

2022 INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

Healing the wounded spirit: A journey into Canada's justice system

Angelina Heer, Sucker Creek First Nation
University of New Brunswick, MEd Counselling



Introduction

Despite efforts to decrease the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian justice system, the issue persists (Zinger, 2018). Although the reasons for this are multi-faceted, it has been identified that there is a lack of research on the resources available for Indigenous offenders as they reintegrate back into the community, the obstacles they face and the support that they need (Griffiths et al., 2007; Howell, 2016).

Purpose

To identify workable and meaningful programs that can guide participants in their journey of healing.

Methods

This qualitative study will use semi-structured interviews to facilitate the sharing of stories with up to 15 Indigenous participants released from a federal prison, and who currently reside in New Brunswick. An Indigenous Wholistic Theoretical Orientation using the four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel Model will be used. Stories shared will be transcribed to conduct a thematic analysis. Data will be coded, organized into pre-identified themes, and analyzed for common themes across the four quadrants of the wholistic model. Consistent with Story Work Pedagogy this research will recognize the diversity in Indigenous teachings (Archibald, 2008). Wolastoqi and Mi'kmaw Elders from the local area will be invited to oversee the research process and gather at three different points in the research project - beginning, middle and end.

Significance

There is an identified need for Indigenous healing approaches to be considered in counsellor education and practice (Rowett, 2019). Counsellors have an ethical and social responsibility to increase their competencies when working with Indigenous clients who have different life experiences (CCPA, 2015; TRC of Canada, 2015). This research has the potential to contribute to culturally sensitive counselling practices with Indigenous ex-offenders, and the acquisition of knowledge that may be used by communities to shape the development of future policy. This is a summary of work in progress for the submission of a research ethics proposal.