

Dear colleagues,

Selected lectures from last year's Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research Indigenous Summer School are now available online.

Eduardo Chachamovich - Wellness: Conceptualization and Measurement

Well-being (WB) and Quality of life (QOL) have emerged as two of the most important concepts in fields such as sociology, medical anthropology and medicine. Increasing quality of life of one individual or a community is the ultimate goal of any intervention (political, social, or health-related intervention).

Quality of life cannot be defined as the mere absence of negative aspects in one's life. It is a multidimensional construct, and encompasses several distinct domains such as physical, psychological, social, religious, personal beliefs, and expectations. Moreover, quality of life is subjective since the same phenomenon can be perceived differently by two individuals, therefore having a different impact on their lives. The United Nations define quality of life as the notion of welfare (well-being), and stress that it should not be measured by "quantitative measures of income and production." The World Health Organization also emphasizes the subjective nature of quality of life, defining quality of life as the "individuals' perceptions of their position in life in the context of their culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns." Studies that apply QOL scales that were designed for non-Aboriginal populations to Indigenous peoples are fundamentally flawed. This is true for several reasons. Firstly, those scales are designed to address domains that are relevant to the population for which they were created. One would expect that the reality of Indigenous populations is significantly different from populations in the US or Europe, for example. Secondly, traditional practices and values are not included in those measures, and they are fundamental to the lives of Indigenous peoples. Therefore, these scales only access a narrow portion of the complexity of Indigenous life. Finally, by simply applying a scale that is not culturally sensitive, one might be reenacting the history of cultural oppression and colonialism. In this workshop, we will explore the research findings on WB/QOL of Indigenous peoples. We will focus on methodological strategies to develop (or adapt when possible) measures to adequately capture WB/QOL, from qualitative approaches to conceptualize it, to modern psychometric strategies to validate its measurement properties.

Stéphane Dandeneau - Cultural and Community Approaches to Resilience

Until recently, the concept of "resilience" was conceptualized and studied at an individual level. However, many of our "individual" characteristics and traits stem from social-ecological sources such as our community, our cultural beliefs and worldviews, and the context and times in which we currently live. Our constant interaction with our social-ecology greatly shapes who we are and how we think. To fully understand and appreciate the resilience process in which a person or a group is engaged, we must consider their past, current, and future social ecologies. This presentation will share different approaches to trying to understand the cultural and community

sources of resilience. It will present methodological options for investigating social-ecological resilience. Finally, ways of sharing resilience through the different knowledge translation mediums used in the Stories of Resilience Project will be presented.

Arlene Laliberté - Empowerment Evaluation

Empowerment evaluation is a form of collaborative evaluation, in which the program stakeholders take an active and engaged role in the evaluation process, guided by the evaluator who acts as a facilitator. In addition to making the evaluation results more useful and relevant to the organisation, the advantages of empowerment evaluations include capacity building, self-determination, enhanced cohesion among program staff, accountability, and integrating evaluation in the organizational routine. In the context of First Nations communities, in which disenfranchisement and “top-down” programs imposed on communities and organizations are a common occurrence, these advantages can be particularly interesting. This presentation will describe collaborative evaluations and highlight the specificities of empowerment evaluation and its steps. We will discuss tailoring evaluations, and the advantages, inconveniences and challenges of empowerment evaluation.

Sarah Fraser - Empowerment in Action Research

Action research is a type of socially-motivated research with a methodological approach oriented towards social justice, reduction of social inequalities, empowerment and action. CBPR (community-based participatory research) has been used with success in First Nation and Inuit communities as a way of decolonising research. Questions surrounding governance and empowerment are particularly important in Aboriginal health research where these issues have been directly associated with indicators of well-being in Aboriginal communities. Adopting various theories, including systemic theories and theories of intergenerational trauma, we will explore the complex dynamics of empowerment and disempowerment, dependence and independence that can take place in action research. We will reflect upon the role of research and the research methods that can improve Aboriginal governance and empowerment in Aboriginal health research.

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Best wishes,
Sophie Gee

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