



reachnexus



Making it Work
Community-based research study



Learning Together: Analysis Through Differing Perspectives in the Making it Work Study

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The Making it Work team gratefully and respectfully works and partners with Indigenous Peoples in what is often referred to as British Columbia.

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The team has no conflicts of interest to disclose

Background

Our Study Team

In line with our community-based approach, the Making it Work Study has a vibrant and active study team, consisting of people with lived and living experiences, academics and community members that represent our case study site organizations:

- Central Interior Native Health Society (Prince George, traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh)
- Positive Living North No Kheyoh t'sih'en t'sehena Society (Prince George; Smithers, traditional territory of the Wet'suwet'en people)
- PHS Community Services Society (Vancouver, traditional territory of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam people; Victoria, traditional territory of the Lekwungen people, including the Songhees and Esquimalt peoples and the Lekwungen speaking peoples and **WSÁNEC** people)

The study team meets regularly to guide the research process, provide input into analysis and knowledge mobilization and provide their perspectives on the work.

The Making it Work Study

Making it Work is an Indigenous-focused, community-based research project that utilizes a Realist Evaluation approach in British Columbia co-led by PIs Sherri Pooyak, AHA Centre at Communities, Alliances and Networks (CAAN) and Janice Duddy, PAN. The study is exploring why community services work well for people with lived experience of HIV, hepatitis C and challenges with mental health and substance use, with a particular focus on case management and community development programs and services using Indigenous service delivery models. This study utilizes Community-Based Research, Two-Eyed Seeing and Realist Evaluation approaches:

Community-Based Research (CBR)

"... is a collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBR begins with a research topic of importance to the community with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change to improve community health and eliminate health disparities. CBR brings researchers together with members of the community to: identify the issues; generate and/or collect, analyze and interpret the data; and decide how to use the results to inform policy, change practice and improve conditions in the community" (CIHR, 2022).

Realist Evaluation

An approach that relies on the concepts of context, mechanism and outcomes – “evaluations need to identify ‘what works in which circumstances and for whom?’, rather than merely ‘does it work?’” (Better Evaluation, n.d.) The goal of a Realist Evaluation approach is to develop a working 'program theory' that links these chains of context, mechanism and outcomes (known as CMO statements) into a greater theory that shows their interconnectedness.

Two-Eyed Seeing

An approach that involves ‘seeing out of both eyes’ – that is, utilizing both Western and Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in approaching research and acknowledging the strengths of both in doing this work (Iwama et al., 2009).

Indigenizing Realist Evaluation Approach

- 2018 - spring 2021, Realist Evaluation program theory developed outline CMO statements with a Two-Eyed Seeing approach. (See our [2020 poster](#) for more information [Clark et al., 2020]).
- Study team explored how a Realist Evaluation approach could support our research and how it could be adapted to better representing Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Doing and decided on representing the CMO statements are in spirals to represent how these process of iterative, not linear and relational.
- A study team member suggested we build our program theory using the the Medicine Wheel - fitting our CMO statement spirals on the four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel: Physical, Spiritual, Emotional and Mental. This has allowed us to consider our program theory holistically and to think about service users and service providers as whole people.

Methods

Data Collection & Analysis

Study Team Drop-In Sessions

In the spring of 2021, we held a series of four Making it Work study team 'drop-in sessions' to help clarify key elements of our program theory and garner initial areas for exploration in our focus groups, described below.

Initial Analysis

Recordings of the Community Conversations were transcribed by a third-party transcription service and analyzed in data analysis software:

- Data were analyzed looking at both the existing program theory and new areas previously unaddressed by the program theory.
- Peer Research Associates along with other research staff primarily completed analysis.
- Throughout the coding process, the research team discussed areas that might be worth exploring further or areas where there was disagreement with the current program theory.

Community Conversations

In October 2021, we held four focus groups (referred to as 'Community Conversations') virtually. Participants included:

- Service providers and service users from our case study site communities
- Other partners linked to our case study site organizations.

There were 30 participants in total across the four focus groups.

The interview guide for the Community Conversations utilized a modified Realist Evaluation interviewing approach. Participants were read aloud a statement summarizing elements of the program theory and asked to discuss whether they agreed with the statement and why or why not.

Participatory Analysis

- Areas identified for further discussion and exploration were brought back to the study team as part of our participatory analysis approach.
- We are planning to deepen our participatory analysis work to support sense-making and theming of data and to support our next phase of data collection.

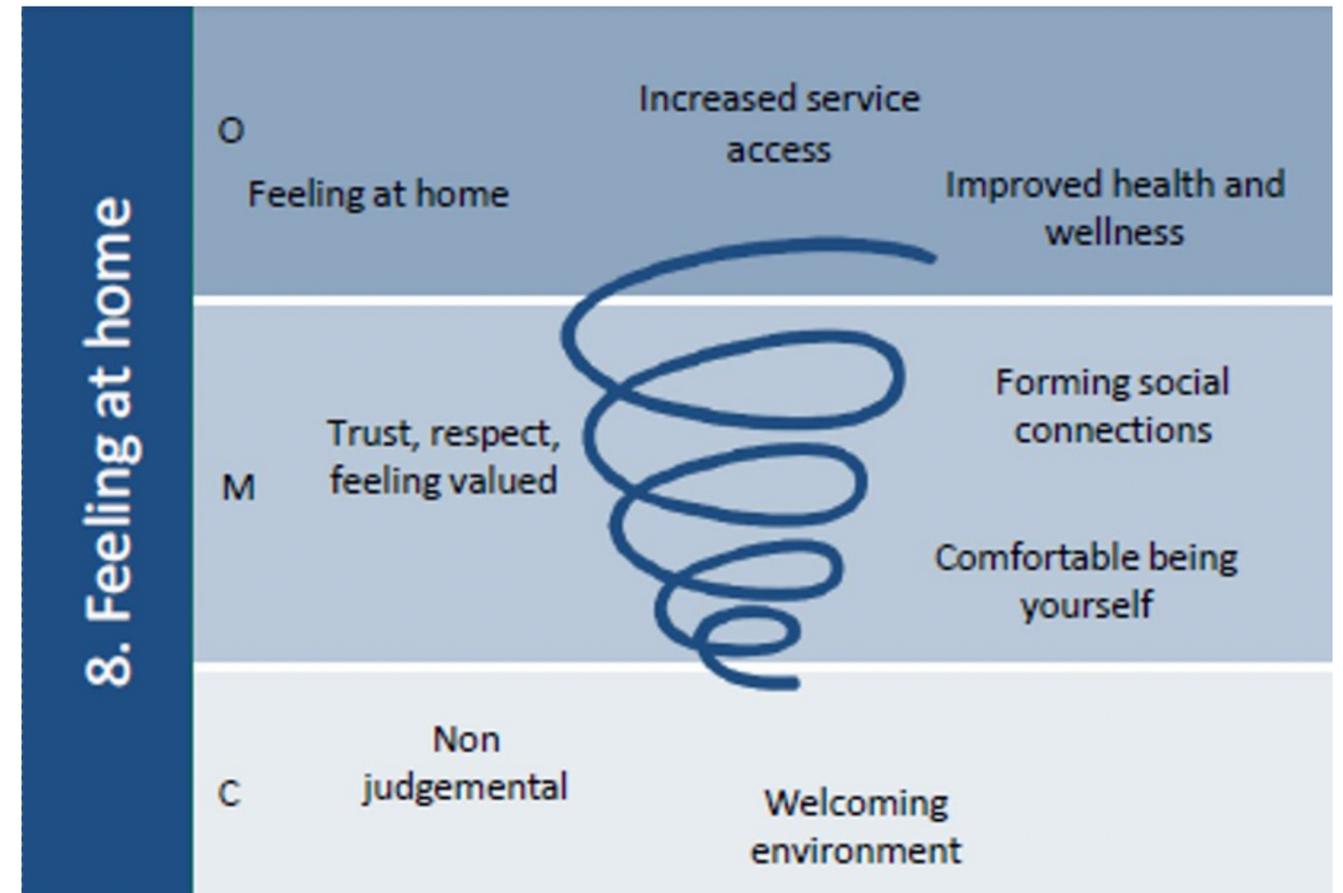


Figure 1: Example of a CMO statement in the form of a spiral within our program theory. This sits on the 'emotional' quadrant of the Medicine Wheel.

Results

Findings - What have we learned from this phase of data collection?

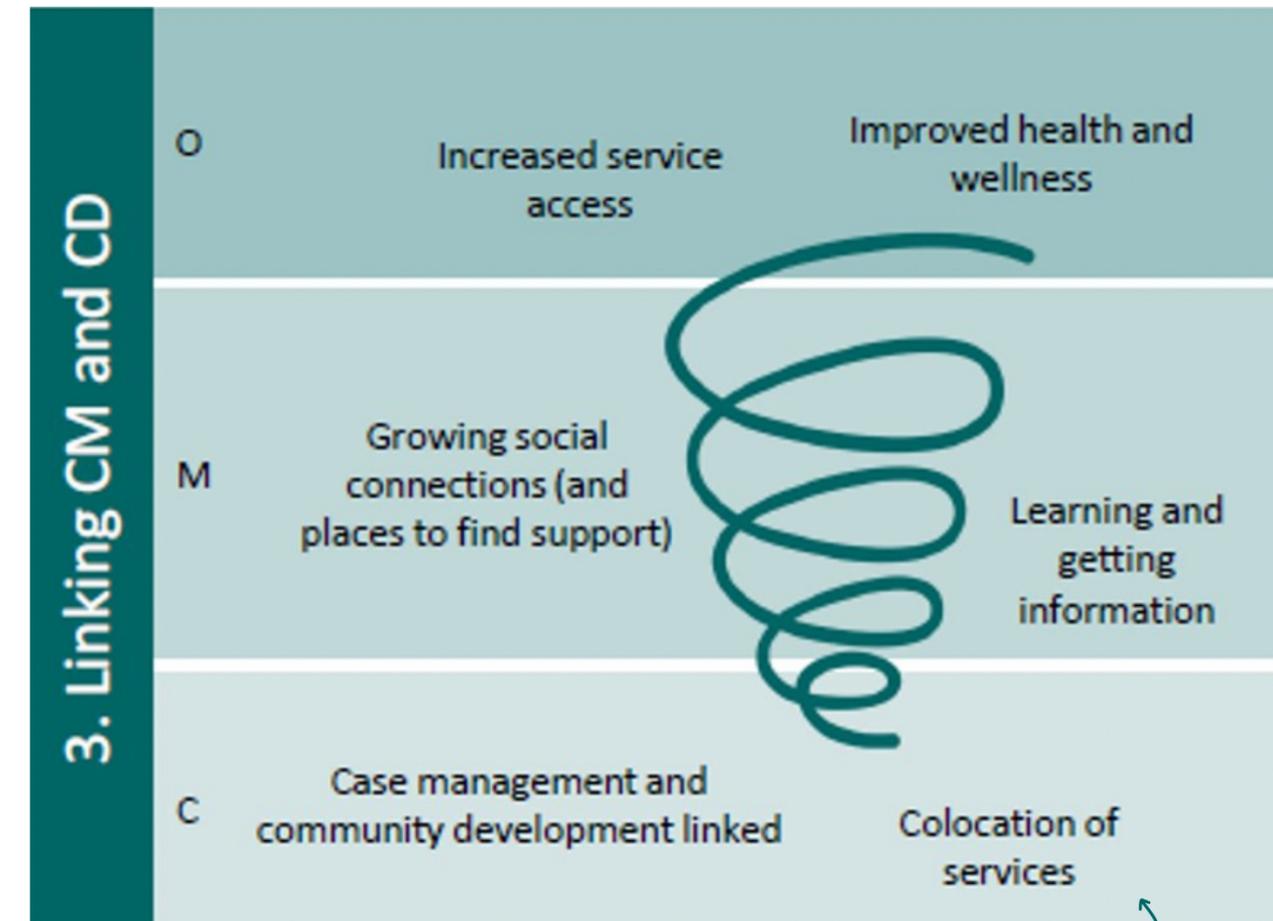
Using our initial program theory and CMO statements, we worked with the Community Conversation data to either confirm our program theory and to identify areas that needed further investigation.

First, we found that not all of our CMO statements matched what we heard in the Community Conversations. Realist Evaluation is an iterative process. By listening to the data, we found points of incongruence, which speaks to the need for further revision of the program theory and investigation.

Second, while people could speak to how they understood concepts like cultural safety and harm reduction and how they showed up in service delivery models, we did not hear a consistent definition. We need to examine these concepts more carefully. Through this work, we expect to refine our program theory.

Finally, we have been assessing whether some CMO statements don't fit into the program theory. Some CMO statements may need to be added or adjusted to better represent how our research participants implement and experience services.

What appeared to be important was the linkage of services – clients being able to access services across multiple organizations and building upon existing partnerships (for example, between staff members in a community). It seems to be important that staff in community have good working relationships.



There was some debate about whether colocation of services was beneficial – there can be differences in organizational approaches that impact which services are a good fit for clients. Likewise, colocation can be challenging when working with varying client groups.

Figure 2: This shows an original CMO statement as included in our program theory and suggested areas for revision and further exploration. This will support revising our program theory.

Reflections

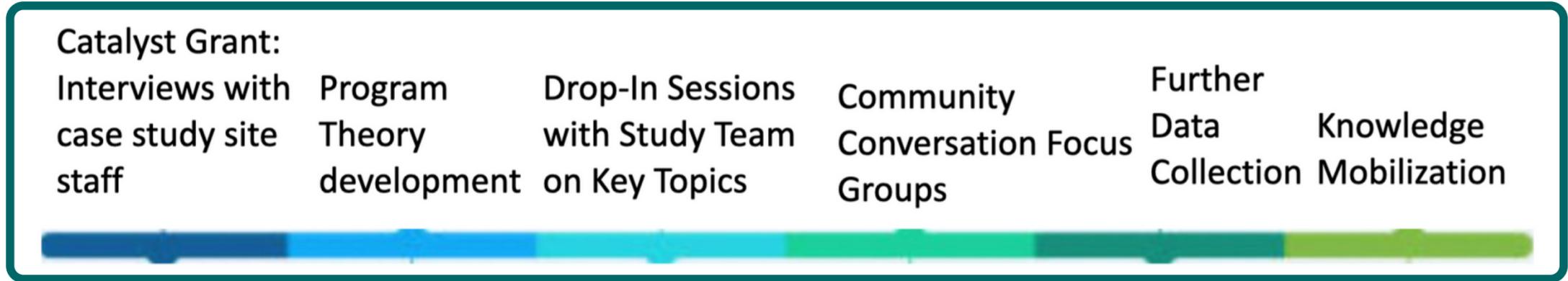
In Summary:

- Examining where our data highlighted different ideas about program theory showed us where it may need to be changed or further examined through additional data collection.
- This speaks to the iterative process within Realist Evaluation of proposing, testing and revising parts of the theory and CMO statements.
- We need to explore the "what services work? for whom? and why?" contextual questions included within Realist Evaluation. This will be developed in the next phase of data collection.

Next Steps

Next Steps Include:

- Using analysis from the Community Conversations to identify more research questions to be explored through a new phase of data collection.
- Developing and implementing a survey that will engage new participants to explore these research questions in more depth.
- Analysing the survey data to further refine and finalize our program theory.
- Bringing knowledge back to community through engagement opportunities and knowledge mobilization.



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