

The Role of Self-Determination in Health and Wellness: A qualitative study with Indigenous youth health leaders across Canada

Rachel Thorburn, Jeffrey Ansloos, Samantha McCormick, Deanna Zantingh

Article Info

Keywords

Self determination
Wellness
Spirituality
Indigenous health
Indigenous healing
Youth mental health

Abstract

This work centers the voices of Indigenous young people to explore how they are defining and enacting self-determination, and how these expressions of self-determination influence the wellness of these young people and their communities. Thematic analysis was used to analyze 15 interviews with Indigenous young people about how they understood wellness in the context of their community work. Interview transcripts were analyzed to understand how young people conceptualized and enacted self-determination and its relationship to wellness, and to identify underlying connections to Indigenous self-determination theory. Results indicate that Indigenous young people define and enact self-determination through traditional healing and embracing cultural wellness practices; through sharing lived experience and meeting people where they are at; and through community inclusion and intuitive practice. Implications for researchers, policymakers, and care providers who work with Indigenous young people are considered.

Author Info

Rachel Thorburn, University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,
Email: rachel.thorburn@mail.utoronto.ca

Dr. Jeffrey Ansloos, University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Samantha McCormick, University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Deanna Zantingh, University of Toronto, University of St Michael's College

<https://doi.org/10.32799/ijih.v18i2.39519>

©2023 The Authors. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Introduction

In academic discourse, Indigenous young people have historically been positioned as the passive recipients of mental health programs and services designed and delivered through centralized state decision-making processes, and furthermore are framed as being ill and vulnerable (Kirmayer et al., 2003). Not only has this been the historically dominant narrative, but it continues to be commonplace in mainstream psychology research today, as seen in research that centers the high prevalence of mental health problems in this population (e.g. Cushon et al., 2016; Hop Wo et al., 2020; Kidd et al., 2019; Whitbeck et al., 2014; Pollock et al., 2016). Heavy focus on these prevalence rates results in calls for more mental health interventions to ‘help’ Indigenous young people. These interventions often utilize Western mental health models that focus on the alleviation of illness (Marsh, 2010). Nonetheless, Indigenous young people across Canada are active in initiating their own Indigenous wellness movements and advocating for health, for themselves, their communities, and the planet (e.g. Ansloos & Dent, 2021; Glauser et al, 2020; Hatala et al., 2020).

Emerging Indigenous health research positions Indigenous young people as experts in their own experiences. One method used in this research is qualitative interviewing, which centers youth voices and perspectives (e.g. Ansloos & Dent, 2021; Clark et al., 2013; Hatala et al., 2020; Lines et al, 2009; Petrusek MacDonald, 2012). Another method called community-based participatory action research involves Indigenous communities in every step of the research process (e.g., Glauser et al, 2020; Kral, 2011, 2012; Swampy Cree Suicide Prevention Team, 2010; Young et al, 2013; 2017). These studies reveal that Indigenous young people have their own rich understandings of wellness that do not always align with Western ideas. For example, young people in these studies highlight the impacts of colonization on wellbeing, the multidimensions and holistic nature of health, and the healing impact of increased autonomy in Indigenous communities. These studies also highlight the persistent challenge of political unresponsiveness to include youth and to center young people’s solutions in scaled up efforts to promote health, especially those already effectively working in Indigenous communities. Research that “moves beyond the performativity of allyship” and advances “redistributions of the power and resources” is needed (Ansloos et al., 2021 p. 100) to elucidate the active and self-determining ways that youth hold and build power for health transformation. Put differently, self-determination should be a primary focus of Indigenous youth health research.

Within Indigenous studies, there are many conceptualizations of Indigenous self-determination, and how it can be or should be enacted. Some emphasize creating an equitable relationship with the state (e.g., Murphy, 2008). This viewpoint emphasizes repairing relationships with settlers and building new Indigenous-settler relationships based on equality and mutual respect. In the context of health services, this often takes shape as a focus on Indigenization efforts, which seek to integrate Indigenous knowledges within reforms of mainstream state-based or funded systems. Others call for a focus away from state mediated relationships, instead centering the radical resurgence of Indigenous nationhood at both individual and community levels (e.g., Simpson, 2017). While often described at the level of the collective, radical resurgence at the individual level can play out in the intimate spaces of life, and through grounding one’s own practices, projects, and relationships in the normativity of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing; enacting what decolonization means in day-to-day life (Simpson, 2017). This can include engagement and immersion in one’s own nation-based cultural, linguistic, political, social, and legal orders, such as learning languages, renewing ceremonies, or reclaiming birthing and parenting rituals. While both approaches characterized here are theories of change that are important to Indigenous peoples, there tends to be a greater emphasis on the former in the context of youth health and wellness. Exploring how non-state mediated, grounded practices of self-determination enhance or constitute the work of Indigenous youth wellness, is an important area of necessary research; it is even more critical to ensure that youth themselves are shaping

knowledge of what self-determination means to them, and its connection to wellness. The current study responds to these issues, centering the voices of Indigenous young people to explore how they are defining and enacting self-determination, and how these expressions of self-determination impact the health and wellness of these young people and their communities.

Methods

The research presented here draws on a selection of interview data from a broader program of research led by the second author, entitled *Manitou2Manidoo*, which is an Indigenous youth engaged study aimed at understanding how Indigenous youth community and health activists theorize, practice, and mobilize knowledges of health, wellness, culture, spirituality, and healing. Participants in this study were identified as leaders in their communities and as important knowledge holders in their understanding of health. This research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council through the Canada Research Chairs program, and all aspects of the research, including the analysis in the study presented here were approved by an institutional research ethics board and an Indigenous research advisory group.

The data presented in the current study draws on interview transcripts with fifteen Indigenous youth ages 18-35, from across Canada who work within the context of mental health, wellness, and life promotion in various leadership roles and capacities within community organizing contexts. These semi-structured interviews were conducted over video from November 2019 to May 2020 by the second author, as well as by a team of researchers under his supervision, including the last author. Young people in this study were recruited through network sampling, meaning young people were recruited through other study participants or community contacts (Lavrakas, 2008). Network sampling was suitable because it helped establish rapport between the participant and the researcher through their mutual contacts. Young people in this study were given the option of either being named in future publications or using a pseudonym.

During data analysis of this project, the research team identified self-determination as a prominent underlying topic that merited further exploration. As such, our research question was as follows: *How are Indigenous youth leaders describing and enacting self-determination in their work with Indigenous youth health?* This question was explored in analysis for underlying themes about self-determination. For the full list of interview questions, see Appendix A.

Data Analysis

The research team consists of a diverse group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. The first author is a queer white settler and long-time youth wellness activist. Of the remaining three authors, two are Indigenous, and all three have a long history of working alongside Indigenous communities to support community-driven wellness initiatives. The research team engaged in weekly group self-reflections on their worldviews and social positions, and how they affected their perspectives in the coding process.

The authors used Braun & Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis to analyze the data and identify themes related to our research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nvivo software was used to code the data, guided by Braun & Clarke's (2006) six stages: familiarization, generation, searching, reviewing, defining, and producing. The final codes were shared with the entire research team to ensure the codes and corresponding quotes aligned with the team's collective understandings of self-determination. To ensure youth voices were being accurately understood and reflected upon,

analysis was sent to the young people in this study for feedback. Young people were asked to confirm that their statements were fairly and accurately interpreted. If a young person in the study disagreed with how their ideas were being used, the results were edited to reflect the participant's intentions more accurately.

Results

During analysis, three major themes were identified which speak to how Indigenous youth enact self-determination in relationship to health and wellbeing, and the impact of these expressions of self-determination on them and their community. The three major themes are: (1) self-determination through traditional healing and embracing cultural wellness practices, (2) self-determination through sharing lived experience and meeting people where they are at, and (3) self-determination through community inclusion and intuitive practice.

Self-determination through traditional healing and embracing cultural wellness practices

Young people in this study described self-determination occurring through intentional (re)connection to their traditional healing and cultural practices, and that this was a critical part of nurturing mental health and wellness. Various young people spoke to the process of revitalizing relationship to cultural ceremonies and community practices. As one participant Carrington explains, reconnecting with ceremony, culture and community are intertwined with healing from the alienating cultural impacts of colonization:

In the 1800's when the government passed the law to, uh, outlaw practicing religious ceremonies and dances, they say that's when our spirit died because people no longer had coping mechanisms for all of the things that were going on. . . And you do see spirit being restored back to people when they have access to their culture. When they're able to learn about their traditions and their language and meet with like elders and different community members.

Many young people in this study described the specific importance of diverse pathways to learning about and engaging in cultural healing practices. They also described how regular embodied practices of culture through ceremony were an important means of healing and wellness promotion, such as for Matthew:

I'm used to, at least once a month, doing a sweat ceremony. I smudge every morning, every night anyways by myself, but I'm used to being able to sweat with an elder at least once a week, and then usually about once every two weeks, I will get a cedar bath from my grandmother or one of my aunts.

For many young people in our study, the decision to engage in these practices required confronting the dispossessive impacts of colonization, and by engaging in ceremonies and cultural activities that are meaningful to them, this in turn promoted their sense of wellbeing. As such, Indigenous youth are enacting self-determination by reclaiming cultural and community practices, and contextualizing these in the ways that make sense for them in their everyday lives.

Self-determination through sharing lived experience and meeting people where they are at

Young people in this study highlighted the ways that sharing personal and cultural wisdom from their own life experiences with other young people is a vital component to youth wellness promotion. Young people identified the ways in which other young people could find healing through the sharing of their own stories and knowledges. As Jenna describes:

Um, so those are all tools, and I love sharing those things with the youth and just kinda making them cool. Bringing back like the cool factor of, you know, banging on the drum. Or speaking the language. Uh, so that's something I really appreciate from the youth when they-they do those things and they bring those things, and then, um, it's extra special when... they make a connection because you can almost feel... the trauma that they carry just kind of lifts up a little bit.

Here, Jenna describes being able to provide modelling and inspiration by sharing her cultural practices with other Indigenous youth. By acknowledging each other as Indigenous and lifting each other up, both the young people in this study and the youth they work with benefit from positive cultural recognition and affirmation. Additionally, by encouraging each other to find ways to express their Indigeneity and sharing cultural lifeways, reciprocal recognition encourages the spread of radical resurgence through everyday acts of cultural reclamation and self-determination.

At the same time, young people in the study also highlighted the importance of balance and a commitment to non-coercive healing practices. Youth emphasized that sharing must be tethered to insight about what people need, and to understand this, it is important to listen. As Dallas describes:

Ultimately, it's not my position to tell them why they're in that situation. Going back to a specific lesson, the act of non-interference, I can only hopefully help them get out of the current situation that they're in, but I ultimately have to allow them to figure it out for themselves... We all have a life to live, and that's their journey. I can only provide some assistance to a certain extent... The approach that I have kind of taken, is that it's not up to me to define how communities or how people are going to heal. They're going to essentially find their own way of healing, their own way of coping.

Dallas demonstrates how young people in this study position themselves as peer guides and describe their role as supporting young people towards discovering what self-determined wellness means to them through sharing and honouring different journeys. This is markedly different from traditional ideas about mental health care, where mental health professionals are considered the knowledge holders of coping skills for emotional wellness, and youth are expected to learn these skills from them. Instead, young people in this study described helping youth find those tools for wellness themselves.

Self-determination through community inclusion and intuitive practice

Young people in this study, many of whom work both inside and outside of mainstream health programming, spoke consistently about the need to approach youth wellness through a lens of community inclusion. Community inclusion ensures that both a wide range of people with diverse lived experiences and vital cultural knowledges are present. While acknowledging that often programs designed to engage with youth are often age-specific, young people highlighted that self-determination in Indigenous youth wellness includes involving community members of many ages. As Heather explains,

One of the challenges sometimes that comes with that is connecting our academic selves to more of our spiritual or cultural selves. With that food project, one of the things that we've tried to do a lot is involve elders and community knowledge holders in grounding things in some of our... spiritual understanding.

Other young people spoke about the importance of community inclusion by speaking to leadership structures run by and for Indigenous youth, in order to center youth voice in a way that other types of spaces simply cannot. Thea shares the effects of having a completely Indigenous youth leadership team:

I find that the way in which I'm able to kind of run some of these things is the way that feels good to me...not actually having to, um, abide by certain rules that don't make any sense...the way in which I do it is-is based on how I connect to it and what I think other people will connect to... this sort of intuitive way of working that starts to resonate with a lot of people, and a lot of young people, specifically because... there's this connection.

Thea shares the power of being able to work in a way that is completely self-determined and fully Indigenous, without the need for approval or input from non-Indigenous people. Here Thea also speaks to a dynamic of intuitive practice, which others spoke to as well. Inclusion makes visible how Indigenous young people, when provided with space to lead, have profound intuition as to how to incorporate key values, goals, and creative solutions.

Discussion

Our study reiterates the importance of young people's active role in shaping approaches to support youth wellbeing, as well as demonstrates their own self-determination in creating wellness for themselves and their communities. This work aims to center Indigenous youth voices to explore how Indigenous youth leaders are defining and enacting self-determination, and the impact of these approaches for youth and their communities. Collectively, these findings resonate with the existing research literature and expand it in several important ways.

Firstly, young people in this work build on existing literature by emphasizing that connection to culture is a critical part of wellbeing for Indigenous young people. For example, engagement with one's Indigenous culture is a common youth-cited determinant of wellness (Clark et al., 2013; Hatala et al., 2020; Isaak et al., 2020; Kooiman et al., 2012). Importantly, our study echoes Clark et al. (2013)'s research with Indigenous youth in Kamloops, B.C., which focused on understanding health needs. Similar to their study, many young people in our study indicated that traditional healing and cultural practices, or what Clark et al. (2013) call "culture-based spirituality" (p. 46) had a major influence on health. They used Indigenous healing approaches that were important to them for their health (Clark et al., 2013).

Young people in this study also build on existing literature through identifying colonialism and the resulting cultural disconnect as the cause of a lack of wellness. Within Indigenous Psychology scholarship, wellness challenges are commonly recognized as rooted in colonial trauma (e.g., Ansloos, 2018; Beltran & Begun, 2014; Duran & Duran, 1995; Lawson-Te Aho, 2014). Duran & Duran (1995) describe colonial trauma passed on through generations as a "soul wound", which emphasizes the spiritual harm to the soul of communities caused by colonial violence and cultural disconnect. Similarly, Ansloos (2018) has conceptualized the impact of colonization as producing alienation to the normativity of Indigenous knowledges of health and social relations, making autonomous and self-determining revitalization of culture profoundly healing. In our study's reflection on this, youth

people help us to recognize the salient, empowering, and socioemotionally reparative work of cultural resurgence.

Young people in this study also described using Indigenous traditional healing and cultural practices to maintain their wellness, such as smudging, cedar baths, and sweat ceremonies, among many others. In Indigenous health research, reconstituting connection to other Indigenous peoples and reconnecting to Indigenous culture is framed diversely. Some of these diverse framings include cultural literacy, connection, or continuity. When viewed together, these cultural practices are recognized in the current literature as youth wellness practices supportive of mental health. (Beltran & Begun, 2014; Lewis, 2014; Liu, 2015, Te Huia, 2014). Simpson (2014) outlines how small acts of everyday reclamation, such as learning one's language, connecting to community, or practicing cultural traditions add up to powerful acts of Indigenous resurgence.

The young people in this study also emphasized the importance of sharing their cultural knowledge and lived experiences with other youth. In some senses, our findings resonate with storywork traditions within many Indigenous cultures (Archibald et al., 2019), where the act of sharing helps with "meaning-making and worldmaking" and to "teach, heal, restore, remember, and resist" (Ranco & Haverkamp, 2022, p. 25). Our findings here speak to the ways that through sharing, young people in this study pass on "reciprocal recognition" described by Simpson (2014). Reciprocal recognition starts with the self (Simpson, 2014, p. 181). Simpson encourages Indigenous peoples to ask themselves how they are living as Indigenous, how they are contributing to resurgence, and how they are ensuring that their Indigenous practices will be passed on. She asks them not only to look inward but to think about how they are reflecting these values outward to others. When someone is attempting to mirror this positive sense of Indigeneity, something beautiful begins to happen in their relationships with other Indigenous peoples:

Part of being in a meaningful relationship with another being is recognizing who they are, it is reflecting back to them their essence and worth as a being, it is a mirroring. Positive mirroring creates positive identities; it creates strong, grounded individuals and families and nations within Indigenous political systems. (Simpson, 2014, p. 181).

By acknowledging each other and lifting each other up, both the young people in this study and the youth they work with benefit from positive cultural recognition and affirmation. Additionally, by encouraging each other's healing journeys and sharing of cultural lifeways, reciprocal recognition encourages community. At the same time, our findings also emphasize the importance of supporting young people to discover what self-determined wellness means to them, rather than imposing specific methods of healing inflexibly. Honoring each young person's individual journey and choices is described as a key part of the process, with the young people in this study sharing their own journeys while supporting the unique paths of those with whom they work. This echoes the call for care providers to position themselves as "a helper and learner" (Tuck et al., 2022, p. 153) when visiting and/or sharing journeys with young people.

Turning towards theories of change, the young people in this study describe going beyond sharing their own wellness practices and moving towards creating inclusive spaces by and for Indigenous youth and community, with the aim of promoting wellbeing and a positive sense of identity. This is akin to what Chandler and Lalonde (2008) described as cultural continuity, a protective factor anchored in Indigenous community leadership and self-governance. This type of organizing is built through the radical acts of individuals and their relationships with one another, but goes further to create something bigger that Simpson refers to as "constellations of coresistance" (Simpson, 2014, p. 211). The efforts of the young people in this study create sites of Indigenous resurgence that foster, honor, and protect Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Finally, our study highlights the neglected domain of intuitive practice in addressing youth health and wellness. This perspective calls to mind Murphy's assertion that Indigenous self-determination

calls for a relational strategy, which includes re-negotiating relationships with settlers and the state while centering Indigenous ways of working (Murphy, 2008; Murphy, 2019). In this context, Murphy's re-negotiation and centering of knowledges is applied to health promotion. In addition to decolonizing existing spaces, young people in this study describe creating their own spaces, characterized by the freedom to express themselves, experiment, and act upon their own ideas, innovations, and values.

In summary, Indigenous youth wellness cannot exist without self-determination happening in tandem. As highlighted by the youth, historical and continuing colonialism are at the heart of Indigenous youth suffering. For this reason, reclaiming cultural practices is critical to restoring wellness. By creating spaces for Indigenous wellbeing, Indigenous youth are both promoting wellness and laying the foundations for the future of Indigenous sovereignty.

Limitations

One issue that arose during analysis was that many of the concepts discussed by young people in this study were tightly interconnected. This made it difficult to sort them into discrete categories. For example, wellness, culture, identity, and spirit were often talked about together, sometimes interchangeably. However, every young person in this study understood these connections slightly differently. Ultimately, we were able to sort and structure these concepts in a clear way, but it is possible that some of the connections between these concepts were lost in the process. This issue may be inherent to filterering Indigenous knowledges to be understood in a colonial academic context. Ironically, this echoes the assertion of young people in this study that there is only so much decolonizing that can be done in an inherently colonial system. Another limitation of the work is that the young people in this study were not asked directly about self-determination. While a prominent focus of their conversations, the connections made between the interview content and self-determination were mostly identified during analysis. If they had been asked directly, it is possible that young people in this study would have given more information, or different information, about how their actions could be understood as enactments of Indigenous resurgence. Through member checking, the young people in this study did have a chance to confirm or modify the connections being made between their ideas and self-determination.

Conclusion

This work challenges the positioning of Indigenous youth as passive recipients of mental health care. Instead, it explores how Indigenous youth take an active role in their own wellbeing and that of their communities. From using their own coping strategies grounded in Indigenous conceptualizations of wellness, to creating their own wellness movements, to making colonial spaces more livable for others, these young people are taking wellness into their own hands. Through understanding, acknowledging, and supporting the autonomy of these youth, we can help promote Indigenous youth wellness.

The implication of this work for researchers, policymakers, and mental health professionals is that Indigenous youth perceive self-determination to be critical to their wellbeing. Any solution to improve Indigenous youth wellbeing must be grounded in the community's conceptualizations of wellness and led by young people and their communities. Adults and settlers should consider positioning themselves as advocates of Indigenous youth autonomy and support Indigenous young people as they find their own path to wellbeing.

References

- Aho, K. L. -T. (2014). The healing is in the pain: Revisiting and re-narrating trauma histories as a starting point for healing. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 26(2):181–212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971333614549139>.
- Ansloos, J. (2018). Rethinking Indigenous suicide. *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 13(2):8–28. <https://doi.org/10.32799/ijih.v13i2.32061>.
- Ansloos, J. and Dent, E. (2021). "Our spirit is like a fire": Conceptualizing intersections of mental health, wellness, and spirituality with Indigenous youth leaders across Canada. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, 10(2). <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/jisd/article/view/72562>.
- Ansloos, J., Zantingh, D., Ward, K., McCormick, S., and Siri wattakanon, C. B. (2021). Radical care and decolonial futures: Conversations on identity, health and spirituality with Indigenous queer, trans, and two-spirit youth. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 12(3–4):3–4. <https://doi.org/10.18357/ijcyfs123-4202120340>.
- Archibald, J., Lee-Morgan, J., and Santolo, J. (2019). *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*. Zed Books, London.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2):77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.
- Chandler, M. and Lalonde, C. (2008). Cultural continuity as a protective factor against suicide in First Nations youth. *Horizons*, 10.
- Clark, N., Walton, P., Drolet, J., Tribute, T., Jules, G., Main, T., and Arnouse, M. (2013). Melq'ilwiye: Coming together — intersections of identity, culture, and health for urban Aboriginal youth. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 45(2):36–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/084456211304500208>.
- Cushon, J., Waldner, C., Scott, C., and Neudorf, C. (2016). Planning adolescent mental health promotion programming in Saskatoon. *Journal of School Health*, 86(8):578–584. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12410>.
- Glauser, W. (2020). Indigenous youth co-develop a new way to measure their health. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 192(12):327–328. <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.1095854>.
- Hatala, A. R., Njeze, C., Morton, D., Pearl, T., and Bird-Naytowhow, K. (2020). Land and nature as sources of health and resilience among Indigenous youth in an urban Canadian context: A photovoice exploration. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1):538. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-08647-z>.
- Hop Wo, N. K., Anderson, K. K., Wylie, L., and MacDougall, A. (2020). The prevalence of distress, depression, anxiety, and substance use issues among Indigenous post-secondary students in Canada. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 57(2):263–274. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461519861824>.
- Huia, A. T. (2014). Indigenous culture and society: Creating space for Indigenous Māori cultural and linguistic development within a discriminatory post-colonial society. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 26(2):233–261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971333614549142>.
- Kidd, S. A., Thistle, J., Beaulieu, T., O'Grady, B., and Gaetz, S. (2019). A national study of Indigenous youth homelessness in Canada. *Public Health*, 176:163–171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2018.06.012>.
- Kirmayer, L., Simpson, C., and Cargo, M. (2003). Healing traditions: Culture, community and mental health promotion with Canadian Aboriginal peoples. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 11:15–23. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1038-5282.2003.02010.x>.
- Kooiman, H., Macdonald, M. E., Carnevale, F., Pineda, C., Nottaway, W., and Vignola, S. (n.d.).

- Minododazin: Translating an Algonquin tradition of respect into youth well-being in Rapid Lake. *Quebec*, 16.
- Kral, M. (2012). Postcolonial suicide among Inuit in Arctic Canada. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, 36(2):306–325. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11013-012-9253-3>.
- Kral, M. J., Idlout, L., Minore, J. B., Dyck, R. J., and Kirmayer, L. J. (2011). Unikkaar-tuit: Meanings of well-being, unhappiness, health, and community change among Inuit in Nunavut, Canada. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 48(3–4):426–438. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-011-9431-4>.
- Lavrakas, P. (2008). *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods*. Sage Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963947>.
- Liu, J. H., Aho, K. L.-T., Rata, A. (2014). Constructing identity spaces for First Nations people: Towards an Indigenous psychology of self-determination and cultural healing. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 26(2):143–153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971333614549136>.
- Marsh, I. (2010). *Suicide: Foucault, history and truth*. Cambridge University Press. pp. xii, 251).
- Murphy, M. (2008). Representing Indigenous self-determination. *University of Toronto Law Journal*, 58(2):185–216. <https://doi.org/10.3138/utlj.58.2.185>.
- Murphy, M. A. (2019). Indigenous peoples and the struggle for self determination. *Canadian Journal for Human Rights*, 8(1):67.
- Petrasek MacDonald, J., Cunsolo Willox, A., Ford, J. D., Shiwak, I., and Wood, M. (2015). Protective factors for mental health and well-being in a changing climate: Perspectives from Inuit youth in Nunatsiavut. *Labrador. Social Science Medicine*, 141:133–141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.07.017>.
- Pollock, N. J., Mulay, S., Valcour, J., and Jong, M. (2016). Suicide rates in aboriginal communities in labrador, canada. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(7):1309–1315. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303151>.
- Ranco, D. and Haverkamp, J. (2022). Storying indigenous (life)worlds: An introduction. *Genealogy*, 6(2):25. Retrieved from.
- Simpson, L. B. (2017). *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt77c>.
- Swampy Cree Suicide Prevention Team*, Isaak, C. A., Campeau, M., Katz, L. Y., Enns, M. W., Elias, B., Sareen, J. (2010). Community-based suicide prevention research in remote on-reserve First Nations communities. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 8(2):258–270. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-009-9250-0>.
- Tuck, E., Stepetin, H., Beaulne-Stuebing, R., and Billows, J. (2022). Visiting as an Indigenous feminist practice. *Gender and Education*, 0(0):1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2022.2078796>.
- Whitbeck, L. B., Sittner Hartshorn, K. J., Crawford, D. M., Walls, M. L., Gentzler, K. C., and Hoyt, D. R. (2014). Mental and substance use disorders from early adolescence to young adulthood among Indigenous young people: Final diagnostic results from an 8-year panel study. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 49(6):961–973. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-014-0825-0>.
- Yellowknives Dene First Nation Wellness Division, Lines, L. -A., Jardine, C. G. (2019). Connection to the land as a youth-identified social determinant of Indigenous Peoples' health. *BMC Public Health*, 19(1):176. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-6383-8>.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

- Where does your understanding of spirit come from? What informs your theorization of spirit?
- Can you explain your understanding of spirit?
- What does this understanding of spirit mean to you?
- What does vitality and well-being mean to you or how would you define vitality and livability? How do you envision, if you do, vitality and livability for yourself, family and community?
- Has your belief in and conceptualization of spirit increased your sense of vitality and livability? If yes, in what way and if no, how come?
- How has your understanding of spirit influenced your own work/practice in communities?
- Do you perceive or believe there is an intersection between spirit and Indigenous youth wellness? And if yes or no, can you explain how or why not?
- What has your experience been in supporting Indigenous youth wellness?
- What opportunities do theorization of spirit present for Indigenous youth wellness? What are the challenges for Indigenous youth wellness?