

LOCATION STATEMENT FOR
HENRY GEORGE HARDER, EDD., RPSYC.

My name is Henry George Harder. I am an Indigenous male and a scholar. I am now the Vice Provost of Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Northern British Columbia. Until I retired from my academic position in 2020 I was a professor in Health Sciences and an Indigenous Environmental Health researcher. I am a grandfather, father, husband, Great Uncle, Uncle, cousin, brother and son. My mother was Russian Mennonite and my father's lineage is not known to me. All my mother would say is that he was an Indian and from the Wolf Clan. Her best friend told me that my middle name is George because that was my father's name. After decades of searching two possibilities have arisen as to my father's family. One possibility is Métis as my Uncle had a business in Rosthern, Saskatchewan near Batoche and my mother visited there. I have explored this possibility extensively but have not been able to prove a connection. The other possibility is in North Central BC likely the Gitksan or Wet'suwet'en, mostly due to physical likeness and other characteristics and some family history. As I do not know my biological father's name or any detail about him I will never be able to trace this lineage. However, I have spent decades trying to find my biological father. I have gone to communities and asked. These communities have tried to help and the closest link I have found is with the Gitksan. I have been privileged to work with Carrier Sekani Family Services for many years. As part of that work I have met with Elders from many Indigenous communities. They gave me a name which I cherish and hold dear. In ceremony I am very honoured to sit with the Bear Clan of which Wolf is a sub clan.

However, these links are not strong enough to make a definitive claim nor strong enough for the community to claim me. This fills me with a profound sense of sadness and an unquenched desire to belong somewhere.

I grew up a physically abused child as my step-father took out his frustration and hatred on me. In today's society I would have been apprehended and removed from the family but in the 50's and 60's I was left to be abused. We lived in a house with my maternal grandparents and aunt and uncle. I ran away from home many times, the first time was around age 4. The police found me and took me home saying that I would likely be punished for running away, which I was. I was always in trouble and in contact with the police. My grandparents tried to protect me and eventually forced my parents to move out. When my family moved away from my Grandparents I was in grade 5. Fortunately, I was left with my grandparents. Eventually I was returned to my family but was in and out and left permanently not long after. I lived on the streets of Vancouver staying in communes and eventually joining the Jesus People Movement. It was the 60's and I was not alone. I touched base with my grandparents living with them on occasion and they, along with my aunt and uncle on my mother's, side likely kept me alive. Eventually, I moved in with

my grandparents in order to finish high school which I somehow managed to do. In grade 12 I met Rita who became my life partner and my soul mate, who definitely saved my life, and with whom I am still together over 50+ years of joy. She is my rock. She keeps me sane, is my solid support and sometimes smacks me upside the head, figuratively.

I grew up Mennonite not Indigenous. I went to theological college and was a preacher for a while. I have spent the last 20 years trying to discover my Indigenous side, my Indigeneity. It has not been an easy journey. Members of my extended family have cast doubt and aspersions not wanting to have an Indian in the family, not wanting the memory of their sister besmirched. My family hid the secret of my parentage well. In Mennonite circles just the sin of extramarital sex could be punished by excommunication. A mixed race child would certainly not have been welcome and the family would have been shunned. I eventually went to UBC and ended up with a Doctoral degree in Psychology. During that time, I experienced some prejudice as a few profs did not want to see a poor kid from the east side of Vancouver succeed. I also never got on well with quantitative research methodologies and didn't thrive until I discovered qualitative research. These experiences have shaped who I am and how I approach all aspects of life including research.

I am Indigenous and an Indigenous researcher. I have been moving beyond qualitative research and am embracing Indigenous Research Methodologies. I categorically reject the notion that mainstream research methods are the only way of determining truth and acquiring knowledge. Many community members have told me and I have heard it in Indigenous communities around the world "we have always done research. We just didn't call it that".

History is rife with examples of unethical exploitive research being conducted on Indigenous peoples and communities. Some of this history is very recent. I have seen it myself and it sickens me. I will not be part of this, ever. I will seek it out and do everything in my power to ensure that such persons never get near Indigenous peoples and communities again.

I cannot definitively prove my Indigenous lineage. I appreciate that this causes problems for some people. It took me a long time to accept my Indigeneity and one of my proudest moments is when an Elder came up to me and said to me in Dakelh "You are Indian". He knew my struggles and had spent many hours in conversation. It is because of him and others that I know who I am. Thank you.