

Indigenous Perspectives

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Shifting the Health Paradigm

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Why do we need an Indigenous Framework?

- Too often, indicators of community wellness actually measure the absence of something negative (disease), rather than the presence of something positive.
- What does the community need? What strengths does it have already?
- Problematic thinking – ‘closing the gap’ on Indigenous health
- While collecting information on things like sickness and environmental damage to raise awareness of real challenges, they can also become discouraging, self-fulfilling prophecies, lowering the expectations of community members of what is possible
- Simply stated, a wellness indicator is a measure of how *well* one are doing.
- **How we frame the challenge will frame how we look at the solution! By focusing our efforts on tracking progress towards our most important values and aspirations, we will become communities that are working towards health and wellness.**

What is Needed?

- **Paradigm Shift**

The current Western paradigm of health delivery has failed Indigenous peoples. It is reactionary rather than preventive. A new framework or adoption of Indigenous work in this area is needed. Key to improving Indigenous health policy.

- **Indigenous Leadership**

More weight must be given to Indigenous voices. Indigenous people know what their needs are. Indigenous leadership is leading a new paradigm.

- **Indigenous Culture**

Indigenous knowledge and culture should be incorporated into health care service delivery and policy development. Solutions must reflect *miyo mahcihowin* - the Indigenous concept of health, which includes spiritual, emotional, mental and physical well-being. This involves a holistic, preventive approach that focuses on the long term.



The Colonial Context

- A relationship history filled with:
 - Colonization
 - Relocation and confinement to reserves
 - Separation from family
 - Residential school trauma
 - Restricting involvement in economy and land
 - Political marginalization
 - Bureaucratic and technocratic control of every detail of their lives
 - Treated as research test subjects

“History has had complex effects on the structure of communities, individual and collective identity, and mental health [of Aboriginal peoples].”

Kirmayer & Valaskakis, p. 27

A Relational Worldview

- With people, families, community
- With the land
- With the spiritual
- With culture
- A Holistic approach

Some believe that this relational way of being is the *heart* of what it means to be Indigenous

Research and Care in a Good Way

- In order to avoid unintended negative consequences, research into Traumatic Brain Injury and Violence Against Women, and the care provided to help heal, must be done in a good way in order to be valuable.
- This includes shifting to an Indigenous perspective and view both through the lens of Cultural Responsiveness.

What is Cultural Responsiveness?

- Refers to health care services that are respectful of and relevant to the health beliefs, health practices, culture and linguistic needs of diverse patient populations and communities.
- CR describes the capacity to respond to the healthcare issues of diverse communities. It requires knowledge and capacity at different levels of intervention: systemic, organizational, professional, and individual.

The Cultural Responsiveness Framework (2009). Published by Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services, Victorian Government, Department of Health, Melbourne, Victoria

Equity, Access and Quality

- It is well documented that there are long-standing disparities in the health status of people from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds (Bacote, et. al., 2007; Betancourt, et. al., 2003; Flores, 2005; Divi, et. al., 2007).
- Equity in health care means that we all have the same right to access and receive high-quality, safe care, regardless of cultural, linguistic, religious, and socio-economic considerations.
- This DOES NOT mean that everyone receives the same care, but that all persons have their health care needs well met, and that factors that can potentially contribute to different patient outcomes have been minimized.

The lack of culturally responsive care is, in fact, a major contributor to health disparities.

The Culturally Responsive Framework

Sasakamoose, J., Bellegarde, T., Sutherland, W., Pete, S., McKay-McNabb, K., (2017). Miyo-pimātsiwin Developing Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Theory (ICRT): Improving Indigenous Health and Wellbeing.: International Indigenous Policy Journal, 8 (3) p. 1-16.

- Goals
 - Restore First Nations Community-based health and wellness systems
 - Establish a “middle ground” for engagement between mainstream and First Nations systems and worldviews
 - Transform mainstream service delivery to become culturally responsive by guiding research that continuously improves the health, education, governance, and policies of Indigenous peoples.



How do we create a 'middle ground'?

Ethical Space

- A cooperative spirit between Indigenous peoples and Western institutions, in order to create new currents of thought. (Ermine, 2007).

Two-Eyed Seeing

- To see the strengths of Indigenous knowledge and the strengths of Western knowledge and use them together. (Bartlett, & Marshall, 2010).

Harmonizing

- It is within this area of ethical space that the strengths of Indigenous ways and the strengths of evidence-informed Western approaches are considered. (Sasakamoose, et. al, 2017; LaVallie & Sasakamoose 2016).

Next Steps...

Questions?



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