



**February 2014**

**Hello Everyone!**

This edition of the newsletter describes the current status of the Indigenous Wellness Assessment (IWA) and briefly looks back at its development.

***The Current Status of the IWA***

The purpose of the IWA is to measure wellness from an indigenous perspective in clients involved in culture as an intervention in alcohol and drug treatment in Canada. There are currently two draft forms: A “*self-assessment*” form to be completed by a client and an “*observer*” form to be completed by someone who is knowledgeable about the client’s treatment progress, such as their counselor or an Elder. The draft instrument is balanced with 15-17 questions in each of the four quadrants of the Wellness Framework: The Heart—Belonging, The Spirit—Hope, Mental—Meaning, and Physical—Purpose.

We are preparing to engage with several NNADAP Treatment Centres to help validate the instrument. The idea is for 3-4 Treatment Centres to hold focus groups with 5-10 clients to see if the assessment measures the things that are important to indigenous wellness and whether the concepts make sense to clients. The insights and feedback from clients and facilitators will greatly help us to make any further changes to the IWA before moving into the pilot testing phase with all Treatment Centers, starting in the next few months.

***The Journey to Developing the IWA***

Looking back, a lot of work went into the development of our draft IWA. We used a Two-Eyed Seeing Approach that joins Indigenous and Western knowledge, with the understanding that First Nations knowledge was the foundation of all work and thus was prioritized throughout. We reflected and synthesized findings from our four approaches: 1) Treatment Centre Approach, 2) Indigenous Approach, 3) Western Method Approach, and 4) Scoping Study Approach. The integration helped us to understand that information from all sources was similar in terms of cultural interventions and the concepts of indigenous wellness. Knowing this we were able to move forward with confidence in the development of a draft instrument grounded and prioritized in indigenous knowledge and structured according to our indigenous Wellness Framework.

Please be in touch at any time to share your input and ideas about these or any other aspects of the project going forward by emailing or calling me, Margo Rowan at mar805@mail.usask.ca or 613-841-7520, or Barb Fornssler, at barb.fornssler@usask.ca or 306-966-7894.