



Department of Sociology

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Speaking Notes – Colleen Anne Dell

- I would like to begin by acknowledging the land we are sharing here, the leadership of our Elders and others with us today & thank each of you for this opportunity to briefly share the beginning of our research team's story with you.
- Along with Peter Menzies at the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, Jonathan Thompson at the Assembly of First Nations, Carol Hopkins of the national Native Addictions Partnership Foundation & many other government, academic and community members on our team (in fact, we have 40 in total!) – I am tremendously humbled by and excited for the opportunity we have been given by CIHR and Health Canada to undertake our research.
- Our project reflects several years of building relationships and linkages with other community-directed work, such as the renewal of the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Youth Solvent Addiction programs. While there is discussion in various circles that cultural interventions have a positive impact in helping people deal with their addictions, there is little empirical data to show this. Our team aims to improve health programming for First Nations struggling with addiction by creating understanding about what cultural practices work and measuring how they achieve success.
- Since the inception of our project, we have been guided by the community in all that we undertake. We are honoured to acknowledge the various ways of viewing the world that each member of our team brings with them. This is reflected in CIHR's new Initiative's reference to '2-eyed seeing' (one eye sees with the strength of Indigenous ways of knowing and the other eye sees with Western ways of knowing). This ranges from First Nation Elders, to individuals with lived experience, to academics. This same approach applies to the treatment communities we will be working alongside.
- Carol and I are pleased to be here today for the launch of CIHR's Pathways to Health Equity for Aboriginal Peoples initiative. The approach spoken about today for this initiative is what our team members have experienced in other CIHR-funded projects to have positive impact in the lives of communities and individuals.
- For example, we are releasing a DVD today at the TRC___ which shares the stories of First Nations and Métis in Saskatchewan about the strength of Aboriginal cultural practices in their own healing journeys from addictions, and in ways that are meaningful to them, such as poetry, video and testimonials. Their stories demonstrate how choosing a healthy sense of self as an Aboriginal person is an important element of recovery. It is about knowing who you are and taking pride in that.
- Our team is well aware of the extent and importance of the research task before us. We are most grateful for the confidence our peers have shown in us and the funding that makes this all possible from CIHR and Health Canada.

Honouring Our Strengths: Indigenous Culture as Intervention in Addictions Treatment
Supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research

tinyurl.com/CultureAsInterventionResearch



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Speaking Notes – Carol Hopkins

- Introduction - in Lenape and acknowledgement of the Algonquin peoples
- Mandate for this research comes from the Honouring our Strengths Renewal Framework & the partnerships that supported it
- CIHR and the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples Health have made significant movement towards appreciation of two world views and systems of knowledge development, and therefore a commitment towards research that makes a difference for the health and wellbeing of First Nations
- Our research project is founded on the role of Elders and cultural practitioners and the commitment of treatment centres towards quality service provision
- Although we do not have an evidence base with empirical data for culture, we also do not have an evidence base with empirical data for the use of Western based addictions theory with First Nations people. This is often not recognized.
- This research project is a great opportunity to bring two world views together, in respect, for the benefit of First Nations people...a process of decolonization.
- Through this project we are fulfilling our obligation to the future by leaving a good path for others to follow, through both our research process and the embedding of our findings within a data collection instrument for the national Addictions Management Information System.
- Thank you to CIHR and First Nations and Inuit Health for their courage in supporting this research project.

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