Archives as Good Medicine: **Rediscovering Our Ancestors And Understanding the Root Causes of Intergenerational Trauma**

Step 1

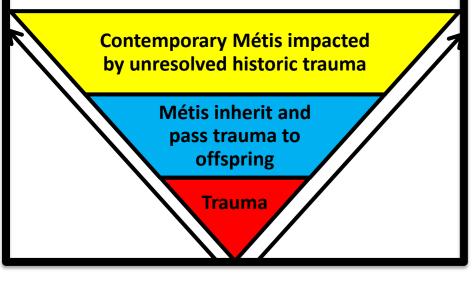
The Question

Step 2

Interrogating the Effects of Intergenerational Trauma

After spending many years trapped in the door homelessness and revolving of incarceration, I wanted to know why substance abuse, child abandonment, poor mental health, criminality, and physical and sexual abuse were prevalent in my Métis family. While studying Indigenous history, I came to realize that my family and I were suffering from the effects of intergenerational trauma. Maria Brave Heart defines historical/intergenerational trauma as collective cumulative trauma compounding emotional and psychic wounding both over life spans and across generations; it is inherited Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Peter Menzies notes that historical trauma sabotages Aboriginal decision-making, facilitating the breakdown of personal, family, and community networks across time thus leading to higher rates of social maladies among indigenous communities.

Intergenerational Trauma Pyramid

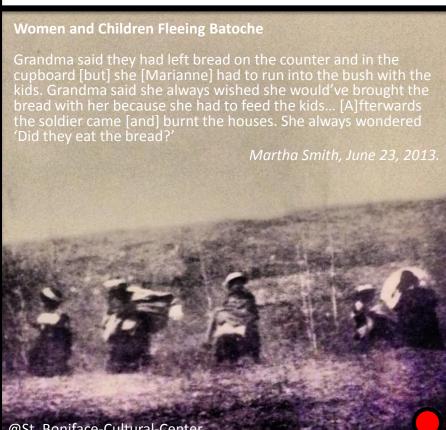


Step 6

Data Processing

Transcribing, Coding, and Analyzing the **Recorded Interviews**

As I transcribed the hours of interviews we collected in Saskatchewan I came to realize how much new knowledge we generated in the field, how rich and yielding our communications had been, and how ingrained intergenerational trauma is within my family. The recordings revealed the residual fright contemporary Métis feel about long-passed Resistance battles and their 135-year reluctance to trust Canada. Many Métis communities have not healed from the devastating loss at Batoche. I chose to exclude the worst stories in my research paper; however, my future work will expose the hardship endured by the Road Allowance Métis during the "Dark Age" (1885-1960), when families lost everything to government deceit, settler trickery, and cycles of addiction, and were forced to make a life in the 10-15 foot allowances on either side of roads and railway tracks.

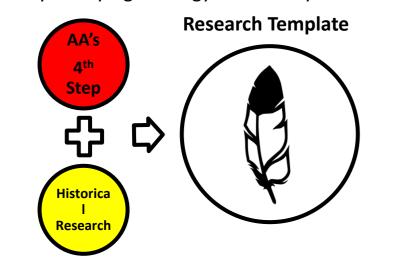


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The Template

Methodology: AA's Moral Inventory Applied to Genealogy

Before sobriety my life was dominated by substance abuse informed by intergenerational trauma. In rehabilitation I found the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and got sober. However, the steps did not resolve my historical trauma so I decided to try something new to prevent relapsing: I combined AA's principles with historical research. Step 4 of AA clearly states that one must compile an extensive moral inventory of one's past actions. The moral inventory is pivotal to recovery because it provides understanding of hurtful addiction behavior that is otherwise incomprehensible. Understanding helps addicts come to terms with their past, allowing for personal forgiveness, which sets the stage for later amendmentmaking, and finally liberation from addiction. While trying to come to terms with my 1976 adoption, I retrofitted AA's fourth step template to my family's genealogy and history.



Step

Locating the Roots of Intergenerational Trauma

Building a genealogical chart helped me locate and understand historical trauma within my family and trace how it impacted my parents and me. Novak and Rodseth posit that intergenerational trauma is borne out of collective incidents of extreme physical, social and cultural violence, and that those who witness such overt trauma become carrier groups, or carrier individuals, who pass trauma to their children. Aided by my research supervisor Dr. Carolyn Podruchny, I located the root of my family's trauma to the Northwest Resistance of 1885. My family suffered particularly in the crushing Métis defeat at the Battle of Batoche, where the Canadian government sent thousands of soldiers to fight to hundred of Métis families. Societal implosions on this scale are what Brave Heart has deemed the genesis of intergenerational trauma, which is a natural reaction to massive group trauma, the seed of which grows in successive generations.

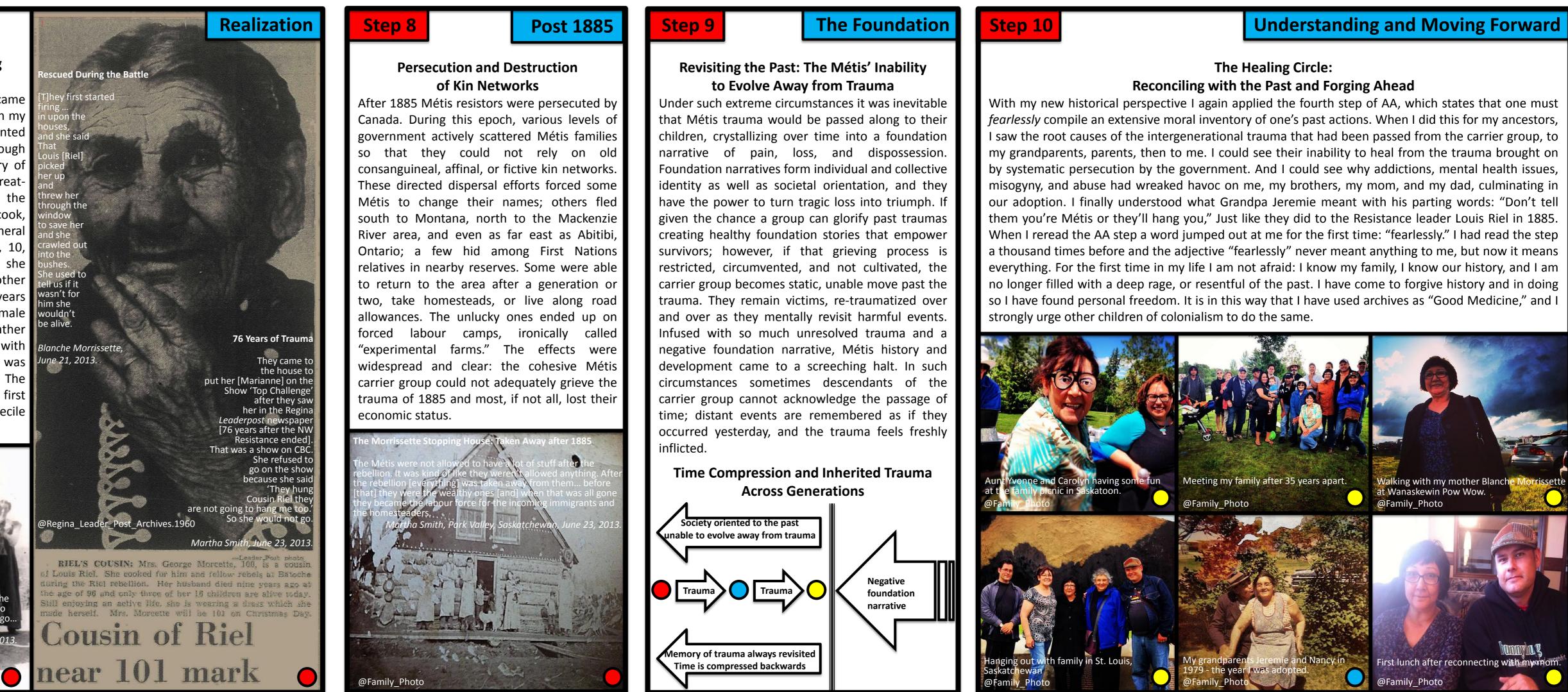


Step 7

Pinpointing, Naming, and Confronting Intergenerational Trauma Head-On

The impact of intergenerational trauma became crystal clear to me when I located its genesis in my family tree, traced its path, and documented numerous stories from the carrier group through descendants. Perhaps the most dramatic story of unresolved trauma is found in the life of my greatgrandmother Marianne Ledoux, pictured on the right. Louis Riel's cousin and personal cook, Marianne was present at Batoche when General Middleton opened fire on the town on May, 10, 1885—a trauma that stayed with her until she passed in 1967. Below is my great-grandmother she used tell us if it Cecile Montour and her family. Cecile was 13 years old in 1885 and watched her brothers, male wouldn't be alive. cousins, uncles, and friends fight. Her father Abraham planned the Northwest Resistance with Blanche Morrissette, Gabriel Dumont and Cecile watched as he was June 21, 2013. apprehended by Canada after the fighting. The opening battle at Duck Lake claimed her first cousins Jean-Baptiste and Joseph Montour. Cecile would suffer from PTSD until her death in 1915.



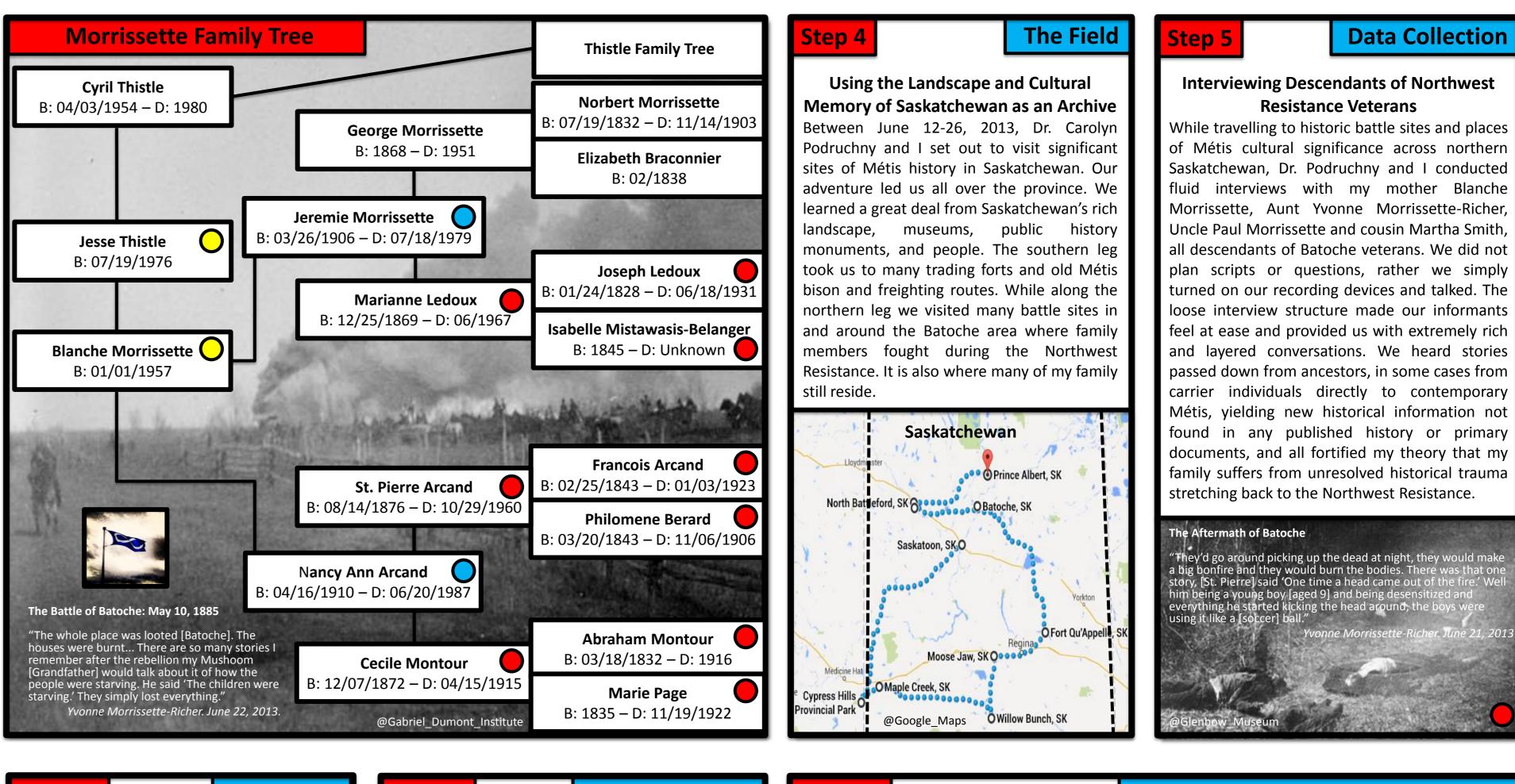


Genealogical Mapping

Poster Legend

First Generation: Métis witness to extreme violence/carrier group Second Generation: Métis directly impacted by carrier trauma Third Generation: Contemporary Métis

affected by intergenerational trauma



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