Educating Minds. Improving Health.
Part 3:
THE CONCEPT OF HEALTH AND HEALING AMONG ABORIGINAL PEOPLES
Western paradigm

• *Western paradigm* (in a health context): the dominant cultural attitudes and beliefs that are based on Western European philosophies and practices (culture) that inform health/mental health approaches and training in North America that are based on individual psychology *(Lamarche, 1995).*

➢ In Canada, the dominant paradigm is known as the western paradigm because it is based on Western culture *(Lamarche, 1995).*
Indigenous health: balance and harmony between and within the four aspects of a person’s nature, which are mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional.

(Blue & Darou, 2005, Mussell, Nichols, & Adler, 1993).
Spectrum of worldviews

**Indigenous paradigm**
- Collectivist orientation
- Non linear perspective
- Time orientation (general)
- Oneness with nature
- Holistic: spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual
- Health/wellness focus

**Western paradigm**
- Individualist orientation
- Linear perspective
- Time orientation (specific)
- Humans against nature; hierarchical
- Dualism: Cartesian split
- Illness/disease focus

(Duran, 2006)
Empowerment & Health Improvement

• Strengthening ethnocultural identity, community integration and political empowerment can contribute to improving mental health among Aboriginal peoples. 
  (Kirmayer, 2003)

• ‘Cultural Continuity' is a protective factor for health issues among Aboriginal people.
  – Cultural continuity exists when individuals have an understanding of their place in a particular cultural history and they feel connected with the culture.
  – This connection creates an opportunity for individuals to contribute to the future of the culture.
  
  (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998)
Cultural Continuity

• A 1998 study looking at youth suicide within Aboriginal communities in British Colombia found **cultural continuity** to be a protective factor against suicide (Chandler & Lalonde).

  – Some communities suffer from youth suicide rates 500-800 times the national average

  – However, communities with higher levels of Band-controlled education and health, self-government and resolved land claims had dramatically reduced rates of suicide

  • Self-government: 85% reduction in relative risk of suicide; land claims: 41%; education: 52%; health 29%.
Culturally Sensitive Programs Needed to Enhance Health

• Spiritual Programs:
  – Sweat Lodge,
  – Shaking Tent
  – Full Moon Ceremony
  – Naming Ceremony
  – Clan Feasts
  – Pipe Ceremony
  – Vision Quests
  – Smudging
  – Traditional Teachings
  – Cultural Workshops
Historical Perspectives:

PRESETTLER CARE

MEDICINE CHEST

SUCCESSIONAL EVOLUTION:

• TREATY DAY
• VISITING NURSE
• ISOLATION HOSPITAL
Issues with health care:

LIMITED ACCESSIBILITY:
- GEOGRAPHY
- URBAN ACCESS

HUMAN RESOURCES:
- QUANTITY
- QUALITY
- ISOLATION
- CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
Problems with Health Care in Remote Centers

LACK OF SERVICES:

- Support services
- Chronic care
- After care
- Extended care
- Mental health care
- Dental care
- Chiropractic care

LACK OF CONTROL
Issues in Urban Centres:

- Cross-cultural communication
- Stereotyping
- Jurisdictional disputes
- Discrimination
- Equity
- Boundaries
What can health care professionals do?
Recall: Understanding Your Patient

- Psychosocial situation of patients
- Social determinants of health
- Cultural beliefs and health practices
- Historical-political context
- Religious and spiritual beliefs
- Previous health care experiences of the patient
Understanding Yourself

- Provider’s value system
- Religious beliefs
- Social class
- Ability to empathize
- Learning to listen
- Good interpersonal skills leading to teamwork
- Willingness to answer all of patient’s questions
Concluding remarks
Recall: Cultural Safety

Improved Health Outcomes through Cultural Safety

Cultural Awareness: Acknowledgement of difference

Cultural Sensitivity: Attitude change; respecting difference

Cultural Safety: Self-reflection, leading to empathy & advocacy for clients

Cultural Competence: Skills, knowledge & attitudes
Empathic Communication Results In:

- Patient-centered communication
  - Builds trusting relationship
  - Patient becomes a partner in health care
  - Better patient adherence to therapeutic plan
  - Better patient health outcomes
  - Improved overall health
• The recent election voted in the highest number of Aboriginal Members of Parliament in Canada’s history (7 MP’s across Canada)

• More Aboriginal people are obtaining post-secondary education than ever before:
  – The number of young Aboriginal adults who completed college education increased from 15% in 1986 to 20% in 1996
  – The percentage of those with a degree doubled from 2% to 4%
  – The proportion of young Aboriginal people with less than a high school diploma fell from 60% to 45%

• There are currently over 200 Aboriginal medical doctors across Canada & graduation rates continue to rise
Support for Students:

• What do I do with this information?
Questions:

• How would you apply or use this information in your career & life?

• What does your organization do to improve cultural safety for Aboriginal clients/patients?
  – How could you contribute to this?
Local community resources:
Miigewech!
Thank you!
Nia:wen!
Merci!
Kinana’skomitin!
Mahsi cho!
For more information, consult the reading list provided by your Preceptor.