

There have been rumors circulating that question my identity as an Indigenous person and where I come from. Those behind this orchestrated campaign, who took this both to the highest office of our university and the media, have never reached out to me directly about this. Conversations I would have been happy to have and would have easily resolved any concerns.

The motives and lack of human care of those behind this are difficult to comprehend. “Pretendian hunting” has morphed from what I believe it began as, a well-intentioned attempt to ensure there is accountability around the question of Indigenous identity, to a frenzied tool of lateral violence. While the media reports on the apparent successes of the pretendian hunting mission, it does not shine a light on their misses – those of us wrongly targeted and left harmed in its wake. I feel a responsibility in this moment of personal devastation and trauma to be such a light – not only on how those with legitimate ties and lineages are being targeted and the harms that come from that, but the realities of what reconnecting, often urban Indigenous peoples, face.

I want to make it clear that if these individuals had called me on the phone, expressing their concern about my identity and ties to community, I would have told them the following:

My mother is Wanda Joyce Pedersen (nee Robinson) who is a status Indian and member of the Lytton First Nation. My uncles Gary and Barry Robinson, and many other family members, are also members of the Lytton First Nation. My mother’s sister, Sylvia Fink (nee Robinson) was offered the choice of membership in either Lytton First Nation or Bonaparte First Nation upon receiving confirmation of her status, she chose Bonaparte First Nation. My grandmother was Hester Robinson (nee Sworts—also spelled Swartz and Swart in various baptismal, birth, death, marriage, and census records), her mother was Amy Sworts (nee Tresierra, Nlaka’pamux) and her father was William Sworts (Secwepemc, Boneparte First Nation).

The colonial history of my family is that we used assimilation to survive. Not an uncommon tactic. As my uncle Gary Robinson has said, “We were native kids hidden in plain sight.” My grandmother and her siblings mostly grew up in Lillooet, Pavilion, and Clinton. My great grandfather worked for CN, and eventually moved his family to North Vancouver. My mother grew up in south Vancouver. I grew up in Delta, BC. I only knew my mother’s family mostly from my grandmother’s side growing up.

I have the documentation needed to prove who I am and who my family is in both the colonial sense (status cards, family tree completed by a genealogist, and a collection of birth, death, marriage, baptismal, and census records) and cultural sense (family who claim me and community members who claim me). All of this has been provided to both university leadership and media and I will happily share it with anyone with continued doubts.

Regarding apparent concerns about my ties to community and communication of such, being a reconnecting, urban Indigenous person is really difficult. Especially within the current, unsafe context of pretendian hunting, and the fear of being targeted. The common question within Indigenous communities is, "Where you from and who's your mom?" Indigeneity is inherently tied to place and family, so the question within the context of introducing oneself as an Indigenous person, would be to say where you are from. Now, if you are an urban, disconnected person, or even a person who has never lived on reserve, the question of where you are from, is complex. Do you explain with additional sentences that where your family is from, in the Indigenous sense, is different than where you physically live and grew up? I try to do that. I feel I have been abundantly clear that I grew up at the coast (Delta) and live between Vancouver and Parksville now. My Indigenous cousins, aunties and uncles who reside in the interior of British Columbia now (Lillooet, Kamloops) have always referred to my part of the family as the "coast cousins". I try where possible to use wording such as, "My family are members of..." wherever possible. If I have longer opportunities to explain my family history, I speak of both my Nlaka'pamux and Secwepemc lineages. I cannot control how members of the media communicate who I am. I try to ensure they get it right, but I cannot be accountable for their mistakes.

The keeper of our family history, my great Uncle Bill Sworts, had a stroke last year. I went to Kamloops to help him and visit with him after his stroke, and he told me, "You are now the keeper of our family records and history." He told me that one of his dying wishes was to figure out two holes in our family tree. One hole was his great grandmother, on his mother's side, known only in records as Josephine Indian or Kettie or Hettie, said to have come to the interior from Nootka Sound. We were told she was Haida in the family stories. This past year, I worked with a genealogist to try and find out for my great uncle. We found out that she was not actually Haida, and still don't know what Nation she was from. This is something I will continue working on to honour his wish.

If you are still following along, I am sure it must be clear that our family histories are complicated and not all Indigenous peoples have the same colonial histories. Counter to many colonial understandings of who we are, we don't all come from one Nation. In my case, people moved up and down the Fraser Canyon and even back and forth from Vancouver Island. Assimilation to survive colonization left families like mine disconnected from their lands and the people. Such disconnection, in many cases spanning multiple decades, can mean that the living memory of our families in our territories is almost gone. I am fortunate that Elders shinqyap (Terry Aleck) and N'kixw'stn were both able to separately locate my family name and locate me to our lands through our community's oral and documented genealogy. While there are Nations that are welcoming back their lost relatives with open arms, and this is something I long for, so far that has not been entirely the case for me. I wish it was.

Another important question is who has a right to further information about my relationships within community? Do I need to be sharing how I have been respectfully working to begin to strengthen ties and list the incredible people that are helping me to do this? Lytton has experienced repeated, devastating traumas this past few years. There are priorities that far

outweigh people taking time for me. I don't want to overshare either, for fear of being seen as exploitative of the realities of those living the impacts of colonial mismanagement of our lands every single day. I will say that I am thankful for the invitation I received last year to give a presentation on Nlaka'pamux Land Stewardship in Lytton as part of the monthly nkshAytkn cultural gatherings and those I met at that gathering who I have since been getting to know. That was a precious home coming for me—something I will never forget. Since then, I have begun attending other gatherings such as our most recent Citxw Nlaka'pamux Assembly Language and Culture móq<sup>w</sup>ix.

While those who chose not to talk to me or my relatives directly about this, and instead analyzed every statement I have made, or introduction I have given, and combed my website looking for any inconsistencies, all to prove the narrative they have created about me and spread amongst my colleagues, I know that I have the colonial and traditional proofs I need. I urge those engaged in such activities, to think about the perpetuation of colonialism that they are participating in. A form of lateral violence so prolific these days that legitimate people such as myself carry the fear of becoming their next target. And here I am. The lack of care for our own relations, damaging reputations through whisper campaigns and casting doubt—creating a new form of trauma. All of which have serious impacts both professionally and personally. It is hard to un-sow seeds of doubt.

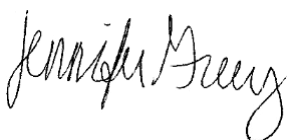
The questions surrounding how we define Indigeneity are complex. I have personally found conversations about this within the university context harmful. There are considerable complexities and differences in the colonial histories of our families and the tendency in these conversations seem to be to oversimplify. Such oversimplification, for example saying, "Who claims you?" often leaves out urban Indigenous and/or disconnected peoples. I am fortunate to be claimed by family who live off reserve, or on reserves in St'at'imc territory. I am claimed by Elders in my community who I am just getting to know.

I hope I can put to rest this incredibly painful experience and await apologies before seeking accountability from those who have participated in this. This is not our way. There was nothing relational about this.

To others who have faced the same, are facing the same, or fear the same, I am here for you. Please reach out.

Meanwhile, I will continue teaching my children the truth about who they are, love my family and friends, and continue to stand firmly with deep love for what matters.

All my relations,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Grenz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Grenz