



Creative, Strengths-Based Approaches to Knowledge Translation Within Indigenous Health Research

“If a research project aims to build capacity and ensure participants retain ownership of their data, creating dissemination and knowledge translation (KT) products that are not presented in a way that is accessible for participants undermines the intent of the process” (p. 64).

1. What is the research about?

This article explores key steps that can be taken to establish a strengths-based approach to knowledge translation within Indigenous communities. **Knowledge translation** refers to the process of sharing research findings with a wider audience through a variety of accessible and relevant resources, such as factsheets, reports, posters, and podcasts. A strengths-based approach to knowledge translation is built on principles of **reciprocity, respect, relevance, responsibility, and reverence**. Considering the long history of deficits-based practices, policies, and research in Indigenous communities, a strengths-based approach can allow organizations to share findings in an ethical and responsive way.

2. Where did the research take place?

The research took place within Indigenous communities in Manitoba, Canada.

3. Who is this research about?

Study participants included Indigenous youth and adults.

4. How was the research done?

The authors drew on their research experiences to develop **seven key considerations** to inform the creation of beneficial and relevant knowledge translation resources:

- i) Can the community easily make copies of the resource?
- ii) Are there aspects of the resource that do not require any written literacy skills?
- iii) Is there a component of the message that is strengths-based and hopeful?
- iv) Is the resource interactive?
- v) Has the knowledge from participants and/or communities been acknowledged?
- vi) Is there an active learning component that goes beyond encounters with the research team?
- vii) Has the resource been returned to the community quickly (in under six weeks)?

In this article, the authors describe how they applied these seven key considerations during the course of **two studies** that examined community-identified priorities within Indigenous communities. The first study (2009-2010) used **focus groups** to understand participants' trust and confidence in public health recommendations during the H1N1 pandemic. In the second study (2015-2016), **participant-driven workshops** explored what female caregivers needed to be happy, healthy, and safe within their communities.

In each study, following data collection, participants were **invited to contribute to the development of knowledge translation resources** as community partners and stakeholders. They provided information on the age range, gender, and geographic reach that resources should target.

5. What are the key findings?

The research team developed three resources to translate the findings of the two studies:

- **activity sheets**, which provided a low literacy activity (word searches), and a visual guide for discussions on influenza prevention (colouring pages);
- **a board game**, which encouraged health promotion practices, while recognizing and validating Indigenous culture and knowledge; and
- **a non-fiction storybook with photographs**, which aimed to improve mental health outcomes through the promotion of healthy relationships.

The activity sheets were created for all members of the community; the board game and storybook were developed to support caregivers in sharing knowledge with children.

These resources were **strengths-based, responsive to community-identified priorities, and informed by the seven key considerations outlined above**. The relevance of the resources was documented through informal responses and requests for additional copies (i.e., participants sought copies in order to continue to share the findings within their families and communities). When appropriate, health professionals assessed the health messages in the resources to ensure accuracy.

6. Why does it matter for youth work?

Programs that work with Indigenous youth can use the seven key considerations to ensure that research and evaluation findings are translated in relevant and beneficial ways. Knowledge translation resources developed for Indigenous communities should **be informed by a strengths-based approach, responsive to community priorities, and incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing**.

Given that researchers have earned a reputation as unethical and untrustworthy within Indigenous communities, it is important to find ways to **foster trust and respect**.

Organizations should ensure that research findings and knowledge translation resources are **shared with participants in a timely manner** (within two and six weeks, respectively).



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