health and support services and would benefit from targeted

assistance to adequately address their unique needs as an Indigenous group (Smylie et al.,

2004). As a result, Métis are trapped between "mainstream" services and those that are First

Nation-specific.

What is Gender-Based Violence:

The term gender-based violence (GBV) is used to describe women's and girl's

subordinate position in society and their inherent lack of power (Western University, n.d.).

Though sometimes used interchangeably with 'violence against women', the United Nations

notes the latter term is much more constrictive. 'Violence against women' is defined as "any act

of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological

harm or suffering to women" (United Nations, 1993). Gender-based violence expands upon this

first definition to encompass the patriarchal configuration of society that is unequal.

The United Nation specifies that certain demographics of folks experience an increase in

gender-based violence, such as "women who identify as lesbian, bisexual, transgender or

intersex..., Indigenous women and ethnic minorities" (United Nations, 1993). It is therefore

incredibly important to understand that gender-based violence actually co-exists with other

intersecting factors that further disadvantage and endanger Métis women, girls and two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and all other sexual orientations and genders (2SLGBTQQIA+) folks.

Most available academic literature and resources surrounding GBV against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks derive from a pan-Indigenous perspective; meaning, that First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples are amalgamated into one group for analysis. As each people is culturally distinct, it is essential to complete an overview of the existing literature (where available) to better understand, and subsequently address, gender-based violence against vulnerable Métis individuals.

Another form of violence that Métis folks often experience is known as lateral violence. The impact of colonialism, residential schools, and ultimately cultural genocide have interwoven intergenerational and contemporary trauma with feelings of anger and resentment between Indigenous peoples and/or groups (First Nations Health Authority, 2019). Lateral violence can become complicated when these negative feelings toward other Indigenous groups are not recognizing as the actual harm of continued colonialism, internalized racism, and oppression (First Nations Health Authority, 2019). Red River Métis Gregory Scofield powerfully portrays the Métis experience of lateral violence in his poem *Divided*:

My Beigey-pink shade
Unlike you with bronze skin
I'm a skin without colour; I get the brushoff
Ego-tripping on me again
Deciding if I am pure enough   Red enough
To be whole but the whole of me says
Enough of this colour crap
I am not your white whipping boy

…

Scofield beautifully outlines this frequently forgotten, uphill battle of simply existing as a Métis

person with a foot in two worlds.

Métis Perspectives on Gender-Based Violence:

As with the limited literature and continued colonial perspectives concerning lateral

violence , this review will use a traditional means of knowledge translation to create a true,

inclusive overview of GBV against Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQIAA+ folks: turning to our

Métis authors and storytellers. It is important to note that there is a considerable gap in

representation of Métis 2SLGBTQIAA+ folks surrounding their experiences gender-based

violence. This narrowed perspective of GBV is not all-encompassing and thus only highlights

that of Métis women.

Consider Jónína Kirton's lyrical and poetic memoir *Standing in a River of Time.* Kirton

describes an experience of a young girl who is sexualized within her mundane existence within

childhood, whereas her brother's sexualized, and questionably consensual, act is both ignored

publicly while celebrated privately (Poem Sexism 101):

every night there is a shouting
in my ear
a ringing going out
a circular sound sent far by force
a slap across the head
I am hurled forward hoping
to avoid what comes next

"You little slut"

shouted at my tiny body

one that has not known sex
but is accused of time with boys
yet when the neighbour complains about my younger brother
playing doctor with their daughter
my father nods appears to agree
until the door closes and
he high-fives my brother

The author goes on to describe that as a young girl she was incredibly aware of the

subservient, willing expectations she was to fulfil as a woman, as a wife. Kirton states quite

plainly in the beginning of her book, *"I often wished that I had been born a boy" (Kirton, 2022).*

Similarly, Cherie Dimaline's contemporary retelling of the Métis Rogarou folklore in her

fictional novel *Empire of the Wild* describes how Métis women and girls would warn each other

of the Rogarou monster. The Rogarou is regarded as a dog-man-wolf creature who poses a

threat to all community members; though, with critically different outcomes as demonstrated

in the following passage: *"For girls, he was the creature who kept you off the road or made you*

walk in packs. For boys, he was the worst thing you could ever be" (Dimaline, 2019). The

Rogarou story was spoken as a warning of the violence to come to females, while utilized as a

cautionary tool for males of the harm they could inflict while *"sleeping with a married woman*

or hitting a girl under any circumstances" (Dimaline, 2019). Dimaline emphasizes that even if

the folklore of the Rogarou might not be completely believed by all young girls, it was impactful

because *"it lived on in the way [they] behaved. Women never walked alone…[they] feared men*

in unknown cars" (Dimaline, 2019). This teaching, to be wary of the perpetual violence

perpetrated against women, transcends Dimaline's fictional story and can be seen in many

other Métis authors, including Katherena Vermette, Beatrice Mosionier, and Lisa Bird-Wilson,

to name a few. These incredible Métis women have threaded experiences of gender-based

violence within their fictional stories, poetry, memoirs, and retellings of traditional Métis folklore. These authors draw upon the entrenched issue of gender-based violence and emphasize that acknowledging Métis gender-based violence is the first step in preventing further harm to our Métis sisters and siblings.

Academia as a Colonial Process:

In its essence, a scoping review is a process that contributes to and upholds the colonial framework of academia. Prior to completing this review, the Thanks for Listening: Witnessing Métis Women & Girls Experiences of Violence & Pathways to Healing Report (Métis Nation B.C., 2021) was examined so that this work could be completed in a good way while considering the recommendations and principles for future research outlined. As such, this review will include facets that are not considered a part of the conventional scoping review protocol in order to thoroughly explore gender-based violence against Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks.

Purpose of this Scoping Review:

The purpose of this scoping review is to identify gaps in existing academic literature as well as present an overview of community gender-based violence services on Vancouver Island. The secondary purpose is to strengthen the North Island Métis Association's capacity to prevent and address gender-based violence through updated anti-violence policy and procedure recommendations. This review was completed by a consultant who identifies as a cis-gender Métis woman (she/her).

Methods

Study design:

This scoping review drew upon traditional knowledge transmitted through fictional novels, historical memoirs, and poetry by Métis authors. It is important to note that when compared with systematic reviews, scoping reviews have a very broadly defined research question, include all study types, and track data according to key issues and themes. A five-stage methodological framework was followed to complete this review, including: 1) identification of the research question, 2) identification of all relevant studies and/or GBV program overview, 3) selection of studies and/or GBV programs for detailed analysis, 4) charting of the data according to key concepts and 5) collation and summarising the findings of selected studies (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Stage 1 Identifying the research question: As per the first stage of the scoping review, the research question that guide the review was: *"What is known about preventing and addressing gender-based violence against* Métis *women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks."*

Stage 2 Identifying relevant studies and/or traditional sources of knowledge: In the second stage of the scoping review a core set of search terms was created and subsequently inputted into academic databases. It is important to note that a librarian was not consulted to determine a comprehensive list of search terms, identify all relevant data bases to build the search protocol due to lack of resources and connection to a post-secondary institution team. The primary search words utilized included 'Métis or Metis' and 'women 'or 'girls or '2SLGBTQQIA+

or 2 Spirited or LGBTQ' and 'gender-based violence'. The combination of these terms was examined on March 7, 2023. The cut-off date for this scoping review was April 15, 2023. A follow-up search using Google Scholar and Medline was completed on April 30, 2023, to include any relevant studies that had been published since the original cut-off date.

Stage one of this scoping review revealed there were no relevant studies examining Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks experience of gender-based violence published to date. To further understand what is known about gender-based violence GBV policy, procedure, and bylaws an examination of Vancouver Island programs already in place was completed from March 8, 2023, to April 30, 2023.

Stage 3 Screening: For stage three of the scoping review, one consultant (TC) independently screened all resources, services, and programming that address and/or prevent gender-based violence. The central qualifications were (1) resources published or written in English, (2) program and/or policy located on Vancouver Island, B.C., Canada, and (3) existing gender-based violence services.

Stage 4 Thematic Analysis: The relevant gender-based violence programs on Vancouver Island were and sorted according to key themes within anti-violence services. Data was sorted based upon the agency, anti-violence service provided, key concept, and consideration of relevant intersectional aspects (e.g., Indigeneity and 2SLGBTQQIA+).

Stage 5 Implication & Overview: The data was synthesized and sorted according to central

issues and themes to present a narrative of the existing literature/ programs. Each theme was

reviewed by this consultant (TC) and subsequently sorted into broad categories. The main

purpose of this scoping review was to identify the breadth of literature in this area of study,

and whether there are any gaps in service identified within policy and procedure aimed at

addressing gender-based violence experienced by Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQIAA+ folk.

Thus, it is important to note that a complete assessment of the quality of evidence was not

completed.

Coding Key → Community / Safe Space / Intersectionality / Connection through Culture – PAN / FN / METIS

Anti-Violence Service Provider on Vancouver Island	Services	Theme	Métis - Specific Aspects	Female / 2SLGBTQQIA+ Inclusive
211 British Columbia	Community-Based Victim Services	Service(s) Navigation	N	Y
Campbell River Family Services Society	-Community-Based Victim Services -Sexual Violence Programs	Family-Centred // Parenting	N	N Parenting & Families
Campbell River & North Island Transition Society	Stopping the Violence Counselling	Women & Children Safe Space	N	N Women & Children
Comox Valley Family Services Association	Community-Based Victim Services	Safe Space for Victims	N	N Women & Children
Comox Valley Transition Society	Stop the Violence Counselling	Safe Space, // Justice // Children programming	N	N
Cowichan Women Against Violence Society	- Community-Based Victim Services -Sexual Violence Programs -Stopping the Violence Counselling	Community Support – Education – Community Development	N	N – Women & Children

Haven Society	-Community-Based Victim Services -Stopping the Violence Counselling -Stopping the Violence Outreach	Housing (safe space) Connecting to Community	N	Y - Women & Children *"LGBTQ & Male survivors welcome"* RE: bottom of what community-based victim services does
Homolco First Nation	Sexual Violence Programs	Health as a community responsibility – Defined Nationhood	N - First Nation	N – Community
Hulitan Family & Community Services Society	Sexual Violence Programs	Resilience through culture & connection	N – First Nation	N – Child & Family
Islanders Working Against Violence First Page on Website Home: *In our anti-violence services & housing, IWAV welcomes all women, inclusive of trans women, and non-gender conforming people and members of the LGBTQ+ community in all our services*	-Sexual Violence Programs -Stopping the Violence Counselling -Stopping the Violence Outreach	Intersectional Factors addressed x2 Affordable Housing LGBTQQIA+	N	Y – *"Outreach is here to help all women, inclusive of cis, trans and non-binary women"*
Laichwiltach Family Life Society	Stopping the Violence Outreach	Pan-Indigenous Cultural Awareness	N Aboriginal & non-aboriginal women	N
Namgis Community Services	Communitiy-based victim services	*Details unnknown (member access only)* Community autonomy	N First Nation	Unknown (member access only)

Native Courtworker & Counselling Association of British Columbia	Sexual Violence Programs	Address +++ intersectionality factors (e.g., justice, housing, MCFD, applications)	N Pan-Indigenous *Specified* Métis *in language*	Y Open to the LGBTQ2S community & their families
North Island Crisis & Counselling Centre Society // North Island Survivors' Healing Society	-Stopping the Violence Counselling -Stopping the Violence Outreach	Intersectionality – Housing	N – Links to 3 Nation-specific centres	N – "All women"
Pacific Centre Family Services Association	Stopping the Violence Counselling	Holistic Community Healthcare	N	N
Peers Victoria Resource Society *Sex Work*	Sexual Violence Programs	+++ Addresses Intersectionality Safety through community engagement / connection to ++ services	N	Y – TN2S / Women / Men
Powell River Community Services Association	-Community-Based Victim Services -Stopping the Violence Counselling -Stopping the Violence Outreach	Housing, employment, food security Community Resources Education	N – x1 resource to Nation-specific services	N – Family, women & children
Sage Have Society (Alberni Community & Women's Services Society)	-Community-Based Victim Services -Sexual Violence Programs -Stopping the Violence Counselling -Stopping the Violence Outreach	Safe Spaces (non-judgemental) -Housing -Education -Counselling -Advocacy -Harm reduction -Self-care supplies	N	N- Women (self-identify) & children
Sooke Transition House Society	-Stopping the Violence Counselling -Stopping the Violence Outreach	Safety as community responsibility Education RE: safety	N	N – Women & Children
Sources Community Resources Centre – Oceanside	Stopping the Violence Counselling	Social belonging – connection	N	– Families, women & children LGBTQ2S+ *(no specific services)*

The Victoria Sexual Assault Centre Society	-Community-Based Victim Services -Sexual Violence Programs -Stopping the Violence Counselling	Education & Advocacy	N – Link to Local Nation Response Team	Y & ++ visible on website *(e.g., language, pride flag)*
Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre	Community-based victim services	Holistic Services // Traditional Healing	N – First Nation specific / Urban Indigenous	N
Vancouver Island Men's Therapy Centre Society	Community-based victim services	Safe Space Education Safe Housing	N	N – any man*: cis, gay, bi-sexual, trans, non-binary, 2spirit, queer, gender fluid+ MEN* in vision
Victoria Child Abuse Prevention & Counselling Centre	Community-based victim services	Safe Space Support through community	N	N
Victoria Women's Transition House Society	-Community-based victim services -Stopping the violence counselling	Safe Housing Right to Feel Safety	N	N – women & children
Westcoast Community Resource Society	-Stopping the Violence Counselling -Stopping the Violence Outreach	Safety as a community responsibility Education Strong sense of belonging	N	N – women & children

Table 1

Results

There were no additional relevant articles published academically after the updated

Google Scholar search (March 7, 2023, to April 30, 2023). The manual screen of gender-based

violence programming originated from the Ending Violence Association of BC (Ending Violence

Association of BC, 2023) search engine and generated a total of 26 services that offer gender-

based violence programming on Vancouver Island. These programs were further screened and

subsequently examined by the consultant (TC), which were then compared to the selection

criteria. Each program was then scanned to identify if it addressed gender-based violence, and/or a Métis -specific organization, and/or primarily serving women, girls, or 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks.

Of the 26 services on Vancouver Island, 12 were based in the South Island (Victoria to Nanaimo) and 14 were located on the North Island (Parksville to Alert Bay). On the South Island, one service was in Salt Spring, seven were in Victoria, one in Sooke, one in Duncan, and two in Nanaimo. For the North Island, one service was in Parksville, one in Port Alberni, two in Courtenay, one in Powell River, one in Ucluelet, five in Campbell River, one in Gold River, one if Port Hardy, and one in Alert Bay. The results displayed that none of the 26 services across Vancouver Island referenced GBV care for Métis women, girls, or 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks. Only six of these services were aimed to care for a specific First Nation or Pan-Indigenous group. Of these 26 services, six had a visual representation of 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion on its website that was easily accessible. This scoping review identified two central themes in regards to preventing and addressing gender-based violence against Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks. As shown in figure 1, the two main themes extracted were: (1) Métis -Specific programming within community (2) Visible gender-based violence policy in creating safe spaces for services.
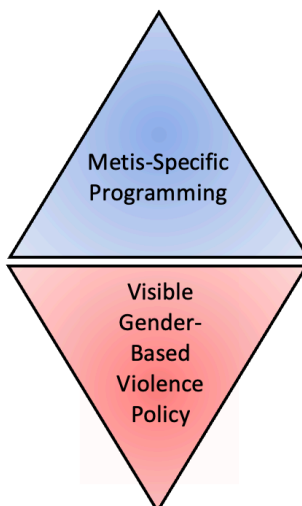

Figure 1 Common themes from this scoping review regarding important aspects of Métis -centred gender-based violence programming.

Interpretation

This review describes the current gender-based violence programs on Vancouver Island.

A scoping review was chosen in order to determine the breadth of the information for this

topic; though, there were no other systematic reviews or meta-analyses of the literature

identified in this research area. This review identified that there are currently no GBV services

and/or programs on Vancouver Island designed to support for Métis women, girls, and

2SLGBTQQIA+ folks. This disparity suggests that gender-based violence support specifically

targeted towards Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks is in dire need of development.

This scoping review identified 26 services on Vancouver Island that provide gender-

based violence programming. A high volume of these services were located in Victoria (n=7)

while others were located in Campbell River (n=5), Nanaimo (n=2), and Courtenay (n=2). The

remainder of communities noted each only had one gender-based violence service provider.

Common concepts highlighted throughout these programs included physical safety, a sense of

safety within the space, connection through community engagement, belonging to those with

lived experience connection, acknowledgement and addressment of intersectionality factors

related to gender-based violence, and cultural connection. Two overarching themes were

identified in this review. These themes may add insight into the way gender-based violence

services are provided to Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks. This scoping review

emphasized that Métis WG2S+ do not have a designated gender-based violence service and/or

program on Vancouver Island. Creating a program designed specifically for Métis peoples

affected by gender-based violence may allow professionals to understand the unique

intersectionality of being a Métis woman, girl, or 2SLBGBTQQIA+ individual.

Theme 1 - <u>Métis -Specific programming within community</u>: Due to the gap within the

academic literature and gender-based violence service providers on Vancouver Island, it is

imperative to turn again to traditional knowledge translation within our Métis community. Erin

Stagg, Red River Métis Artist, speaks of the importance of healing within culture and

community. In her blog *How Métis am, I* Stagg writes, *"I know that our story isn't just our*

traumas. It's also our connection to the land and to each other. Our culture is our language,

stories, art, medicines, and methods we use to heal from these difficult times. It's practiced in

our love, and the way we care for each other" (Stagg, 2021*).* The impact of a Métis gender-

based violence program provided to citizens within their local community would allow for

entrance within that space without having to leave an aspect of one's person behind prior to

engaging. Just as it is not possible to dissolve a Métis person into their percentages of heritage,

of fixating on blood quantum, it is impossible to create a place of safe healing when we are not

complete.

Theme 2 - <u>Visible gender-based violence policy in creating safe spaces for services</u>:

Many of the GBV programs on Vancouver Island highlighted the importance of feeling safe

when accessing services and connecting with others; however, the sense of safety does not

simply apply in the physical sense. To know an organization is a safe space to be in as a

2SLGBTQQIA+ individual can be incredibly difficult to determine if there are not clearly

displayed signs of acceptance and inclusion. Returning to Cherie Dimaline's *Empire of the Wild,*

the author provides an example of auditorily transmitting signs of safety through the Rogarou

folklore. As the older auntie explains to the younger girls, *"it is not safe for us there. We go*

missing. We are hurt" (Dimaline, 2019). This reported sighting of the Rogarou acts as a warning

for those Métis folks susceptible to gender-based violence to stay away from such unsafe

spaces. Just as it is impossible to heal without ones' complete self present within a space, it is

equally important to display signs of acceptance and inclusion so that sexual and gender diverse

individuals know they are able to first engage prior to beginning the healing process.

Conclusion

The well-being of Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks is a topic of great

concern. This review suggests that gender-based violence services should be tailed specifically

to Métis people (as opposed to taking a pan-Indigenous perspective on connection to culture),

and should provide very clear, easily accessible signs of inclusion for 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals

to signify safety within a space of service engagement. It is clear Métis women, girls, and

2SLGBTQQIA+ folks face a gap in gender-based violence programming on Vancouver Island. This

gap of service should be recognised by the health system as an area to address and improve

upon. Collectively, the gender-based violence services overviewed emphasise that it cannot be

assumed Métis folks fit within westernized GBV programming, nor can they easily slot within

programming designed for First Nation peoples; tailored programms are required to address

Métis-specific needs. Aligning the priorities of Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks may

enable efficiency in achieving improved outcomes, while also promoting greater engagement of

Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks within gender-based violence services on

Vancouver Island, across British Columbia, and Canada.

Limitations

While it is not the main tenet of a scoping review, it must be acknowledged that a

thorough investigation into the quality of the literature was not completed. It is important to

note that the well, most studies had small sample sizes and lacked consistent measurement of

outcomes. It should also be noted that the though all GBV services were overviewed on

Vancouver Island, the conclusions of this review are by no means exhaustive. Furthermore, the

consultant for this scoping review identifies as a Métis woman and uses pronouns she/ her;

therefore, individuals identifying as 2SLGBTQQIA+ or folks who are sexual and gender diverse

must be collaborated with and included when acting on the recommendations below.

Recommendations

1. Métis communities should be supported to provide Métis GBV services for community members (e.g., funding support, hiring, contracting, etc.)
2. Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks to lead in program creation
3. Create clear, easily visible GBV policy for North Island Métis Association (NIMA)
4. Polices created will be specific, and relevant to NIMA
5. The GBV policies apply to staff, clients, volunteers, contractors, suppliers, and visitors.
6. NIMA to utilize SGD-positive visuals (e.g., posters, signs, etc.) within the office to signify a safe space
7. NIMA to display symbols of inclusion after foundational training(s) have been completed (e.g., rainbow pins, sticker with personal pronouns etc.)

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