National Collaborating Centre
for Indigenous Health

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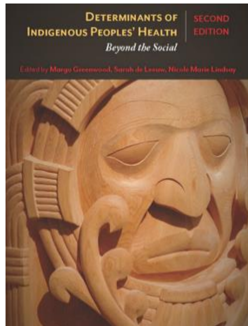
Beyond the Social: Author Interviews



Welcome to Beyond the Social: Author Interviews, a video series produced by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health. The NCCIH focuses on innovative research and community-based initiatives promoting the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada. All of the contributors interviewed in this video series, from the highly-acclaimed book Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada: Beyond the Social, share a common concern with improving the health of Indigenous peoples in Canada and beyond. In sharing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit traditional knowledge alongside Western academic and medical knowledge, the authors demonstrate the potential gains of walking in two worlds, integrating the best of both Indigenous and Western knowledge, and honouring and respecting the diverse healing and medical practices available to us today.

Video – *Beyond the Social* Panel from the NCCAH National Forum "Transforming our Realities" held Dec. 2-3, 2015 in Ottawa, Ontario with Brenda Macdougall, Shirley Tagalik, Charlotte Loppie, and Sarah de Leeuw

This video presents the perspectives of three Indigenous knowledge holders and panelists at the *Beyond the Social* panel at the NCCAH National Forum, "Transforming our realities", held in Ottawa on December 2-3, 2015. Shirley Tagalik, and Dr. Brenda Macdougall share their knowledge about determinants of Indigenous peoples' health in Canada. Dr. Charlotte Loppie presents a First Nations perspective, utilizing a holistic model of a tree to illustrate the factors affecting the health and well-being of Indigenous people in Canada. Shirley Tagalik presents an Inuit perspective on determinants of Indigenous peoples' health that is entrenched in Inuit knowledge systems. Finally, Dr. Brenda Macdougall presents a Métis perspective on Indigenous health and well-being rooted in the importance of families and family history. Without a doubt, the wisdom and knowledge presented in this book has resonated with many people, including post-secondary instructors and students across diverse disciplines of study, from education to health to geography.

Transcript

Harold: I want to turn quickly to our next agenda item, to the Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada: Beyond the Social. And we invite Sarah de Leeuw to come forward with the panel. Professor de Leeuw will moderate that panel and let me just introduce her and I will leave the introductions of the remainder panel, who are all writers, authors of chapters in the book to come forward. Dr. Sarah de Leeuw is an associate professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Northern British Columbia, and an award-winning human geographer and creative writer who has authored five literary texts and published more than 45 research based academic journals, papers, and book chapters. Please help me welcome to the podium Dr. Sarah de Leeuw, Charlotte Loppie, Shirley Tagalik and Brenda Macdougall.

Sarah: I also want to, as Margo did this morning, acknowledge that we are on unceded territory of the Algonquin Peoples. For me, it's an incredibly important acknowledgement to make because as one of the points we make in this book, Indigenous determinants of wellbeing have always been grounded, have always rested in ecology and land and physical geography. Something that is in part beyond the social, which is precisely the points that we've attempted to make in this book. Of course, social determinants of health models are vital and important means of understanding Indigenous wellbeings in this country. But additional information, additional conceptualizations of the social are required truly in order to expand conversations. And certainly, land-based and territorial based conversations are in part what's needed.

This text is, in some ways, an utterly unique endeavor, encompassing perspectives of Inuit, First Nations and Métis knowledges. It is a book that represents Indigenous perspectives from coast to coast to coast. It is a book that encompasses the perspectives of artists and writers and community members and clinicians and health policy makers and activists and scholars and researchers. It's also a book, as we will learn today, that encompasses the perspectives of three incredible women who are holders of First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledges.

I'm not gonna take very long to introduce the entire framework of the book. I will tell you that it is now going into its fourth printing. Margo and I are approached almost daily to say, where can we buy this book? And we say, please order it from Canadian Scholars Press only to be told, we've tried that, and they've said that it's printing itself again. So that's an extraordinarily exciting statement to make within the first six months of this book's life, it's already moving into its fourth iteration. I also want to acknowledge that the proceeds of this text, the profits from it, are being donated to the First Nations Child and Caring Society of Canada, Cindy Blackstock.

It's an important book from cover to cover and it's an important book in what it does materially in terms of generating knowledge, but also putting profit of texts written by and for Indigenous People, back in the hands of the people who are making Canada a better place for Indigenous People. So thank you also, Cindy, for allowing us to donate the profits of the book to the Child and Family Caring Society.

Before I introduce three women who I have to say, I have the honor and pleasure of calling my friends. That's a pretty amazing thing, to have women who are without question, in my estimation, some of the most brilliant minds of our time. And I get to say, I also like to have a cup of tea with them or talk about shoes. So before I introduce them, not in the realm of being eminently stylish women, I will introduce them professionally.

Before I do that, however, and harkening back to I think something that moved us all last night, the words of Jaimie Kobel, who cited Louis Riel when she said that it will be artists who reawaken our spirit. I want to tell you that part of the power of this book is the presence of artists and poets and storytellers, people who aren't often invited into the conversations about determinants of Indigenous health in Canada, and yet who are absolutely integral to it.

I have the incredible pleasure of working with Charles Heit, Ya'Ya Heit. He's a carver in a tiny little community not far from where I grew up in Kispiox, a town of about 400 or 500 people. And it's his contemporary poll that sits on the cover of this book. The poll is entitled Me and My Dead Brothers. And in order to contextualize the cover, he wrote the following poem which I will share with you because I think in a thousand important ways, it also is a piece of art, incorporates everything that we heard last night from the speakers. It incorporates what Margo just spoke of, and it incorporates what we are about to speak of around the book today. This is Ya'Ya's poem. I did ask him if I could read it and he said he would be really happy for you to all hear it. He's actually receiving a BC Aboriginal award this week or he probably would've liked to have been with us.

The title of the poem is Ya'Ya Mourns His Two Dead Brothers. My bro, Andy Clifton, died in 1999; Am Hon was his real name. He was the first person I knew with AIDS and I was afraid back then, and so was he. Am Hon was afraid to live. So he went to die in Prince Rupert, and I was afraid of his AIDS, but I went to see him anyways. I couldn't watch him die, so I went to the Skeena River to fight my demons. There, I watched his rainbows taking him home. I almost missed seeing them, with giant steps they went so fast, Am Hon and his ancestors.

On May 14th, 2003, Yvon Michael Starr died. He was my bro. Now, he no longer shares this world with me, and this world has become smaller. And I cried for him to live again, to run through the jungle with me, to live and to laugh like we did when we were young. We had some crazy times, wild, crazy, and free. Together, we had known true and pure freedom, not a worry or a want. Those times past us years ago, and life took us far apart. But my brother stayed in my heart and he crossed my mind often. Once in a while, I worried about him, and I wished he was near. Both my brothers had AIDS when they died, that made their death hurt extra. I found my love for them again with Native Pride. Thank you.

We have a panel representing Inuit, Métis and First Nations knowledge, incredible baskets, red willow baskets of knowledge before us. Each woman will speak for approximately 10 to 15 minutes which should, in order to make Harold happy, allow us to finish up with lots of time for some questions and opening conversations. I'll introduce all three of our speakers and then they will present in the order that they're here, Charlotte and Shirley and Brenda.

Dr. Charlotte Loppie is a professor in the School of Public Health and Social Policy, faculty of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria, and she's the Director of the Center for Aboriginal Health and Editor. I had the very, very spectacular honor of co-editing this book, the Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health with Charlotte.

Shirley Tagalik is an educator who has lived in Arviat since 1976 and has worked at all levels of the school system. In 1999, she joined the Early Childhood and School Services within the Government of Nunavut, the curriculum division, and she helped establish the Arviat Wellness Cente, which delivers programs promoting wellness and healing in Nunavut.

Brenda Macdougall was appointed Chair of Métis Research at the University of Ottawa in 2010, and she's worked with a number of Métis communities documenting cultural history through the stories of families. She's the author of several articles and her first book, One of the Family: Métis Culture in 19th Century Northwestern Saskatchewan was awarded the Clio Prize for Prairie History by the Canadian Historical Association. You are genuinely lucky, privileged, as I am this morning to hear the words of these incredible women, and we are lucky to have a book that includes these women's voices and so many others. Thank you.

Charlotte: Really, I'm really honored and pleased to be here with you today just to share a little bit of, really just things that I've learned over the course of the work that I do from folks like these and and folks like you. So, again, this is just an opportunity for me to share a little bit about what I've learned, and to focus a bit more, as I did in the chapter that I wrote for the book on the Structural Determinants of Indigenous health. Should I just be telling you when to turn it, or do I have a clicker or what's the deal? Do you want me to do it? No, I can do it. How do I do it? How do I do this, man? Oh, on the right. Oh, oh, sorry. That's good. Man, I don't know his name; he looks like a man.

I wanted to begin as well by acknowledging and honoring the unceded territory of the Algonquin Peoples and thank them for such a warm welcome last night. And, what am I doing there? I wanted to just start by talking a little bit about how the mainstream discourse has really been talking about the social determinants of health, and particularly sort of structural determinants, which is the focus that I do. And what most of us are familiar with is this sort of what we call a descending causal model of which I'm gonna show you in a minute, that really talks about health issues at the community or individual level, that are downstream to these structural forces that are creating a sort of like a downflow effect on people's health. This is the model that we most often see. And this model actually talks first about, if you go from right to left, about disease and illness and morbidity. That's the focus of the model.

Then they talk about things that they call sort of midstream causes, or determinants, which are things like health behaviors and physical environments. And then further upstream are things like policy and what they call social inequities without really teasing that apart too much. This has been the model that people have been using for many years. You know in learning about the social determinants, this model, with all due respect to the people who created the model, didn't really make a lot of sense to me in the sense that it was one directional. There didn't seem to be a lot of emphasis on structure.

Carolyn Bennett, and I had no idea that she had come up with this like years ago, and I was like, oh, I'm gonna get in trouble, but this tree model has been used by lots of different people in lots of different ways. But it made more sense to me to think about the things that influence our health in a what I would consider a holistic way. And so why the tree? Well, first of all, it's part of a natural environment. I know up north, they don't have big trees, but they have little tiny ones, which we might call a bush.

But the tree is actually a really good representation of complex systems that are interconnected. And yet it's a really simple metaphor for people to understand, right? And I like simple metaphors because I'm not that bright. And so the other great thing that I find with a tree metaphor is that it really does allow us to look at sort of structural, you know, an overall structure and the systems within that structure, right?

And in the same way that when we see a tree, if the leaves are unhealthy we know that the tree is unhealthy. But the origin, and I've done a little research on this, the origin of that ill health almost always occurs in the roots of that tree, right? So that you can tell how healthy the tree is by the health of the leaves. But that's not where the disease often occurs; not that it doesn't sometimes. So that's what I like about the tree.

When we talk about structural determinants of health, I've looked this up in the dictionary, so I got it right, a structure is an arrangement of and relationships between the parts or elements of something complex. No one can argue that Indigenous health is not something complex, right? So again, this works for me.

You all are going to remember this from grade three. This is the tree; we all learned about photosynthesis, which is the collection of light and to generate energy. But this model really represents the process by which nutrients from the environment are absorbed into the roots. They're transported through the trunk to the crown and it influence the tree's health.

Within the context of Indigenous health a similar process occurs where resources are either extracted or developed by social, political, economic structures, like the roots, distributed to diverse systems where they are likewise circulated to affect human health. Now, the obvious difference between the two are that the first is an organic process; it's meant to maintain the health of the entire tree. Unfortunately, the latter is a constructed system. Sadly, sometimes the aim is not to maintain the health of the entire tree but to distribute resources to selected segments of that tree, often to the detriment of others, and thereby really impacting the overall wellness of the entire structure.

So, Fred Wien and I, some years ago, wrote a report for Margo's group which talked about proximal, intermediate and distal determinants of health which is kind of medical language. In the same way that we were thinking about those determinants, the levels of those determinants, the tree actually creates a really helpful model for thinking about that.

If we look at the crown of the tree, we can think about those immediate or stem environments in which we all live. And we're all influenced by things like education, our employment, which of course is going to determine our income, and our social status. Also, the social supports we

have access to, not just at the individual, but at the community level, can be human or other resources that have a direct impact on our health.

Most of us are really familiar with this environment because this is where most public and other kinds of interventions are focused. They're either focused at the individual level, like, are you smoking? Are you drinking? Are you behaving in a healthy way? Or these very immediate or stem environments that are really having a direct impact on our health.

Now, if we look to the core environments, these represent the systems. So primary and public health, education, justice, governance, labor, systems that actually shape those stem environments. At this level, we're just starting to focus on things like cultural safety, so that would be practice of individuals within systems and sometimes in the case of First Nations Health Authority, for instance, the system itself is changing. This is often where people will start to think about reducing barriers for people to access those systems. So they might be engaging a bit more with community.

But it is the root that was the focus of my chapter and the focus of what I would like to be my research agenda. Like the roots of the tree, these structural environments that are deeply entrenched, ideological, historical, political, and economic foundations. Will they influence all of the other environments? It is the integrity of these foundations that shape equity, that's the fairness and that's the wellness of entire societies.

So, this is the model, in it's entirety, just to show you that in this model, human health or Indigenous health is not part of the equation because we already know that there's an absence of leaves here because we already know what the problems are. And the focus have to shift from those individuals who may be healthier or unhealthy to the systems and the environment in which are either creating or impacting or creating health or hindering health. So you can see if you, if you work down or up, whichever is your preference, that wasn't sexual, but it sounded like it was, maybe it wasn't. Let me get a drink now. That was bad. Sometimes I can't help myself. So, we see here at the stem in these immediate environments. So we have opportunities and resources that either are sufficient or insufficient to promote and support human health in all of its dimensions.

At the next core environments, again, we've got institutions, education, employment, health, and governance that are sufficient or insufficient to promote and support healthy immediate environments. And then at the root, we've got social, political, economic, and other environments that are, again, sufficient or insufficient to support healthy systemic environments.

This is just a statement that brings our focus away from individuals, away from community to the question of do we have a just society? So the structures, all of those deeply embedded ideological, political, social, historical, roots of a society, if this is a just society, then those foundations are going to create systems that support everybody equally, that give everybody access, everybody benefit from all of the resources and opportunity in that society. Not only does that ensure the equitable health of the entire society, but because everybody is getting a fair share, it also enhances goodwill, people don't hate each other and don't fight for those

resources and cohesion among the members so that everybody feels like they're a part of one society rather than different levels of a hierarchy.

So the question here is, does our current structure have integrity? And so I looked again up integrity. So this can mean, and I think it applies for the state of being whole and undivided, does the structure of our society, is it whole? Is it undivided? Is it honest? Does it have principles around equity and justice? If we consider what we have now and have had up to now, we have to ask the question, can racist ideologies, a misunderstood history, and the wounds of that history, clearly unbalanced, power relations and inequitable distribution of resources be interpreted as structural integrity? Is it possible to change deeply entrenched pathologic structures?

Well, there are some examples of colonized countries that to different levels have actually overcome those structures. Africa being one of probably the most, but certainly Europe's had its fair share of colonized and decolonized experiences. But it takes a great deal of effort from everybody. It means that we all have to realize it's gonna take a really long time, that everybody has something really important to contribute, that we all have to be involved and have a voice, and that we have to do it peacefully. And as most of you know, in Indigenous country, humor is sometimes the best medicine. And Mark Twain says that, that it is something against which nothing else can stand. So these are just some thoughts.

But again, if we take a focus away from people as individuals who may or may not have control over those environments in which they live, and we recognize that those environments are created, they are structured, they are constructed by people, we can make a decision to change the structures so that no child is denied the basic resources for healthy development, which we know is critical to the long-term trajectory of adult health; we can decide that all people will have equal opportunities for a quality education, and employment, that everyone's contribution will be celebrated, including Indigenous Peoples; that we will prevent all communities from being harmed by development and resource extraction; that we will support all people's capacities for self-determination; and that we will ensure that the healthy development of all communities across the country. This is a decision that we have to make together. And, if we don't, we will continue to have structures that are insufficient for the health of our future generations. Thank you very much.

Shirley: We can never look at a tree in the same way again or a bush. So I'm just waiting for my presentation to come up there. I really want to thank many people for the privilege of being here this morning. First of all, the Algonquin People for the privilege of being able to address you on their territory, especially to the Collaborating center and Margo for making a place to include the Inuit knowledge that has been shared by our Elders.

I really have to acknowledge the group of about 50 Elders that I work with, who have both encouraged me and allowed me to come to venues like this and to share their knowledge through the book chapter that we were able to contribute.

So while we're still waiting for the presentation, one of the things that struck me last night was when Phil Fontaine was talking about poverty and we are in the process of doing a poverty

reduction strategy in Nunavut. When we went to Elders to talk about poverty, to look at what were the terminologies that they used around poverty, they said, of course, we didn't know we were poor until the qallunaat, you know, the white people came and told us we were poor. When they tried to define how they would talk about someone who might be perceived as being impoverished, they said that kind of person would be a person who didn't have relations, who was alone in the world, kind of like the qallunaat who come, alone and have no one. That kind of person would be somebody who may have a poverty of spirit, that they were easy to anger, and immature enough to show their anger, and perhaps didn't know how to be happy, much like the qallunaat who come to our territories.

I'm hoping that the presentation today will give us an opportunity to rethink how we define, ours is not the only definitions that Indigenous People have completely different perspective to some of these terms that we throw around and use all the time. Now I have to figure out how to use the clicker. There we go.

So, I live in Arviat, which is just across the Manitoba border, down there. So it looks like I'm in the very south of Nunavut, but we're actually one of the coldest communities in Nunavut. I've lived there almost 40 years. I work with teams of Elders from almost every community. Unfortunately, the group of Elders that I work with changes as people are unable to travel to our community for our meetings or people pass on. But it's been a terrific privilege over the past 20 years to work with these Elders in the documentation of their world view, Inuit qaujimajatuqangit. Oops, I'll just go back there.

I live in Arviat. It's a prairie town, so we have those fantastic wide vistas, fantastic sunsets in every season. I moved there as an educator, but met my husband and have been there ever since. I lived there with my children and grandchildren, and, we can never exactly have any count, but we have probably, between 40 and 50 dogs. So I'm going to try and talk about my relationship with our dogs, in the presentation today.

I'd like to start by looking a bit at the social historical context. In working with the Elders, they describe three areas of life. Innusiq, they describe as life matters. It's everything about who we are as a people, it's our social context. Of course, the most important thing in that is our relationships with each other and, how we engage with each other in respectful, supportive, and caring ways.

They also talk about having the same kind of respectful and caring relationships with our environment because it's our environment that nurtures us. Of course, for Inuit, everything that they had, all the resources that they had came directly from their environment. So avatimik kamattiarniq is showing stewardship for your environment.

And then they say that that comes together in a third piece, which they call iqqaqqaukkaringniq, which is when we use the resources that we have in our environment, to create technologies that make our lives more livable, that help us live successfully in our environment. And we have these three areas iteratively building on each other throughout life.

So if we look at some of the pictures there, some things that they would identify as examples as iqqaqqaukkaringniqi would be taking the mud from the land to make your mud runners so that your sled can move smoothly across the snow. Or the technology of the igloo, which allowed people to live at 60 below, right, Sally, in Kivalliq region and still be warm and comfortable. Or the absolutely amazing technology used in the design of Inuit clothing, which, even to this day, there's no southern kind of clothing that can match the warmth that you have in Inuit clothing. And of course, the domestication of dogs, which is why the Inuit who are now living in the circumpolar regions took over from past groups of Inuit who did not have dogs and could not manage as well.

So these are the beliefs of Inuit qaujimajatuqangit, or what Inuit have always known to be true. And these beliefs are really strongly grounded in relationship. When you look at the animal groups around you, you see that they have social systems, they have social networks that are grounded in relationships as well. You see that in the way the musques huddle together to protect their young. You see it in the mother polar bears who train their young, for the first few years of their lives. And I can attest to how protective mother polar bears are since our community is sharing our land with polar bears, every day these days.

Also to the children whose responsibility it is to train the dogs, to get the dogs ready to become part of the family. The children are the ones who name the dogs; they carry the puppies on their back so that the puppies will get the smell of the family, and be part of the family; they'll stretch the puppy's legs to make them fast runners, and they'll hold the puppy's head and talk to them very specifically to say, you are going to be a good dog? You are going to be a smart dog. You are going to be the fastest dog. You are going to be an obedient dog. And so the training of puppies happens at a very early age just as the training of children happens at a very early age and is very intentional amongst Inuit.

And that training of children is called inunnguiniq, making a capable human being. And the process is very specifically laid out for Inuit about how we make a capable human being. And part of it is, again, very early on, engaging our children in all kinds of experiences that help build their capacity on the land, in relationships with other people, understanding their culture, their language, the expectations, the cultural expectations that children have or that we have for our children.

And that this is a key building block. It starts actually with planning on how the child is going to be named. If all of our kids weren't being sent out to, have their babies in Winnipeg, it would start the moment of birth when there would be a blessing given to the child, and the extended family would come around the child and say what their wishes and hopes for that child's future would be. And Elders would describe the path of that child for the future. These things don't happen when your child is a thousand miles away. But Elders still recognize these as the core important pieces of the foundations for innunnguiniq. So we have this very strong relationship building that is so important to Inuit and those relationships are strong with all of the natural world as well.

When we talk about the importance of dogs, were trained part of the family, they were seen as the most important resource to most Inuit families. I want to share two short stories that were

told to me by Elders. One Elder, Theresa Anma, she was my children's first babysitter. She told me the story of, as a child, they were in an igloo, they may have built it in the wrong place, I'm not sure, but a huge storm came along and buried them very deep in the igloo. When they woke up the next morning, the father used the savgut, the snow tester, to try and feel his way around, and they realized that they were buried alive. I'm not exactly sure, I can't remember how long they spent there, but they were carefully rationing the little bit of food they had, thinking that they would be there for a very long time, until the snow could began to melt. In fact, they were there at least several weeks when they heard some crunching of the snow on top. People had come and people dug down and rescued them. They knew where they were, and they knew to dig down and rescue them because their dogs had gone to get help, and their dogs never left them.

Another story was shared by a lady Helen Konek. Our community was formed by forced relation in the 1960's. So Helen's camp was relocated to Arviat. One day, the RCMP plane flew down, they told them they had to get on the plane. They had to leave everything behind, they weren't to bring their weapons, they weren't to bring their family treasures. they were gonna be moved to a new life and everything would be better. She was a young girl, well, not too young, she said when they took off, she looked down and there were two things that she thought about. The camp had just finished harvesting the fall caribou. So they had cached over a hundred caribou, and she was concerned that all of this meat was going to be wasted. And the other thing she said, when she looked down she saw all the camp dogs running around, and her thought was, they're going to have trouble, they're going to go hungry. And because our dogs are so well-trained they won't break into the meat caches, they won't have access to the meat.

After a community healing session, she came up to me and she said, you know, there isn't a day that's gone by in the last 50 years when I don't think about those two things, that we will be held accountable for the meat that we harvested and wasted, and that our dogs suffered because we left them on the land. So these things are part of the trauma that the community feels to this day.

For Inuit, and for many Indigenous populations, their purpose in life is to live a good life. I put in this picture of our Elders playing nugluktaq. That's a game where every person brings something that they have made, or something that they're known for. So, if I could make wonderful beaded kamiks, I would bring those and put them down. When somebody wins the game, which is spearing that little piece of caribou bone, they get to pick from all the things that people have brought. So it's a way of redistributing wealth. It's a way of sharing people's accomplishments around the camp. This was to ensure that there wasn't jealousy and that nobody was in need. If you needed a knife, you got lucky at nugluktaq and you got a new knife.

So this is part of the maligait, the big laws for Inuit. The four big laws are that it's everyone's responsibility to continually work to improve the common good, to live in harmony and balance, to continually plan and prepare for the future, and to show respect for all living things. This plays out in specific Inuit ways of being which is to be welcoming and to be inclusive, to make sure that you're living together in harmony and balance in very respectful relationships, always concerned for the other person's wellbeing and for making sure that there is that level

of balance, as you know, with the nugliktaq how you redistributed wealth so that everybody was in balance, and communicating openly and truthfully to others.

So never gossiping, never lying. and confronting any issue that may create conflict in the future. Then there is innunnguiniq which is the process of training children to live like this. There are also a set of guiding principles that become the teaching foundations for innunnguiniq. So I'm not gonna go through all of the guiding principles, but each of those principles includes a process for how we train our children in those ways.

So, pilimmaksarniq, to become highly skilled, that it starts from very early days, you notice what a child is interested in. You notice what a child has natural aptitudes towards, and then you bring the best experts from the community to work with that child to make sure that that child becomes extremely skilled in that area, so that the child can then contribute those skills to improving the common good, to improving the whole community.

So harmony is, from that perspective really, a social determinant of health. It's the opportunity to bring everyone together collectively with the same purposes in mind, the same expectations, to work together and achieve wellness for the community. Oops, sorry.

I am using the example of caribou. We live in one of the, well I think we have the second largest caribou herd in the world that walks by our doorstep a few times a year. But one of the reasons why this caribou herd is so successful when caribou herds across the country, well, not just across the country, but across the globe, are in decline, is because this caribou herd, for thousands of years, had an extremely safe calving ground. Caribou are very skitterish when they calve. So if you even walk by a caribou that has just given birth or is in the process of giving birth, the caribou will run away and leave the calf. The calving grounds need to be very secure for caribou herd to have good health and feel confident during the calving period. As we are moving forward with development in the Kivalliq region, our calving grounds are threatened by mining development. If that happens our caribou herd will be devastated.

The concern for how we move forward, keeping the importance in the role of family as central, just as it's so important to make sure that our caribou herds, our caribou families are safe and secure, we also have to pay attention to our own families, and how we can build supports for our own families in the light of all of the trauma and change that has been experienced in our Inuit communities.

With this comes wisdom, the wisdom that we need to act properly to make good decisions. A process that Inuit use and it's a system, like Charlotte described, is aajiiqatigiingniq, where you build consensus, where you bring all of the experts together and you make decisions collectively through consensus building and through sharing and through discussion in just the way that Margo is going to allow us to do later today. This important element of not having elected councils, or not having government appointed people making the decisions, but allowing the decisions to come from the community in the culturally traditional ways is very important.

Because we're overrun by overpopulated polar bears in Arviat, I want to use this as an example. When I talked to Elders about hunting polar bears, they said, well, if we didn't have meat, and we generally had caribou meat, we might hunt polar bear. But otherwise, you gave a polar bear a wide berth because why would you hunt a polar bear? It's when the Canadian government came along and wanted to protect the polar bears from Inuit hunters that they established quotas. And when our communities received quotas, you have 15 caribou tags. Then, of course, when a person got a caribou, they went out and hunted sorry a polar bear, they went out and hunted a polar bear. So before that, in our area, there may have been two or three polar bears hunted in a year. But when the government introduced quotas, then the maximum number of polar bear tags was used and polar bear were hunted to that maximum, whether people wanted the meat or not.

So it goes back to the idea of a wise policy. Often policy is driven by some other agenda and doesn't line up with the wisdom that people already have.

Just to summarize, the real strength of Inuit qaujimajatuqangit is the interconnectedness that people have in every area of their life. This is characteristic of our Indigenous knowledges and it's really important that we use the strengths and the foundations of those interconnectedness, the expectations that have been laid out by our communities to live a good life, in order to be our guiding posts for how we move forward and make good decisions around promoting wellness, and encouraging people to come together to seek common solutions.

And also, it's important that teaching our children that this training begins very early in life, and that we really look carefully at how we can revitalize our cultural knowledges, revitalize those cultural expectations and those beliefs and values in our communities and our families, so that we have the opportunity of this better future. When we look to the better future, we look to it with a great deal of hope.

In Nunavut, the work of these, as I say, about 50 Elders we're in the process of putting it together in a book. And the National Colloborating Center is also working with us to create some Vimeos on Inuit qaujimajatuqangit that will be available on the website. So we are feeling very hopeful about the future that we have in terms of revitalizing our Inuit knowledge. So, thank you very much.

Brenda: I also, would like to thank Margo and her team for inviting me to participate. I feel very fortunate to have been included in so many events with health practitioners over the last four or five years. I am a transplant from Western Canada; I'm from the prairies. Ottawa is my home now. and the Algonquin People have been incredibly generous and welcoming and have shared amazing stories. So I acknowledge the place that we are, near the Chaudieres fall which are so important to them.

What I am going to talk to you a little bit about today echoes a lot of what Shirley in particular has said, but from a Métis perspective. I work with Métis families and communities in a historical context. I'm not a health practitioner; I don't work in a field of health. Alhough, I grew up in a family that is riddled with nurses. So I think I have a little bit of a sense of the kind of work that you do and the issues that you deal with. And I want to acknowledge the

Elders that are here and all of my intellectual heroes. Quite frankly, many of you are people that I've been reading for years or have heard at different conferences, and I'm so honored to be here today.

So what I'm going to share with you is a bit about that chapter that's in the book and talk specifically about a couple of families. I've been really fortunate in my life to work with both Elders and young people. I started teaching in the University of Saskatchewan in a program called SUNTEP, the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program. It's primarily Métis students, but not exclusively. There are a lot of non-status and status people that are also a part of that program.

And one of the activities that we engage in every year, or used to engage in, their job was to produce their genealogies. And it really wasn't about who they were related to but learning the stories of their people. And what struck me was how difficult it was for them to piece together even the simplest of genealogies. They might know their grandparents, but they didn't know their extended kinship networks. People didn't want to talk to them about certain members of the family, because of shame, because of racism, because of the things that they had lost. And these were young people that grew up in the city of Saskatoon. I knew a lot of their family members, but I had never realized that they were Métis in the same way that they had never recognized me as being Métis. That's because we're not supposed to share those things, or my generation was one of the last to be told not to talk about these things in public.

And so it struck me that we have a lot of work to do in terms of rebuilding our kinship connections to each other. I started wanting to know what the traditions of kinship were. So I started looking for stories. I started looking for traditional stories about family, and I was excited one day to discover the story of the woman who married a beaver, and this story is retold, amongst Algonquin speakers. Sometimes it's a man who marries a beaver. Quite often it's the woman who married a beaver. In the Inuit tradition, it's the man who married a caribou. This notion of this kinship relationship to animals, and if we understand our kinship to animals, which lays the foundation for our kinship to the land, then we understand how we work together and how we relate to one another. The foundation, the key to those stories from my perspective is the teachings about reciprocity.

So in the story of the woman who married a beaver, a young woman goes out to fast on the land, and she meets this young man who she falls in love with and he convinces her to come back, to his home and to live with him and his people. And so she goes there, and all he asks of her is that she not associate with other people outside of their community, but in return for her behaving this way, he would supply her with everything that she needed or wanted in life. So she was rich, she was rich with children, she was rich with material goods, she was rich with food. And she grew into an older woman happy and contented in her life with her husband and her children amongst her. And one day, she was left by herself in the lodge and she was all alone. And she realized that her family was never coming back. And very much like the story of the igloo, one day she heard voices outside. She heard people walking around. For the first time, she called out to outsiders to speak to. And so the outsiders broke into the lodge that she was living in and they released her from this space. She discovered that this whole time she had been living amongst beavers and her home was a beaver lodge.

And what had happened, in the course of that is that she learned the kinship structures of beavers, and it became her responsibility to convey that information to her own people. And so she went back and she told her people about the kinship that they would have with the beavers, that if they were respectful, if they hunted properly, if they didn't waste, they would always have the support of those animals. If, however, they disrespected those animals, if they violated their kinship protocols to them, those animals would no longer allow themselves to be hunted, and the people would be poor because they would lose those relationships. So similarly, poverty is defined as people who have no one. Poverty are the people to pity in this world, are not the, the people who have no money, but the people who have nobody in their lives. And those are truly, truly pitiful people.

And so this story, the story of the man who married a caribou, the story of Buffalo Child, all of these stories tell us what it is to be human beings. How we as the original people will live amongst each other and how we will construct relationships with each other. Our family is not, our immediate family, our nuclear family, the kind of family that we're taught about in Western traditions, which is really new, even to Euro Canadians. But it's our extended networks, and it's our job as human beings to go out and make relatives, to connect with one another and make kinship relationships. We do that through marriage, we do that through adoption. But we also do that through, engaging in ceremonies with one another, with sharing life moments with each other. I look around this room and I see several of my extended family, and I'm so excited that they're here, because those are my kinship relations. Even though we don't share a genealogical tie in any way, I see my relatives in this room.

I study those stories as a way to try and understand Métis family structures. And one of the things that I do as a methodology is I do genealogy. I'm one of those annoying people. Everyone has one in their family, great aunt, so-and-so is annoyed you more times probably than you can remember about, remember, blah, blah, blah, well, he's our relative because, and they can name all of these things off. I'm that person, but in a community structure. I've taken it as my responsibility to try and remember the stories of how people are related to each other. Because what happens is I end up in all sorts of forums where people come up to me and tell me, I don't know who my family is, can you help me do this? So, yes, it's part of my responsibility now since I have had the richness of those stories to pay that forward.

One of the families that I worked with, and I say worked with, I know the living descendants of this family, it's the Laliberté, or Laliberty family of Northern Saskatchewan. I know the living descendants of that family, but I work with their history. I work with historical records to find them more of their own stories. I was raised in an education system that told me that our people didn't leave written records, that you couldn't find us in archives. You can't find us in history books. That's crap. Sorry. That's absolute crap. We are all over the written record. Our people left us clues everywhere. We've ignored them because we were told that they weren't there. But we are absolutely all over the historical records. We are in fur trade records. We are in census records. We are in church records, marriage, baptismal, burial records. Our people left records of themselves for us. They did it deliberately, I believe very strongly, they did it deliberately so that we would be able to find them when we needed them. It's our job to go and find their stories.

So that's one of the things that I do. I work with fur trade records, journals, letters, reports, and they're incredibly revealing. And so one of the things that I found, in Northern Saskatchewan about the Laliberte family, was this incredible story of how annoying they were to the Hudson's Bay Company. So one of the ways that our people leave imprints of themselves is they upset other people. And those people then write about them. And trust me, we've pissed off a lot of people historically.

So I found the record in 1982 in the All Cross post journals about Pierriche Laliberte, he was the patriarch of the Laliberte family. He had worked in the Hudson's Bay Company trade system for over 50 years. He was now in his seventies. He was asking for a pension, and he was being quite insistent that the company owed him a pension. And the company had an internal dialogue about whether or not they should in fact give Pierriche this pension. And a lot of the higher ups in Winnipeg we're saying, absolutely not. We can't, you know, we can't provide welfare to this man. I mean, you know, what is he thinking? He'll just be a burden, his wife will be a burden. His wife was Sarazine Morin. The local chief factor wrote to his superiors in Winnipeg and he said, this is a mistake, and it's a mistake because this man and his sons and his sons-in-law control the local trade. They are so intermarried with one another, with other Métis people, is what I mean, with the First Nations, the Cree and Dene of this region and with us inside of the Post that if they decide to withdraw the trade from this region, the Hudson's Bay Company will be crippled. They will collapse the trade. And so he got his pension. And not only did he get his pension, he got a contract to run an independent business freighting for the Hudson's Bay Company.

I went looking for his children. I wanted to know who his kids were. Pierriche Laliberte had 12 children with his wife Sarazine. Nine of those were sons. Only one son left the region and didn't return and he simply just went slightly east, about 200 miles to Cumberland House. So all of the Laliberte's in Cumberland House region descend from that son. The other nine remained in what is referred to as the English River District of the Hudson's Bay Companies trade. It's the Churchill River trade for Northern Saskatchewan. His daughters had all married into the Canoe Lake First Nation, Birch Narrows, Dene Nation, and La Loche Nation. So they were heavily, their imprint was heavy in that region. More importantly, Pierriche's wife Sarazine was herself the daughter of an important trader in the region, Antoine Morin, who came from Quebec, and, Pelagie Boucher who was actually born in the Athabaska region, a mixed ancestry woman from Athabaska. So Sarazine was the eldest daughter of 14 children. And again, all of those children were heavily invested in the fur trade.

So our people, regardless of the geography in which they come from, our people were raised to be traders. We were raised to make relationships with each other and to create a sound and stable economy for the Northwest Company, for the Hudson's Bay Company, for the XY company, for the American Fur Company. They needed us.

And so the other thing that I had learned in school had been that our people were taken advantage of by the trade. And what I learned in these records is that we had a great deal of power. We had a great deal of agency over ourselves and over our lives in these spaces. And it's

the reclaiming of those stories that allows us to rebuild a sense of who we were historically, so that we can have a sense of who we are today. This isn't an abstract history.

I know everybody in this room has suffered through a history class, and I say suffered because they're boring and they're boring for a reason. They're boring because they don't have any people in them. You learn about events, you learn about things that happened away from your own community. I will lay money that nobody in this room learned the history of their community in a history course in the K to 12 system anywhere in this country. It's because it's not taught. History is never taught at a local level. So our kids come into university where I first encounter them with never having learned where they came from. And so we start from there. Who are your people? What did your community do? Where did that community come from? How was it formed? What's the forced relocation of that community? If you're not from that place, how did you get here?

I primarily deal with a lot of urban young people. Those are the people that primarily come through my classes for whatever reason. And they, in some respects, have incredibly rich kinship networks because they've built them over time with people that they're not related to in a biological sense. But they do exactly what they're told without necessarily knowing the stories about the woman who married a beaver. They have gone out and they have built kinship networks that are incredible. But they don't know their grandparents. They don't know their great grandparents.

If we can start filling in those gaps, we can start improving the way they feel about themselves, that this is not a history that is shameful. This is not a history that they should forget. And in fact, if they find these things and it's out there, then they can help rebuild our communities. And they have a lot of potential, they have a lot of things to give. And I've heard people, nobody in this room, but I've heard people criticize urban aboriginal youth as being that they don't know who they are, that they're lost, that they end up in situations that are harmful to them, or they simply don't act like native people anymore.

That's what colonization was supposed to do to them. They're the very products of colonization. Residential schools didn't just take kids away from their families, they fractured the kinship system. As important as residential schools are, I want to put it out there that there are more kids in care now than there were at the height of the residential school system. We are losing our children at exponential rates every day. And as we lose them into care, that continued fracturing of kinship will go on. We have to stop that. We have to stop that and we have to allow them to rebuild. And we have to allow our communities to rebuild.

So as we talk about truth and reconciliation going forward, it's getting our kids out of care. It's also rebuilding our kinship systems to each other. The Canadian government created an incredible legal system that separates us from one another. Status Indians from non-Status Indians, from Métis, from Inuit. As long as we allow those legal categories to divide us as people, we forget that we're the original people. We forget that we are the human beings of this place. That is our teaching, that is our legacy. And so, legal categories divide us. We have to find a way amongst ourselves to make those things go away because they hurt us. And as long as we're fighting amongst each other, we continue to allow our kids to go into care. Cause we

can't fight as a unit. We can't fight with our strength, cause we've lost that. So, I don't want to end on a bummer of a note here; somehow, I always get there.

But I think one of the things that was so amazing to me about teaching the SUNTEP courses, and I miss them dearly, was that when we did their genealogies, and these were small classes, these were 15 kids at most, and I say kids just because I'm getting old and they seem just so young to me now, they all came away related to each other. They found their extended kinship relations, but more importantly, they created kinship relations inside of that class for one another. So when people went to the archives and just couldn't find their people for whatever reason, everybody else in the room took them in as relatives. So that is the strength of our teachings. That's what we hold. And we have to be so, so proud that we still have those things because we've survived. Our stories have survived. We just have to remember them. Hey, hey, thank you.

Sarah: I know that we are at time, and as Harold likes to say, he doesn't want people to be standing in front of you and be plates of bananas and apples. But with full deference to the power of Harold Tarbell, might catch this later, I would like to just open the floor. Ah, I knew I was going to, Harold, Margo said 10 minutes can. Okay. Oh, see, I knew if I deployed Margo, then I'd get my way. Because I think we've really been gifted with some extraordinarily powerful stories, and they are stories that are in the book. I would like to just open up for any questions, any requests for more information from any of the spectacular authors from this book that we just heard from. And Harold is generously extending our time, by even walking around with that microphone. Are there any questions from the floor? Observations?

Trevor Hancock: Thank you. My name's Trevor Hancock, I am from the University of Victoria. I have to come to Ottawa to see Charlotte. Thank you for that. It was very moving and very profound, all of you. One of the things I was sitting here thinking about, I spent the last three years, good chunk, of the last years of my life working, with a group on a report for Canadian Public Health Association on the ecological determinants of health. Because we talk so much about the social, and I was so glad to hear all of you in one way or another, talking about the land and nature and the ecology that supports us. And I just want to add a piece to Charlotte's tree metaphor, which I really like and have sort of watched develop over the last few years. And that is that the tree is rooted in soil, and the soil is the ecosystem. It's the particles and the air and the water and the radical organisms and the plants and the animals that actually sustains the tree. And we tend, although you have not any of you, but we tend to focus so much on the social that we neglect the ecological. And I'd like to maybe hear you talk about how those two, and I think you have anyway, are related. Because if we don't nurture the soil, which provides us our ecosystems, provide us with the most fundamental determinants of health, air, and water and food. And if we don't nurture and protect those, and we are not, then we are all in deep trouble.

Shirley: Thank you, Trevor. And of course, you know, from the Inuit perspective, they are the same thing. Inuit would say they entirely rely on the health of the environment, and their understanding of the health of the environment. So for example, young people, especially age six to eight, were thrown out of bed early in the morning, sent out of the igloo to look at the sky and read the weather and report back to their families exactly what was going on, so that

they would know how to plan hunting for the day. And if you got it wrong, it was not a good thing. So young people were extremely keen observers and very astutely aware of even very small changes that were going on in the environment. And this is something that the Elders caution us has been lost in current generations. My daughter has started a program called The Young Hunters Program, where she trains, or group of Elders and mentor hunters, train eight to 18 year olds. But really focusing on the observation skills that have been lost in current generations. And that becomes critical as we look to climate change. And, its so important for us to be aware of what's happening in our in our environment.

Sarah: I'll just add, Trevor, that the book itself is in fact, an attempt to expand upon the ascendance of the concept of social, hence the subtitle Beyond the Social, with full recognition that the social is important. But I would encourage you to buy the book so that the proceeds can go to the First Nations Child and Family of Carings Society, and then you can learn all about all the perspectives beyond the social. We've got another question in the back. Michael?

Michael Bird: Yes. Good morning. I'm Michael Bird, and I'm from Kewa Pueblo in New Mexico and in 2001, I was the first American Indian to serve, unfortunately, the only one to serve as president of the American Public Health Association, back down South. So I'm your cousin from the South. And what I wanted to first of all just thank you for the excellent presentation and also for the invitation and the opportunity to be here with you today. And I wanted to share one thought. Stephen Hawking, the British physicist has said that intelligence is the ability to adapt to change. And Indigenous Aboriginal Native People have been the greatest people at adapting to change. And I consider myself anytime I'm with an Indian audience, a native audience, an aboriginal audience, I am surrounded by genius because we in fact, have adapted to more change in the Americas than anyone ever has had to deal with in the history of the Americas. So we are all geniuses and I'm honored to be in your midst. Thank you very much.

Isaac Sobol: Hello, I'm Isaac Sobol. I'm an itinerant public health person. And I've worked with, in Métis community in Northern Saskatchewan. I've worked with First Nations in British Columbia, and I've worked in Nunavut as well. So I feel a resonance with the speakers. And thank you all for your presentations. I have a question about how to keep the sharing economy alive in Indigenous communities when capitalism and wage based economy becomes prominent. So I wonder if there are any thoughts about that.

Shirley: They turned it back to me again. Isaac, I know you're aware of the poverty reduction strategy talks that are going on in Nunavut. And actually this is one of the key pieces because relationality for Inuit was so strongly grounded in sharing, not just sharing food, but sharing everything, sharing your knowledge, sharing your expertise, contributing it through pijitsirniq, to serving others. So, there's actually a meeting in Cambridge Bay this week that is looking at a whole re-articulation of income support. So that people are encouraged not to sit back and wait for their welfare check which Elders say is has been the one main thing that has destroyed Inuit culture. But are being challenged with finding ways of participating in working for the common good and then in return being supported by the community for the contribution that they make. It's a reframing of the whole perspective on the capitalist economy and the sharing economy of Indigenous Peoples.

The other big part of that is food security. And, Inuit, these days say, oh, well, country food is free because our hunters go out and get it. And then they bring it and share it with us. But, we did research in our community to define the sharing of food. And of course, all sharing is reciprocal. And so, if you share, if somebody brings you country food, then you should reciprocate in some way. And when we asked Elders what was the most important reciprocation that they received, like some people would be given gas money or warm mitts, they said the most important reciprocation was a blessing or a good wish from the Elders when they shared food with the Elders. So, we can say that those beliefs are still alive and well, and we need to build on the strength of those beliefs in order to make sure that they really shape how we move forward.

Sarah: Thank you, Shirley. And we are going to end it there. I'll just encourage everyone, if you are interested in this text, you can get it online, ordered into your local bookstore. I think it has a broad appeal. And, as a co-editor, I'll just reiterate that it was an incredible honor and, an honor in which the National Collaborating Center for Aboriginal Health played a central role. So thank you and thank you all for listening this morning. Thanks.