

Webinar 4: Braiding Together Indigenous Wellness, Trauma- and Gender-Informed Approaches in the Substance Use Field

October 19, 2017

The *First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum* is a national framework to address Indigenous wellness in Canada. “Mental wellness is supported by culture, language, Elders, families, and creation and is necessary for healthy individual, community, and family life.” The continuum is rooted in cultural knowledge and emphasizes Indigenous strengths and capacities and can enhance substance use services and policy, including the development and inclusion of trauma- and gender-informed approaches.

Many Indigenous healers and scholars have challenged and expanded on Western understandings of trauma. For example, Eduardo Duran (1990) describes the “soul wound” of colonialism. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart-Jordan (1995) describes historical and complex trauma as a “reaction to the multigenerational, collective, historical, and cumulative psychic wounding over time, both over the lifespan and across generations.”

Colonial policies, the suppression of cultural knowledge and the multigenerational impacts of trauma have affected relationships and connections in many Indigenous families and communities, including relationships between men and women, expression of gender and sexual identity, and the role of women in Indigenous communities. For example, from 1869-1985, the *Indian Act* denied Indigenous status to Indigenous women and their children if they married a non-Indigenous man and women were not allowed to be elected as Chief. In the past few years, there has been growing awareness of the number of Indigenous women who have been murdered or gone missing. Many Indigenous communities are finding new ways of working with trans and “two-spirited” individuals and bringing together new and old understandings of gender.

Indigenous ways of helping people through trauma, depression and experiences of parallel and multiple realities include: love, Being in Creation, cultural and ceremonial resources, teaching and educating, restorative justice, and non-pathological frameworks (Linklater, 2014).

Many Indigenous communities are developing new models of care based on wellness and culture as a foundation. For example, the Nipissing First Nation has developed *Wiidooktaadyang* (“we take care of one another”), a strengths-based model which reflects original Anishinabek values of community responsibility in wellness for all. This model has required a paradigm shift across the Nation and has included involvement and training of individuals beyond those who provide health services, e.g.,

First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework

“Mental wellness is a balance of the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional. This balance is enriched as individuals have: **PURPOSE** in their daily lives whether it is through education, employment, care-giving activities, or cultural ways of being and doing; **HOPE** for their future and those of their families that is grounded in a sense of identity, unique Indigenous values, and having a belief in spirit; a sense of **BELONGING** and connectedness within their families, to community, and to culture; and finally a sense of **MEANING** and an understanding of how their lives and those of their families and communities are part of creation and a rich history.”

<http://thunderbirdpf.org>

language keepers, Elders, managers in areas related to Indigenous social determinants of health such as housing and education.

The Mothering Project in Winnipeg, Manitoba works with pregnant and early parenting women who use substances. The Mothering Project was given the Spirit Name “Manito Ikwe Kagiikwe”, an Ojibwe word which means “spirit woman teachings.” This name reflects the program’s philosophy that women carry all the teachings they need within themselves and that the role of the program is to walk with women and support them in the ways that they ask. The Mothering Project views culture as central to their model – culture as wellness, culture as healing, culture as intervention. The program also emphasizes relationship building as reflected in the phrases “we’re better together” and “nothing about us without us.”

Links

First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework, <http://thunderbirdpf.org>

“Mind Chatter,” Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, <https://youtu.be/JKabBrX-q8E>

Decolonizing Trauma Work: Indigenous Stories and Strategies, Renee Linklater (ISBN: 9781552666586)

“The Mothering Project: Meeting Women Where They Are At: Community Making A Difference,” Manitoba FASD Coalition, <https://youtu.be/c2YBbOgF7TA>

Presenters:

Carol Hopkins, Thunderbird Partnership Foundation
Renee Linklater, Aboriginal Community Engagement, CAMH
Brenda Restoule, First Peoples Wellness Circle
Tammy Rowan, The Mothering Project/Manito Ikwe Kagiikwe

Facilitator:

Nancy Poole, Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health

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