

Mi'kmaq Family Resource Centre's Creation Stories: A step by step Guide: Part 2: how to process and present the information.

Analysis

This process can be done in a number of ways, but for simplicity, I will explain the process we did. After all of your interviews have been transcribed, you need to go through and read all the interviews. As you are reading, highlight lines that seem to be repeating a lot. Does residential school come up a lot? Start to highlight all the sentences that discuss residential school in yellow. Does loss of language come up a lot. Go back and highlight any passage that talks about loss of language in blue. Once you have read through the interviews a few times, you can flip through the pages and which colors are coming up the most. These colors are your themes. The themes are a good representation of your communities perspectives on education. Are the themes mostly positive or negative? If it is mostly positive, your community is in a good place. Use this as a chance to celebrate your community's strengths. Your communities members' success can be an inspiration for those who are struggling. If there are a lot of negative themes, this can be the focus of your booklet. For context, here are the themes we discovered from analysing our interviews:

1. attendance at residential schools being present in the family history.
2. family history of losing language and culture to greater or lesser degrees.
3. experience of racism and bullying within attended school.
4. feeling alone, a lack of belonging, and expression of being caught between two cultures (e.g. white and Aboriginal) and not fitting well with either.
5. not seeing the relevance of education and the importance of finding a “place” either through recognized skill in one academic domain (e.g. math), or the support of a “special” teacher that highlighted the relevance of school learning.
6. importance of having someone (parent or grandparent) who placed importance on school.
7. the important role of grandparents, particularly grandmothers, in supporting cultural learning.

Assembly

For our booklet, there are seven sections that follow the Mi'kmaq's Seven Sacred Gifts of Life: Love, Honesty, Humility, Respect, Truth, Patience and Wisdom. According to the teachings of Mi'kmaw elder Dr. Murdena Marshall, each of the seven sacred teachings has been passed down to help us in our lives and empower us in our journey, as we each work on creating our own stories. Each section has three parts: a quote from a Mi'kmaw elder or knowledge holder (as gathered under the research process), a quote from interviews with parents, and finally, a

question to help you think about your own creation story. Here are a few examples of questions we used for our booklet:

*What does family mean to your story?

*How do you share goodness with those you love?

*Our stories can be hard to share. How can you share these stories in a way that is honest and empowering?

*Our history has left some of us feeling isolated. Some of us want nothing to do with our history. But our history will always be a part of our story. How do you balance our history with your stories?

These questions came out of the process of pairing the quotes from Mi'kmaq elders and knowledge holders with quotes from the parents interviews. There is no right or wrong way to pair these quotes, but each of the questions were in reaction to what was being said by the community.

For photographs in the booklet we used photos taken at First Light St. John's Friendship Centre and Fredericton Under One Sky Friendship Centre. We used these pictures because of their quality and because we had immediate access to them. However, this was a mistake. We missed an excellent opportunity to bring in someone to the Mi'kmaq Family Resource Centre and capture the families in their element, visually connecting the interviews with the physical booklet. We did not realize this mistake until it was too late in the design process but it is a mistake I regret. Finally, in regards to design and layout, we had funds available to hire a professional designer. We used Ryan Hutchinson (<http://www.ryanhutchinson.ca>). This is not necessary as the community interviews are the essential aspect, but it did add a beautiful sheen that was appreciated by all.

Use

Creation Stories is an attempt to offset the legacy of colonization in Canada. In order to empower ourselves, we will have to work together and learn as we go. It is important to realize that we all have choices and that these choices have an effect on our families. As individuals and as a community, we have the knowledge and skills needed to live the lives we choose for ourselves, our families and our community. This product can be used in any way that is appropriate for the community that created it. We unfortunately did not get the opportunity to use our booklet in the community as a part of our project.

While this project was designed to be replicated, and this curriculum is meant to help you create your own, there is nothing wrong with asking for help. If at any point in the process you have any questions, please contact Neil Forbes at i.neil.forbes@gmail.com