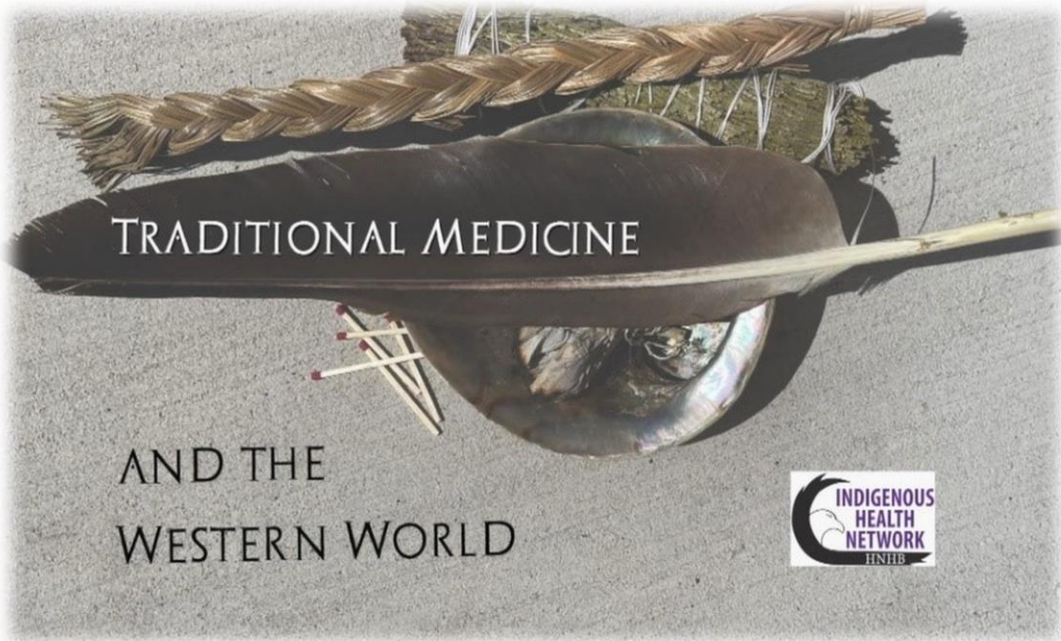




INDIGENOUS HEALTH NETWORK

Serving Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand, Brant, Burlington and Norfolk



Summary Report

Traditional Medicine and the Western World

A report based on a community engagement event hosted virtually on September 29, 2022

March 2023

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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge that due to the virtual nature of the event, people joined from many places. Participants were invited to share where they were joining from in the chat. The Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand Brant Indigenous Health Network (HNHB IHN), as hosts of the event, are a group of organizations located on the shared traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe Peoples, protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt.

This historic peace agreement between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Anishinaaba and Allied Nations represents a commitment to share and protect the land, water, plants, and animals, with respect. There are many dialects to the Indigenous Languages and one variation for this report will be Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. We wish to honor the original Peoples of this land and express gratitude for the opportunity and privilege to work with communities across this territory.

Nia: wen, Chi-Miigwech, to Vanessa Ambtman-Smith for expertly facilitating the virtual community engagement event and recognition to the talents of filmmaker Cher Obediah, Ceeit Video Services for the thoughtful production of the film 'Traditional Medicine and the Western World'.

This report was compiled jointly by the HNHB IHN and Ontario Health, West Region.



Introduction

On September 29, 2022, the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Indigenous Health Network (HNHB IHN) hosted a virtual community engagement event on the topic of 'Traditional Medicine and the Western World'. The purpose of this event was to initiate dialogue and increase knowledge on the advancement and spread of Traditional Medicine within local healthcare systems with the following objectives:

1. Engage health care leaders in learning about Traditional Medicine practices within local healthcare systems.
2. Cultivate a collective reflection around advancing reconciliation in healthcare, specifically focused on Call to Action #22 ([TRC report, 2015](#))¹, that calls upon healthcare systems in Canada to recognize traditional healing and to support actions to make this accessible as requested by Indigenous patients.



The invitation to participate in the event was extended via the four Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) in the geographic area of HNHB. Each OHT was asked to identify 10 to 12 system influencers who can use the information they receive at this event to improve access to Traditional Indigenous Medicine within their organizations. A total of 40 people participated in the event.

Vanessa Ambtman-Smith, Health Geographer, Indigenous Health Scholar and Assistant Professor at Western University, Department of Geography and Environment and Indigenous Studies facilitated the event. The event began with a welcome from the HNHB IHN Co-Chair Maggie Copeland who shared the background and vision for the HNHB IHN and an introduction for the film. The group viewed the premiere screening of the film '[Traditional Medicine and the Western World](#)' by Cher Obediah².

Additional context to bridge information shared from the film included:

- The need to respect Traditional Healing systems as a valuable and evidence as informed source of healthcare by the mainstream healthcare system.
- Acknowledgement of the intersection and tension of Traditional Healing systems and Western medicine.
- Reflection of our collective histories and need to reconcile healthcare to meet the needs of Indigenous People.

A panel of Indigenous and non-Indigenous practitioners were asked to share their reflections and key takeaways from the video on the topic of Traditional Medicine in the Western World. Guest panelists included:

- **Elva Jamison**, Indigenous Practitioner, and founder of Juddah's Place which is the only clinic that offers the combination of Western and Traditional Onongwatri: yo Indigenous Medicine located on the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory
- **Dr. Garway Wong**, General Practitioner, De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre
- **Dr. Amy Montour**, Haudenosaunee woman from the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and Interim Chief and Medical Director, Brant Community Healthcare System

Panelist Reflections

Elva Jamison – Elva's initial reaction was as knowledge and demand for Indigenous Traditional Medicine increases there will be a need to increase resources to support the demand for Traditional Medicine Healers. Graduates are obtaining jobs faster than she can train them and additional Traditional Medicine Practitioners are needed. She has adjusted her practice to accommodate some

of the limitations and restrictions in the Western medicine world such as mist smudging. Elva keeps her focus on what she knows is right for her people. Elva also shared examples of how she works and collaborates with allies and has built some positive relationships with Western medicine physicians.

Dr. Garway Wong – Dr. Wong shared that the more knowledge he has gained since graduating in 2008, the more he realizes there is so much more that he doesn't know. He reflected that when he thinks about Traditional Healing, he views it from the lens and perspectives he came from having grown up in Canada as a second-generation immigrant of parents who escaped poverty in Hong Kong and China. Dr. Wong loves to see how colleagues and people working in the same space can acknowledge that we need to make room for what we do not know.

Dr. Amy Montour – Dr. Montour shared about her journey as an Indigenous person and a physician, finding her purpose. She now knows her role is to walk in between these two worlds, use her power and privilege as a physician to break down the walls that keep out the people who know how to do this work, because Traditional Medicine People are a precious resource in the community. Dr. Montour believes that if we want to look at respect for Traditional Healing practices and ancient medicines that predate Western biomedicine, we first need to re-humanize Indigenous Peoples. She reflected that we all have a role in life and knowing who you are, and your culture is foundational and once this is done the needle can be moved for change. There is a need to understand the differences and where the synergies can start to happen. The Indigenous Navigator programs were shared as an example of these synergies.

Questions that were raised in the chat throughout the session:

- How can non-Indigenous people receive Traditional Healing?
- How do you start incorporating Traditional Medicine into hospitals?
- How can Indigenous Medicine be incorporated in a pediatrics and neonatal care settings in hospitals?
- Are there a suggested resources or contacts to explore how Western organizations can partner successfully?

Summary and Key Messages

Traditional Medicine is a Priority

- The resurgence of Indigenous Traditional Medicine is a priority in redressing reconciliation in healthcare and is a critical step in achieving better health outcomes for Indigenous patients.
- While we know that wholistic, and land-based medicine appeals to all people, and is likely an important advancement in the delivery of healthcare, it still needs to prioritize Indigenous Peoples, take place within culturally safe spaces, and be led by Indigenous Traditional Medicine Practitioners.



Relationships and Collaboration are Essential

- Reconciliation in healthcare, including making Traditional Medicine available and accessible for Indigenous patients, requires collaboration between the leaders at the systems and structural

levels, particularly within hospital spaces, to work closely with Indigenous healthcare leaders and practitioners to advance.

- There is emerging research and evidence that speaks to both the efficacy of combining Traditional Medicine and Western medicine, as well as forthcoming study about the transformation of space to include Traditional Healing spaces. These studies can be used to support further discussions and direction but must be done in concert with local Indigenous communities.



Spaces for Traditional Medicine are Needed

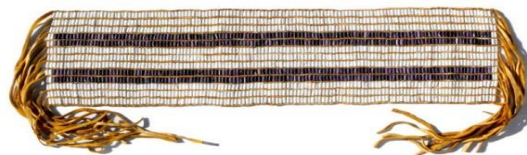
- Dedicated programs require dedicated spaces that have been designed for the delivery of natural medicine and can support functionality that may include land-based ceremony, drumming, singing, burning of medicines (e.g., smudge ceremony).
- These practices are foundational to the

delivery of Traditional Medicine, though some practitioners have had to adapt and use new methods as a work around in spaces that cannot accommodate these practices (e.g., the use of liquid smudge).

Required Attention on Training of Traditional Medicine Practitioners

- Advancing Traditional Medicine is more than just a four-year apprenticeship and training, it requires connections with longstanding Indigenous knowledge systems brought into a modern context.
- Learning is lifelong, and often starts through the earliest kinships and relationships with Knowledge Keepers and learning on the land.
- Indigenous People require the time/space to learn these practices and to be valued as medical practitioners within healthcare systems.

The HNHB IHN ended the event by extending a sincere thank you for everyone's participation. Participants were asked to reflect on the information and the stories shared to be helpful in expanding knowledge and understanding of the importance of reconciliation in healthcare, including making Traditional Medicine accessible for Indigenous patients and their right to culturally safe and culturally appropriate care. The HNHB IHN looks forward to seeing positive changes being implemented that reflect commitments to building health system capacity that provides culturally competent care to meet the needs of the First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Urban Indigenous Peoples served.



Evaluation and Post Event Survey Results

A total of 40 community members participated in the virtual event:

- Senior Leaders (7 participants)
- Leaders (20 participants)
- Staff member (11 participants)
- Other (2 participants)



A post event survey was sent out to participants with a 32% total response rate. For the purposes of this report, common themes and ideas were collated and summarized. Overall response and feedback were very positive. Participants used words such as 'powerful', 'impactful' and 'motivating' to describe the presentations.

“This was an amazing event, it felt inclusive and welcoming.”

A summary of survey results included:

- Participants expressed confidence in their understanding of Indigenous Traditional Medicine or can provide an example.
- 92% of participants identified needing additional education and resources to support advancing the Call to Action #22 that calls upon healthcare systems to recognize Traditional Healing and to support actions to make it accessible within their workplace.
- Participants identified actions that they can take to move towards reconciliation including:
 - Furthering education
 - Incorporating Traditional Medicine resources and linkages to Traditional Medicine Practitioners within their practices
 - Developing active offer processes.
- Full agreement from participants recognizing their duty, as a member of a healthcare institution, to provide a safe and inclusive space for Indigenous Peoples and to collaborate with Indigenous leaders to embed access to Indigenous Traditional Medicine into their organizations.
- Suggestions for future events included:
 - More sessions for frontline staff
 - Further education on sacred medicines
 - Offering a series of engagement sessions on this topic to advance education
 - Sharing examples of how organizations have taken action to change their practices and policies.

Next Steps

To ensure there is clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities in providing culturally safe and inclusive care for all Indigenous Peoples, knowledge of what is working and where there are still gaps will help guide future HNHB IHN planning and decision-making.

Next steps include identifying future community engagement opportunities to build on the information shared at this event, to continue to promote respectful dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations that focuses on improving culturally appropriate care inclusive of embedded access to Traditional Medicine resources.

Contact Us

If you have any questions pertaining to the content of this report, or the work of the HNHB IHN, please contact Kelly Cimek, Director of Capacity, Access, and Flow, Ontario Health (West) at Kelly.Cimek@ontariohealth.ca.

Appendix A: References

- ¹ [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)
- ² [Traditional Medicine and the Western World](#), by Cher Obediah, Ceeit Video Services