“Talking for Action”
Urban Aboriginal Women Speak Out About a Collective Vision for Non-racist, Nondiscriminatory Health Care Reform

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Community Based Indigenous Led Study

Aim of the study:
- To provide a safe environment for urban Aboriginal women in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, to share their experiences of health care and their vision for health care reform.

Research questions:
- What has been your experience of health care in Canada?
- What is your vision for health care reform?

Research Approach: Indigenous Methodology & Talking Circles

Critical Questions continually asked during the project:
How will Indigenous Methodologies and Academic protocols be honoured?
- Whose Voice is represented? Who benefits from the research?
- Who owns the research?
Who We Are

• 14 First Nation & Métis women
• 23 – 71 years of age
• Originally from BC, AB, SK, MN, ON
• Living in urban areas of Okanagan Valley of BC
**Indigenous Methodology**

Indigenous led research by and for Indigenous peoples that is purposeful, intuitive, organic and fluid, without a static step by step framework. It is shaped along the way by local knowledge and traditions and acknowledges life experiences as authentic ways of knowing in which storytelling is a source of knowledge.

The relationship, between researcher and ‘participants’, honours a collective commitment to sharing knowledge gained from the research for the benefit of the individual and the community, is long-term and ties knowledge, experience, and relationships together.

(Castellano, 2004; Evans, Hole, Berg, Hutchinson, Sookraj, & UUAHRC, 2008; Kovac, 2005; Kurtz, 2011; Porsanger, 2004; Smith, 2009)
Talking Circles

Ancient customary cultural way that provides a respectful Safe Environment to:

• Share stories
• Construct collective vision
• Carry out Group Process

• Teach culture & Traditions
• Teach health education & promotion
• Foster healing & support

Becker, Affonso, & Blue Horse Beard (2006); Cesario (2001); Hodge, Fredricks, & Rodriguez (1996); Loppie (2007); Sturthers, Hodge, Geishirt-Cantrell, & De Cora (2003)
Collective Vision in Action

The strategies commenced during the study and continue:

• involvement in academic forums and Advisory Committees that contributed to curriculum change;

• presentations at national and international conferences;

• teaching faculty and future health care providers the history of colonization, and how to respect each other in working together in health and education systems;

modeling at national and international workshops how to use Talking Circles for healing, teaching and learning and to initiate much needed change;

• writing reports and manuscripts for publication.
Borderlands in Research:
Contradiction of Two Worldviews vs Place of Possibilities
Thank you to the women who continue to share their stories, insights, and guiding wisdom.
References (cont)


Rational for the Study
Teachings in Our Circle

JUST BECAUSE WE’RE INDIAN (Experience)
Our Colour Is Used to Marginalize Us
We are Harmed, Violated and Labelled
Our Rights Are Denied
We are Mistreated and Pre-judged in the Health Care System

SHAPING OUR FUTURE (Woman Warriors)
Roots of Respect
Cultivating Cultural Safety
Offering Help

FIGHTING ALL OUR LIVES (Consequences)
Learning to Hide
Defending Ourselves
Responding to Oppression

WHO WE REALLY ARE (Reclaiming Our Lives)
Embracing Self
Proud to Be Native
Living With a Purpose
You cannot understand the present without knowing about the past. The history of our people shape who we are today and who our children will be tomorrow...

We are the First People of this country, of this land. If you learn that, you learn to respect people that are different from yourself, that are of a different color. If you can learn to respect and deal with me, then you will be able to learn to respect and deal with those that are black, yellow, brown, white.  (Elder Two, 2007, 2012)