

EDITORIAL

Special Issue: Indigenous Mental Health

GUEST EDITORS

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There have been many things said about the life conditions of Indigenous peoples, about the lack of services, the high rates of unemployment, and the low rates of education. What doesn't get talked about nearly enough is the consistently high rates of despair and resulting suicide ideation and death in Indigenous communities across Canada.

We have brought together a diverse group of people who work in the field, are concerned citizens outside of any Indigenous community, who counsel, support, and are determined to shine a light on Indigenous youth and Indigenous life from a variety of perspectives.

Wesley-Esquimaux and Steven Koptie bring forth a question from an historic standpoint, through the eyes of Plenty Coups who felt that after contact with his people "nothing happened" although he lived for an additional 60 years. They look at Michael Lerner's concept of "surplus powerlessness" and how a combination of events have contributed to the lived events we are grappling with across Canada. There is a way to heal historic trauma, and understanding those events and reconstituting a strong cultural base are some of the ways forward.

Kowatch, Schmidt, and Musquash, query the extension of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to accommodate cultural groups and adapt therapy to their cultural beliefs and values. While CBT is proving to be a significant help to those needing or requesting therapeutic intervention, adjusting therapy to respect and reflect cultural norms and incorporate required structural change may be a life changer with great utility for Indigenous youth.

Sommerfeld and Danto take a closer look at the value of Land Based Interventions for

mental health and determine there is a significant difference between Indigenous Land Based practices and Forest Bathing or green and blue space research programs. Indigenous peoples have been saying this for a very long time, it's time to listen to the wisdom of the land and understand Indigenous youth respond to the "wise practices" their ancestors gifted them with and cultural land based interventions provide suicide intervention that works.

Ford-Ellis brings the use of the medicine wheel into clinical practice and the systemic barriers that are often in the way of implementing Indigenous methods and perspectives in health care. She notes the number of studies that can become a starting point for advocating the use of the Medicine Wheel and, more generally, Indigenous traditional healing, as a focal point for healing that takes place with Indigenous people and/or in Indigenous communities. We all agree we have young people that need access to treatment modalities that work for them,

Snowball queries our ability to listen to the voices of the Inuit when they speak and questions the barriers to changing our unwillingness to respond to the suicide crisis in our most northern regions. Why when so many youth are suffering, do we as Canadians not heed the warning they represent? He notes that Inuit youth are "dying to be heard" and it is our lack of knowledge or understanding of the north and the people who have lived there for thousands of years that we ignore their plight, something he believes we can and must change.

Bennett brings our thoughts to bear on the transitioning of children out of care and the impacts this experience has had on their lives through the use of digital storytelling. This

paper notes how negative experiences in care are carried forward into adulthood and can have serious consequences on their quality of life. The development of resiliency and a moving forward into a good life, and looking back into familial experiences and cultural knowledge are put forward as important vehicles to change, integration into positive cultural experiences, and the need for policy changes which reflect the needs and expectation of Indigenous peoples across Canada.

There is always more that can be said, research that can add deeper dimensions, and new approaches that can offer hope to Indigenous peoples. We hope we have offered food for thought when it comes to developing empathy, compassion, and some insight on why our young people continue to suffer, and how we might all mitigate the events that continue to impact their lives.

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