

CBR Quarterly

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

9:00 AM – 11:30 AM PST

Welcome

Attendees: Paul Kerber, Jen Demchuk, Dave Miller, Madeline Gallard, Clara Tam, Nance Cunningham, Matthew Numer, Anita David, Tim Wesseling, Janet Madsen, Emma Kuntz

Approval of Draft Agenda

Approval of Previous Minutes – No changes!

Introduction to speakers – Dr. Matthew Numer and A. Dave Miller

Community-Based Intervention Research: Pathways for Sexual Health Promotion Among Indigenous Boys and Men

- In the middle of phase II of an Operating Grant on this topic
- “Community-inspired and driven” research – driven by CBOs and community about what they should be doing
- Recognizing that research is supportive of community – not taking too much time and providing space for their perspectives
- Two-Eyed Seeing approach
- Holistic sexual health – not just about looking at things like STBBIs but looking at root causes
- Phase I: did a lit review about what is known in Canada on this topic – community report on the SHaG site
- Gaps in the literature – parallel focuses – contributing to the literature and also providing resources and reports for community
- Some areas of focus – not using a deficits-based approach, breaking of knowledge around sexual health and gender roles, particularly due to the impacts of residential schools
- Heard that sex was taboo – knowledge that was passed down about sex was lost particularly because of Christian ideology
- Teaching from Elder Theresa Morris – everything can be traced back to residential school
- Community consultation: themes, creating a space for Indigenous boys and men to talk and the importance of positive role models
- Interviews with 10 Indigenous men, all previously incarcerated – originally working with a program that helped men who had been in jail transition back to society. Led by Scott Lekas.
- Key themes from these interviews: systems of oppression affected their journeys – needed to go to jail to find their culture; the systems that have and will enable them to recover – found through programming in jails and in community at the Friendship Centre

- Community report available
- Findings from phase 1 led to Phase 2 – CIHR Operating Grant. Need to get on the land and do cultural activities – intervention-based research and land-based methodologies
- Phase II – through learning lodges and gatherings to provide forums for boys and men
- Get to take part in building a sweat lodge from the ground up
- Open and end the day with a talking circle – sacred fires burn throughout the gathering. The gatherings are usually three days – but this project’s gatherings will be five days. Feeling like holding this for five days will help folks to feel more comfortable
- Opportunities for naming ceremonies – for people to sit with an Elder and receive their spirit name. Can be quite long – up to eight hours!
- All boils down to really wanting to create a safe space. Want to make sure not to make people feel forced to participate in anything. to connect and heal and share
- Sense that people were ready to have some of these conversations – some participants were experienced being in group as part of incarceration and were ready to share their stories
- Healing Our Nations holds gatherings every year but funding was limited
- Comment from health authority that Indigenous people must know their own culture but that isn’t always the case – people may have been disconnected from culture e.g., as an impact of residential schools
- Gatherings: a mode of harm reduction. Allows people to connect with culture, Elders, can support people in making different choices
- Importance of Elders. One example – had a youth who was struggling and was able to join a ceremony and felt like it helped them to make better decisions
- Do find some challenges finding the right Elders for the right thing – want to make sure they have the Elders available. Also want to make sure there are Elders who don’t restrict access to ceremony based on substance use, as perhaps when people are struggling with substance use they need ceremony the most
- Often a lot of people are interested – want to work to ask people why this is important to them in order to narrow down the participant list. Age group is often around 22 – 30.
- **Q: some Elders require abstinence from substances to access ceremony** – sense that a spirit has left the body when people are using substances. So one way this project has managed is seeing where people who are using substances can participate. But also they try to work with Elders who don’t feel that way.
 - Other side of the coin – where are our men getting their guidance? What are our men learning? Elder Theresa Morris says that some Indigenous people learn by doing. What you know and what you learn is important!
- **Q: How do they make the spaces safe for folks to talk about taboo topics?**
 A: Existing relationships with community partners – and being nimble and reflective in those spaces as to what is going on. E.g., in the last event, many of the guys knew each other. So, they will be different with them than in groups they will see over a week with Dave. These guys have talked about some of these things – this means building rapport and being comfortable themselves [the researchers] in who they are. Being aware of

people's emotional states – and presence of mind. Have to be comfortable experiencing some of the trauma with them.

Dave: strong confidentiality process and checklist around making a safe space. Zero tolerance for judgement, discrimination and stigma. These gatherings are for people to be able to express themselves. One of the questions from ethics: who is doing these events? Healing Our Nations has been doing them for a long time and has a lot of training and experience. You learn to recognize things and provide supports when people need it.

- **Q: Can they speak to culture as harm reduction?**

A: Harm reduction was a new term not long ago. So they wrote a grant for harm reduction that talked about how access to culture can help people find the 'link' that helps people feel connected – and some people find they start using substances because they don't feel like they know who they are. So if they're doing things like sweats and drum-making – this is harm reduction because they're doing these things instead of other activities. This grant was rejected because the government couldn't see that this is harm reduction as opposed to things such as needle exchanges.

Q&A

Roundtable

Closing