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MSIT No'Kmaq: An Indigenous framework for understanding children's social emotional attachment

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Abstract

MSIT No'Kmaq is a core Indigenous philosophy that understands life as a broad series of interconnectedness. This article highlights principles of MSIT No'Kmaq in order to understand the philosophy as an Indigenous framework for understanding children's social emotional development. MSIT No'Kmaq is explored in the context of the contemporary social issues that Indigenous families face, and implications on implementing MSIT No'Kmaq as a framework for promoting healthy social emotional outcomes for children are explored.

Keywords: MSIT No'Kmaq, Indigenous children, Indigenous families, attachment, Indigenous research methods, Indigenous childrearing practices, child welfare system, colonisation.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to discuss *MSIT No'Kmaq* as an Indigenous framework for understanding children's social emotional development. MSIT No'Kmaq is a traditional Indigenous philosophy which understands that everything in the world/universe is interconnected; everyone and everything has a purpose and is worthy of respect (Kaminski, 2013). Roughly translated from the Mi'kmaq language, MSIT No'Kmaq means "all my relations". This is a phrase familiar to most Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island[1] (King, 1992). The principles of MSIT No'Kmaq understand life as a broad and complex process of the interconnectedness; an extensive web of

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[1] Turtle Island is a term that Indigenous peoples use to refer to what is known as North America.

relations to all animate and inanimate forms—people of all races, plants, animals, and everything in the natural world stem from one Mother; our Mother Earth (Mzinnegiizhigo-Kwe Bédard, 2006). MSIT No'Kmaq emphasises laws of mutual relationships, sharing, harmony, and respect (Kaminski, 2013). While Indigenous cultures are diverse, they share fundamental worldviews of collectivism (Muir & Bohr, 2014).

Collective societies have different childrearing goals than individualistic societies (Benzies, 2014). Individualistic cultures value personal goals over communal goals, endorsing independence, self-reliance. Individualistic models are characteristic of nuclear families where children are taught autonomy (Zaman, 2014). A nuclear family consists of a couple and their biological children, where men are accorded authority of the household (Anderson & Daily, 2014). Group harmony, cohesion, and interdependence are attributed to collectivistic societies (Sen, Yavuz-Muren, & Yagmurlu, 2014). In collectivistic societies, they are taught the importance of relatedness (Sen, Yavuz-Muren, & Yagmurlu, 2014). Nuclear family goals are "a matter of the individual's life, his house, his possessions, and not the traditional usage of [the land] . . . sharing the happiness, woes, and successes of the extended family, with loyalty and responsibility to one's Elders" (Nyarko, 2014, p.233).

In Canada, attachment theory is currently the dominant framework for understanding children's social emotional development (LeVine, 2014; Neckoway, Brownlee, & Castellan, 2007). Attachment theory stems from a Eurocentric perspective that values individualism and nuclear family systems. It is considered one of the most important frameworks for understanding healthy childhood outcomes in the field of early childcare (Benzies, 2014). Despite its widespread use, there is little cross-cultural research on the applicability of attachment theory. Therefore, research on attachment in the context of Indigenous peoples is even more limited (Neckoway et al., 2007).

Attachment theory has received many criticisms—one is that it takes on a pathological approach to understanding child development, by testing attachment styles in a clinical setting (LeVine, 2014). The Strange Situation Procedure (SSP) was developed to observe attachment types (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). SSP is the most commonly used tool to measure attachment styles between the mother–child dyad (Benzies, 2014). To test the SPP, young children and their mothers are observed through a two-way mirror (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). After a period of time, the mother is asked to leave the room. Then, a stranger enters the room while the mother is still absent. The stranger is asked to leave upon which time, the mother re-enters. The child's reactions are observed throughout the process to determine their attachment type (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). According to SSP, a securely attached child would be upset when their mother leaves the room, leery of the stranger, and relieved upon the return of the mother. Other observations including a child's indifference, clinginess, or confusion result in insecure attachments.

The basic tenets of the attachment theory are that the relationship dyads that exist between a child and their primary caregiver (typically the mother) determine attachment outcomes in children (Bowlby, 1969). The type of attachment that the child forms early in life is argued to be a lasting schema; a blueprint that determines the quality of the children's attachments to others for the remainder of their lives (Bowlby, 1969).

Attachment theory places a great deal of emphasis on the mother–child dyad. The concept of the "ideal mother" from a Eurocentric perspective reserves the role of mother strictly for biological mothers (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health [NCCAH], 2012). Under this value system, she is expected to put her children and husband's needs above her own—children's misbehaviour is seen a reflection of the mother's lack of parenting abilities (Gosselin, 2006; NCCAH, 2012).

Attachment theory is argued to be a 20th century moral campaign that began in the 1950s, to adopt maternal love and care as necessary like nutrition for the healthy development of children (LeVine, 2014). John Bowlby, the pioneer of attachment theory, used empirical research and clinical observations to define his theory as universal, dismissing the implications of cross-cultural studies where the SPP resulted in a high number

of "insecurely attached" children (LeVine, 2014). Studies where non-pathological options across individuals and cultural variations could have served to disprove attachment theory, were generally ignored, and despite the growing body of cross-cultural data on attachment, there has been little decline of attachment theory in the field of early childcare (LeVine, 2014).

MSIT No'Kmaq is a central finding in the thesis entitled *Indigenous Families: Fostering Attachment Our Way* (Root, 2018). This thesis was pursued to address the gap in knowledge that exists on attachment in the context of Indigenous families. In order to discuss MSIT No'Kmaq as an Indigenous framework for understanding children's social emotional attachment, this article highlights some of the stories that research participants shared about their childrearing values.

MSIT No'Kmaq is discussed in the context of traditional Indigenous childrearing practices, impacts of assimilation practices on Indigenous families, and the social contextual realities in which Indigenous peoples live today. Implications of understanding MSIT No'Kmaq as a framework for understanding children's social emotional attachment are discussed in the context of the child welfare system.

MSIT No'Kmaq: A Finding in Indigenous Families: Fostering Attachment Our Way

In *Indigenous Families: Fostering Attachment Our Way* (Root, 2018)*, the collective voice of urban Indigenous caregivers who participated in the study showed that they valued principles of MSIT No'Kmaw, including community, shared-caregiving, and connection to the land as important elements in childrearing. To bring the concept of MSIT No'Kmaq to life, direct quotes from the participants are shared:

Community

> "To me, the family isn't so much about blood…I want as many people to be around my child…the bigger the circle of love, the better. . . . The centre makes me feel like they are a part of my family, everybody is a part of my family that is included

with the centre, right? . . . I have adopted this place as my family…this place is my family, it's my home. The support is here. This place is magical and wonderful. I was introduced to the centre here, and that was like a huge life change for me because I met really awesome people here, and I've got the support that I really needed, that I was missing for so long. If it wasn't for the centre, I don't know where I'd be because [you] need that support when you're going through a tough time"

Shared-Caregiving

> "Our house was kind of jammed growing up…there was me and I had two siblings, my parents, my grandmother, and we usually had extra children frequently…there was always six, seven, eight, 10, however many people living in the house…its sort of a [tradition], and you don't think about that when you're growing up. . . . Never mind even one person to talk to about your problems. There was five people…My mom had to feed an army…My aunt lived here, my uncle lived there, we were all close, like a circle. . . . I was closer to my sister in that mother role…she was always quick to say [about the participant's children] those are my grandchildren."

Connection the land

> "When they would go hunting, they would take us, and when they would go berry picking, we would be with them, fishing, all of that, they always included the children with it, and that made a big impact on me, because now I do that with my kids."

Indigenous methodologies were used in the thesis. Indigenous methodologies are intended to evoke discourse in a process of developing meaning or "truth" through a relationship of trust and reciprocity by using methods that stay true to the context of the story being presented (Prior, 2007). Rather than in traditional academic research methods that ask questions about validity and reliability, Indigenous research methods are relationally accountable to "all my relations" (Wilson, 2000). Respect, reciprocity, responsibly, and relevance to the relationships with the world around you; in the context of research with Indigenous peoples, this relationship extends beyond the research and participants, to the community overall (Prior, 2007). Respect of Indigenous cultural integrity, relevance to Indigenous perspectives and experiences, reciprocal relationships, and

responsibility through participation are essential to promoting effective and respectful research environments that honour Indigenous peoples (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

Specifically, two-eyed seeing is the research methodology used for *Indigenous Families: Fostering Attachment Our Way*. "Two-Eyed Seeing refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing and to using both of these eyes together" (Hatcher, Bartlett, Marshal, & Marshal, 2009, p. 146). I have adopted the two-eyed seeing approach in many aspects of my life, including that of academia as it allows me to balance the requirements of being a scholar while staying true to my Indigeneity.

Sharing circles were used to obtain information on attachment in the context of Indigenous families. Two sharing circles, facilitated by the researcher and guided by an Elder, were held, with eight and four participants, respectfully. Participants were recruited in an urban Indigenous community, mainly through word of mouth.

Elders are important spiritual leaders in guiding the process of gathering knowledge in a safe and spiritual way, especially in the context of discussions with Indigenous peoples about family, where potentially hurtful topics can arise due to the intergenerational impacts of colonisation. The Elder who facilitated the sharing circles provided this to the participants. During the sharing circles, urban Indigenous caregivers were asked to share about what their lives, and the lives of their children were growing up, and what family meant to them (Root, 2018).

Sharing circles are similar to focus groups in that they consider the collective story of the group, except that with sharing circles there is an added element of spirituality (Archibald, 2008). Sharing Circles encompass the spiritual component of each individual; their heart, mind, body, and spirit; and considers the story of all shared as a whole (Lavallée, 2009). Sharing circles adhere to principles of respect, wherein traditional knowledge systems convey holistic connections between participants and their environment which implies confidentiality in the stories shared

(van de Woerd & Cox, 2005). Oral stories have been an important way of gathering and understanding knowledge from an Indigenous perspective since time immemorial (Smith, 2002). Oral storytelling is enmeshed in Indigenous ways of knowing (Archibald, 2008). Much like the principles of Indigenous methodologies, oral storywork includes principles of respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relevance; and contributes to the collective meaning of knowledge that includes sound, feelings, and body language (Archibald, 2008).

Both the university ethics and the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch granted approval for the research; participants read and signed confidentiality agreements; and participants agreed that the confidential information could be shared in future papers, presentations, and journal articles.

MSIT No'kmaq provides an understanding of attachment that considers community, shared-caregiving, and connection to the land as important elements in childrearing. Taken holistically, these values show the interconnectedness that exists with people, Mother Earth and all her elements. This approach for understanding how to foster children's healthy social emotional attachments stems broadly, where the approach of attachment theory stems narrowly from one or two relationships—these fundamental differences resulting in different expectations in childrearing practices.

Research has shown how important culture is in promoting the well-being of Indigenous children, families, and peoples as a whole (NCCAH, 2012). Therefore, exploring MSIT No'Kmaq as an Indigenous framework for understanding social emotional attachment will contribute to the well-being of Indigenous children. Given the fundamental differences of MSIT No'Kmaq and attachment theory, the widespread use of attachment theory is problematic for Indigenous children, especially since Indigenous children face more significant social contextual issues than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Attachment theory arguably has a negative impact on the social emotional well-being of Indigenous children.

MSIT No'Kmaq: Promoting the Social Emotional Health of Indigenous Children

Conceptual differences are expressed in language (King, 2003). "Aboriginal languages are directly linked to indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, traditional territories, collective identities, cultures, customs and traditions, personal identity and spiritual well-being" (Metallic, 2016, p. 245). Indigenous languages are verb-oriented, reflecting concepts of interconnectedness; a state of flux (Benjamin, 2014). For example, Indigenous values of interconnectedness are reflected in words like *nemultes*; translated from Mi'kmaq this means "until we meet again". Indigenous languages do not have words for "goodbye" because conceptually, they signify an end. Expressing the uniqueness of Indigenous family structures, it is not uncommon to hear terms like "auntie-mom/sister-mom" to address women other than the biological mother who are contributing to raising children. Auntie and uncle are terms used for those who are close to a child's family, regardless of biological relation. The concept of a primary caregiver is foreign to Indigenous languages, therefore has no significance to Indigenous peoples' childrearing. The land is a critical pathway for cultural knowledge resurgence that supports the well-being of community, and Indigenous languages reflect centrality of relationships to the land, with all living beings in the natural world, including wildlife, weather, and other non-human beings as reflected in the values of holism and interconnectedness practices (Obed, 2017).

Muir & Bohr (2014) argue that using a term like "attachment" would not be relevant to the childrearing values of Indigenous families. Instead, a term like "connectedness" would better reflect their values as it applies more broadly to an individual's total environment instead of focusing on one or two relationships (Muir & Bohr, 2014).

Childrearing practices depend on conceptions of the self, personhood, and the social good that vary among societies. For Indigenous families, the expectations of infant socialisation are embedded differently than in the individualistic mother-child dyad of attachment theory (Muir & Bohr, 2014). Indigenous cultures place great importance on the role of mothers; however, for Indigenous peoples, motherhood is a concept that extends far beyond giving life (Mzinnegiizhigo-Kwe Bédard, 2006). Mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters are considered to be interchangeable roles that are not culturally defined (Mzinnegiizhigo-Kwe Bédard, 2006). Solely relying on the outcomes of a mother-child dyad from an Indigenous perspective is incomplete.

While there are unrefuted universal aspects of the attachment theory, such as the innate need for all humans to form meaningful relationships, the definition of secure attachments varies across cultures (Neckoway et al., 2007). Infants can thrive in a number of different environments with diverse systems of care (LeVine, 2014). Fostering healthy social emotional attachments depends on a diverse array of cultural goals (Vicedo, 2017). From the standards imposed by attachment theory, an Indigenous mother and child as a dyad would be misconstrued as insensitive (Muir & Bohr, 2014).

> In Aboriginal cultures, the goal is to create a nurturing environment for child development utilizing multiple relationships with extended family and other community members. In the cultural context of the shared parenting model, mothers of Aboriginal heritage believe that other caregivers are capable and will be attentive and responsive to the child's needs. The primacy of a purely dyadic mother-infant relationship does not exist in a shared-parenting model and Aboriginal mothers may be considered insensitive and unresponsive (Benzies, 2014, p. 381-382).

Social emotional attachment outcomes in children are impacted under various socio-economic conditions and social class (Vicedo, 2017). In Canada, Indigenous children are two and a half times more likely than non-Indigenous children to live in poverty (MacDonald & Wilson, 2013). Over 40% of Indigenous children live in conditions of poverty (MacDonald & Wilson, 2013). Centralisation and enfranchisement are primarily responsible for creating these conditions (Battiste, 2018). Indigenous children today face a greater risk of social, health, and economic disparities compared to children of the mainstream population (Davis, Dionne, &

Fortin, 2014). Compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts, Indigenous children face greater physical and mental health risks including diabetes, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, depression, suicide, and have a greater likelihood of dropping out of school and being incarcerated (Reading & Wien, 2009). If attachment theory is universal as it claims to be, then why are outcomes for Indigenous children not different, seeing how influential the theory is in the field of early childcare?

Prior to colonisation, traditional Indigenous families have lived for generations as self-sufficient societies with matriarchal, collectivistic values. Today, just being born Indigenous is considered a social determinant of health (Reading & Wien, 2009). This vast difference is, therefore, strongly correlated to the arrival of settler society (Blackstock, Trocmé, & Bennett, 2004).

Putting Contemporary Indigenous Childrearing Practices Into Context

Traditional Indigenous childrearing values centred around the power of women—their strength to bear children is still honoured today through ceremonies such as the Sweat Lodge (simulating a mother's womb) and the Sundance (simulating the endurance of labour; Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard, 2006). A woman was viewed as good medicine in her ability to self-cleanse through menstruation (Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard, 2006). Traditional Indigenous family systems were based on community kinships; childrearing was a communal effort. Children were taught that respect began with Mother Earth, and that respect was to be reciprocated to her and all her elements for their offerings. Children were at the centre of their communities; it was understood that they were the bearers of future generations and viewed as valuable teachers in that respect (NCCAH, 2012).

Upon the arrival of European settlers, traditional Indigenous caregiving practices were forcefully shifted. In their worldviews of hierarchy, law, ownership, and patriarchy, European settlers believed that their ways were superior, thereby dismissing the notion of two worldviews co-existing (King, 1992). Indigenous women were seen as a threat to the norms that European settles assigned to their women, whom they viewed as subordinate. "In European eyes, gender relations were hierarchal; dominance was all too often integral to male honour, making a powerful woman a rival to be disarmed" (Noel, 2006, p.78). European settlers implemented assimilation strategies to "correct" the ways of Indigenous peoples. Targeted directly at innocent children, the residential school system is arguably one of the darkest times in Indigenous peoples' history (Blackstock et al., 2004).

The Indian Act (1876) played a major role in controlling Indigenous families, by centralising Indigenous peoples on reservations that created conditions of poverty and dependence, and by mandating the attendance of children in residential schools— this racist legislation would be enforced by sending "lawbreakers" to prison. These barriers gave little option for Indigenous families to resist the injustices. Far from the residential school system era being a distant historical event, the Gordon Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan, was the last to close in 1996 (Benjamin, 2014). For over 100 years, generations of innocent Indigenous children were torn apart from their families, resulting in devastating intergenerational impacts on Indigenous peoples' caregiving beliefs and childrearing practices (Blackstock et al., 2004). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has shown that the greatest impact of the residential school system was the breakdown of families; cultural knowledge and skills in childrearing practices, nearly dissipated (Muir & Bohr, 2014).

Current government legislation in Canada remains rooted in the country's historical ambitions to assimilate Indigenous peoples out of existence. While not as overt as it was in the residential school system era, where the infamous goal of the country was to "to kill the Indian in the child", culturally ignorant policies, programs and services that push Eurocentric values on Indigenous children and families, are ongoing systemic attempts at assimilation. The child welfare system is argued to be a perpetuation of the residential schools and is a prime example of current-day assimilation on Indigenous children (Blackstock et al., 2004)

A phenomenon known as the Sixes Scoop, the child welfare system began to "scoop up" Indigenous children as the residential schools began to taper off in the 1960s (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2006). Indian agents took children from their communities by the busload (Cull, 2006). Like merchandise, Indigenous children were listed in catalogues for white families to browse, and purchase for the "greater good" of society. In Western Canada, there was a program called Adopt an Indian or Métis during the Sixes Scoop— social workers who placed the most children in care were awarded monetary rewards (A. Currie, personal communication, June 4, 2019). During the Sixes Scoop, Indigenous children were dispersed to white family homes all over the world, their names were changed, birth records destroyed, and their identities vanished (A. Currie, personal communication, June 4, 2019). It is estimated that tens of thousands of children were taken during the Sixes Scoop; however, that number is likely a gross underestimation, since records were not kept, and survivors may have passed on (Cull, 2006).

"The child welfare system, almost by design, is predisposed to focus on Aboriginal families" (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2006, p. 176). Designed from a Eurocentric perspective, the child welfare system automatically strips Indigenous peoples of their right to self-determination (Blackstock, 2010). Children are vastly overrepresented at every level of the child welfare system—from investigations to apprehension and reintegration (Blackstock et al., 2004). In 2016, Indigenous children represented only 7.7% of the overall population of children under age 14 in Canada, yet accounted for 52.2% of the population in the foster care system (Statistics Canada, 2016a).

Historical trauma and misunderstanding of Aboriginal families (i.e., the Sixties Scoop) are factors in the overrepresentation of and significant apprehension of Indigenous children in the child welfare system (Muir & Bohr, 2014). For instance, systemic poverty resulting in neglect is the primary reason for which Aboriginal children are placed in care (Blackstock et al., 2004). It is evident that the etiological factors of Indigenous child placement are systemically driven, yet little is done to address structural risk factors that they face, including multigenerational trauma, poverty, high unemployment rates, and substandard housing (Blackstock et al., 2004). Instead, the child welfare system uses standardised checklists based on Eurocentric nuclear family values where assessments measure parental competence by taking into consideration the size and cleanliness of caretaker's homes; each child is expected to have their own room, and the household is required to have bathrooms proportional to the number of people living in the house (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2006). Indigenous households tend to have several people living under the same roof. While this type of living arrangement allows for Indigenous mothers to be less vigilant, they are construed as being insensitive and neglectful according to the standards of the child welfare system (NCCAH, 2012).

The child welfare system uses assessments based on middle class, nuclear family standards (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2006). Canada is a first world country, yet many Indigenous communities across the nation do not have access to clean water. In addition, many Indigenous households are overcrowded as a result of systemic poverty and lack of adequate housing in communities (Statistics Canada, 2016b). The child welfare system sees the parents at fault for creating these conditions, instead of acknowledging the systemic causes. Through the principles of MSIT No'Kmaq, extended family systems are considered a source of support, yet the child welfare system refuses to look beyond their faulty views. For Indigenous families who are involved in the foster care systems, concepts of MSIT No'Kmaq—community, shared-caregiving, and connection to the land—are better suited to meet their needs.

MSIT No'Kmaq is an important cultural value in understanding how to foster healthy social emotional attachment in Indigenous children. The philosophy needs to be considered to improve the current assessment tools that exist, so that cultural literacy within the child welfare system is enhanced. When professionals have a better understanding of cultural differences in childrearing, they will be able to make more informed decisions to ensure the safety and well-being of Indigenous families (Muir & Bohr, 2014).

MSIT No'Kmaq: Implications in the Field of Early Childcare

As an academic research finding, MSIT No'Kmaq speaks the language of a two-eyed seeing approach that Indigenous families, and the western systemic frameworks that govern Canada, can understand. Opportunities for change are possible through mutual understanding. The implications of a mutual understanding of MSIT No'Kmaq as an Indigenous framework for understanding social emotional development in children are discussed in the context of early childhood education, and the child welfare system.

Early Childhood Education

In 2017, Canada invested in the *Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework*, where provinces and territories entered into formal agreements to improve the quality of early childcare in Canada. "There are five principles stated in this framework—high quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity" (Friendly et al., 2018, p. x). The goal of the *Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework* is that "all children can experience the enriching environment of quality early learning and child care that supports children's development to reach their full potential" (Government of Canada, 2017, p.1). In 2018, the *Indigenous Early Learning Childcare Framework* was released as part of the national agreement. The framework was created to support, coordinate, and guide the design, delivery, and governance of Indigenous Early Leaning Childcare (ELCC) that are anchored in self-determination, centred on children. The framework

> sees children and families supported by a comprehensive and coordinated system of ELCC policies, programs and services that are led by Indigenous peoples, rooted in Indigenous knowledges, cultures and languages, and supported by strong partnerships of holistic, accessible and flexible programming that is inclusive of the needs and aspirations of

Indigenous children and families. [And grounded in culture] (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 5).

The implications of MSIT No'Kmaq as an Indigenous framework for understanding social emotional development in children could be implemented in a national Indigenous curriculum framework and/or in Indigenous community frameworks.

The Child Welfare System

In February 2019, Bill C-92 enacted legislation to allow Indigenous communities (First Nation, Inuit and Métis[2]) the rights and jurisdiction over the regulations and policies their child welfare programs and services in Canada; the Bill is mandated to be guided by the establishment of national principles that are more culturally relevant (An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, 2019).

The Mi'Kmaq Rights Initiative (Kwilmi'kn Mawklusauqn—KMK) is an organisation that is responsible for implementing Treaty Rights in the First Nations communities in Nova Scotia. In order to implement regulations and policies as a result of the enactment of Bill C-92 in Nova Scotia, KMK recruited professionals in child welfare, including lawyers, social workers, KMK Policy Analysts, and others to form a Foster Care Assessment working group. The task of the working group is to make recommendations on how to include more culturally relevant foster care assessment tools within the Mi'kmaw Child and Family Services (MCFS). While in the early stages, the Foster Care Assessment group is having discussions on how regulations will better inform policies impacting Mi'Kmaq families and children in MCFS, and the findings of *Indigenous Families: Fostering Attachments our Way* (Root, 2018), including the concept of MSIT No'Kmaq as an Indigenous framework for understanding social emotional attachments in children is being considered. We discussed how principles of MSIT No'Kmaq would look like for supervised visits, in community, allowing extended family to participate. This approach would be more relevant to the Mi'Kmaq families in the system, as opposed to the traditional one-on-one parent–child interactions being observed by the social

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[2] First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are distinct Indigenous cultures in Canada —First Nations include status and non-status "Indians" under the Indian Act (1876), Inuit live in Northern Canada and are not considered First Nations, and Métis is a collective culture of people who are Aboriginal and European descendants of Louis Riel.

worker in their workplace setting. What would the implications of honouring Indigenous connections to the land be, by allowing visitations to take place outside, in a natural setting, a peaceful forest, by a calm lake; fostering attachments in children with Mother Earth as intended by principles of MSIT No'Kmaq? Having the opportunity to have childrearing principles of MSIT No'Kmaq be considered in how the new legislation will be implemented in Mi'Kmaw Child and Family Services is an exciting prospect for Mi'Kmaq children and families.

Future Research

Little research exists in the context of Indigenous parenting and Indigenous child development (Muir & Bohr, 2014). *Indigenous Families: Fostering Attachment our Way* (Root, 2018) contributed to this research area by providing insight into the childrearing values of contemporary Indigenous families. Future research could expand on the childrearing concepts of MSIT No'Kmaq and a visual model could be created. A visual model would provide a more holistic understanding of how to implement principles of MSIT No'Kmaq in childrearing practices, which could be shared with early childhood education centres, the Nova Scotia Department of Early Childhood, Mi'kmaw Kinamatnewey, and other organisations vested in the well-being of Indigenous families.

Conclusion

Indigenous peoples have been tested and tried since the arrival of colonial settlers. While never undermined, the dark and unjust realities that Indigenous families and children face are nothing compared to the strength the Indigenous grandmothers and grandfathers, who in the cusp of colonialism, have maintained their ability to hold onto traditional childrearing practices. Although altered by colonisation, Indigenous people still practice traditional childrearing practices (Muir & Bohr, 2014). Family, respect for elders, and maintaining cultural values remain important traditional elements in contemporary Indigenous childrearing (Muir & Bohr, 2014). The traditional Indigenous philosophy MSIT No'Kmaq, which values community, shared-caregiving, and connection to the land are still believed in and practised today, as shown in *Indigenous Families: Fostering Attachment our Way*

(Root, 2018). In order to understand the current context of Indigenous people, it is imperative to consider resilience. Yet, another problem with attachment theory is that it fails to take resilience into account, focusing too narrowly on one relationship dyad for promoting healthy attachment outcomes (Muir & Bohr, 2014). The seeds of resilience that the grandmothers and grandfathers planted Indigenous children must always be remembered, for without them, the future of Indigenous peoples may not be as promising (Root, 2018).

Foretold in the Alquonquin story since time immemorial, it is believed that we are living in the era of the Seventh Fire (Lamothe, 2013). Seventh Fire Prophecy is a belief that Indigenous peoples' "language, philosophies, political and economic traditions, and culture[s]" (Lamothe, 2013, p. xxiii) are resurging and have the opportunity to light the eighth Fire of Indigenous recovery and rebirth. It has been seven generations since the onset of assimilation practices. Simpson (2008) argues that we are currently in the later phases of the 7th Fire, where a mutual effort toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations is critical to attaining the 8th Fire.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), Jordan's Principles (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, 2017), Treaty Education Nova Scotia (2015), and the recent results of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) acknowledging the phenomena as genocide, are all testaments to the strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples, who have never given up the fight to reclaim their identities through just actions. It is important to acknowledge that colonisation is a shared history in Canada, and that reconciling the injustices is a mutual responsibly of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike. "Reconciliation is not an aboriginal issue. It's a Canadian issue" (Trudeau, n.d., as cited in Battiste, 2018, 9:28). Our children are the 8th generation since colonisation; it is *our* responsibility as the 7th generation, the "dreamcatcher generation", to resolve feelings of bitterness and anger, and pass onto our children only feelings of hope, so that they can lead us in the realm of the 8th fire (Battiste, 2018).

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