Coming Together: Nurturing Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness

IYS–LHS Summit: ACCESS Open Minds Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network Workshop

Share back report

October 9, 2024

ACCESS OPEN MINDS | Lakehead University | Douglas Research Centre | McGill University | CIHR IRSC | Fondation Graham Boeckh Foundation

Introduction

On October 9, 2024, 140 stakeholders from each of the ten provinces and three territories gathered in Winnipeg as part of the Integrated Youth Services (IYS) Learning Health System (LHS) Summit, funded by the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) and the Graham Boeckh Foundation.

As part of the summit agenda the ACCESS Open Minds Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network Advisory Circle members, in collaboration with Ways of the Heart Youth Council representatives, hosted a 2-hour workshop to co-create a tree that nurtures Indigenous youth mental health and wellness by exploring what IYS networks are currently doing or planning on doing within their region and identify aligned initiatives with our network. This was achieved through two objectives, outlined below.

The aim of the workshop was to share strengths and identify challenges we can collectively work towards in future initiatives. Participants were asked to share work being done from the network in real time to foster collaboration and encourage us to 'think outside the box' and contribute unique ideas on what and how to measure Indigenous youth mental health and wellness.

Objectives of the Workshop

Identify shared priorities for the CIHR Phase 2 Integrated Youth Services-Net grant.

Identify what and how to measure Indigenous youth mental health and wellness in the literature and in practice.

Why do a share back?

It is important to document, remember, and keep us accountable as we pave the way for an Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network. It is challenging to completely capture the depth and richness of the discussions that were shared at the Summit. However, by implementing multiple forms of documentation, including notetaking, illustrations and photos, we can only hope to honour at least some of the valuable messages, stories, and wisdom through this share back.

The information and quotes in this document were based on the notes taken at the Workshop.

Moments to remember

Coming Together Graphic Recording

Introduction to the Workshop by Youth and Researchers

Participants

Where Workshop Participants are Based

Organizations Represented at the Workshop

Breakout Activity

Envisioning a National Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network

Voices from the workshop

At the workshop, attendees were asked

a) What are you currently doing or planning to do within their network for Indigenous youth?

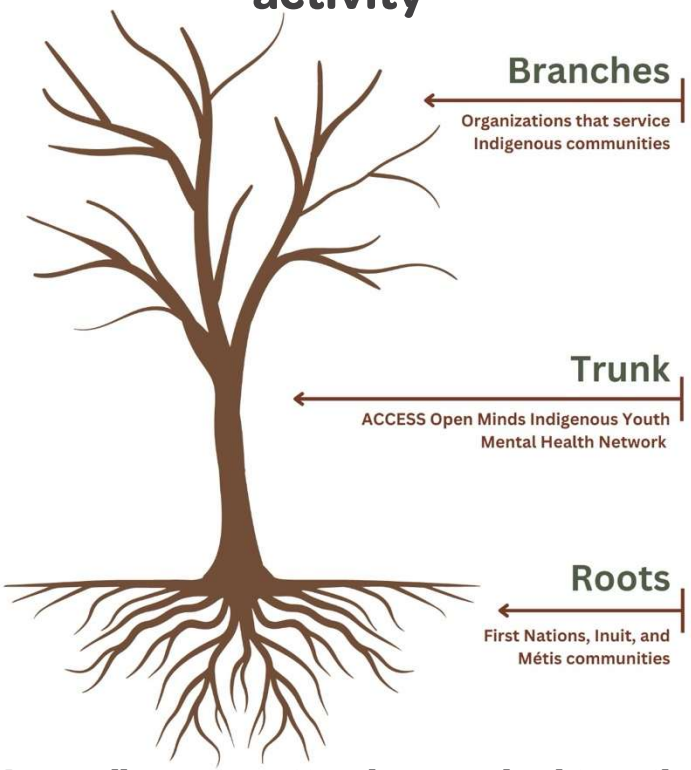
b) What do you hope for when you envision a National Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network?

c) How do we achieve this?

"Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations can collaborate, co-create and co-design in an equitable way that serves truly the most vulnerable and works up to supporting all."

–Attendee

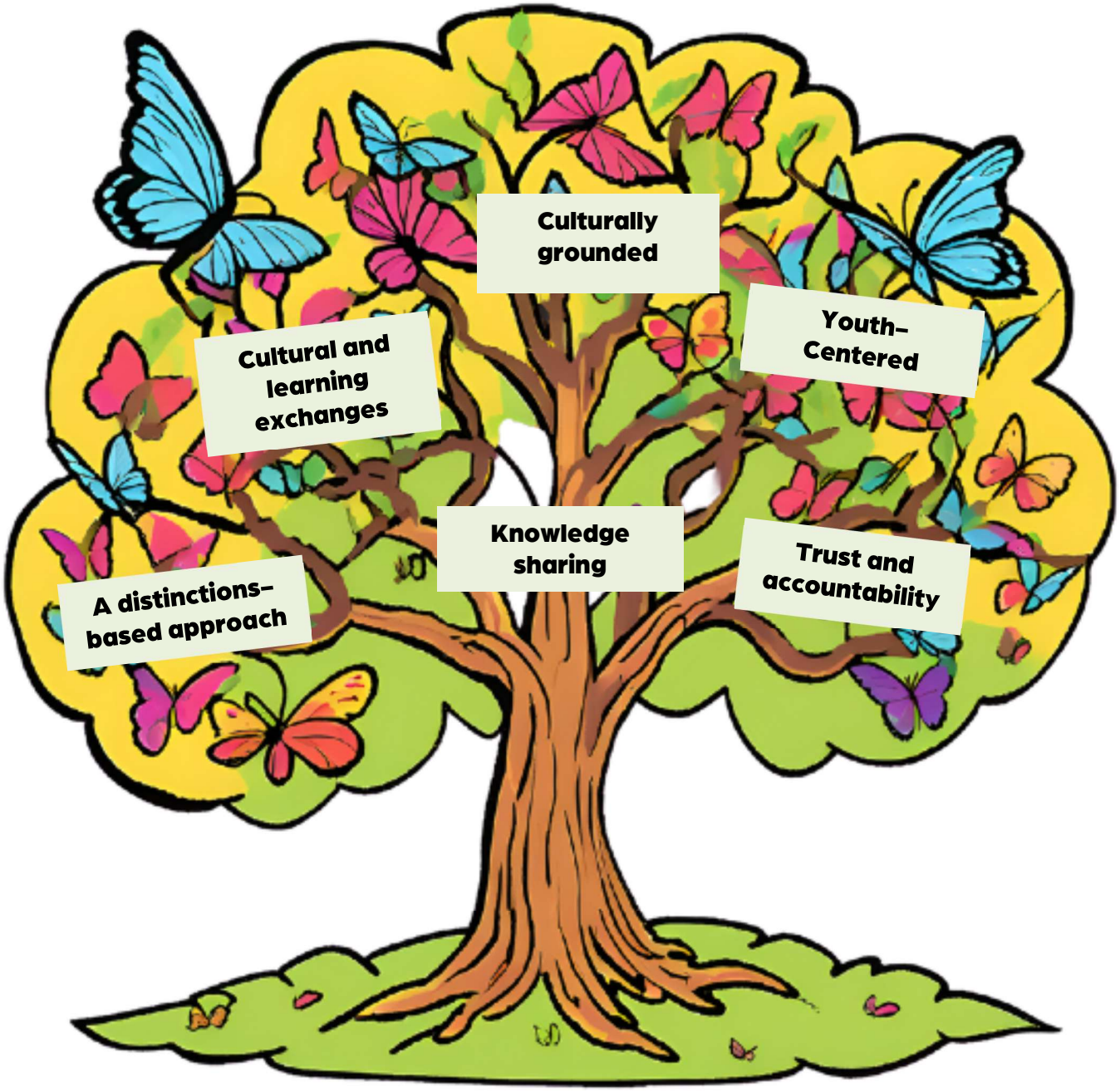
Co-creation small group activity



In small groups, attendees worked together to co-develop a tree by writing their vision for the National Indigenous Youth Mental Health Network on leaves.

Part One: Envisioning an Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network

What did attendees say is needed to build the network?



Part One: Envisioning an Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network

What themes came out of the discussion?	
Engagement and relationality 	• Indigenous ways of knowing/centering Indigenous knowledge • Building, sustaining and nurturing trust and relationships • Balancing trust and relationships • Representation • Inclusivity • Building resilience • Respecting different identities • Groundwork and mobilizing resources • National Indigenous Workforce Association (mentorship, coaching of youth peer workers) • Connecting with youth who identify as Indigenous • Equity in representation in decision-making • Youth-led priority identification of project and oversight • Barrier-free involvement • Reciprocity • Mentorship/Capacity-building/Leadership • Youth advisory development support • Continued engagement
IYS structure 	• Develop our own national Indigenous core principles • Support from existing structures • Bridging Indigenous and larger IYS Advisory Council on measurements • Connect youth engagement with Indigenous youth • So many co-occurring initiatives happening so quickly
Networking activities 	• Different formats for dissemination of information • KT on Indigenous health and wellness • Repository of wellness resources across Turtle Island
Funding 	• Many organizations and not enough funding • Compensation for Indigenous participation and inputs • Competitive funds • Direct funding to Nations • Money • Funding and support to Indigenous staff, services, youth, and family participation to support network development

Part One: Envisioning an Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network

Network Vision

Representation within provincial IYS programs

Indigenous data sovereignty

holistic views and ceremonies from all Indigenous communities

Service delivery in Indigenous contexts and data collection

Learning/cultural exchanges

Accountability

Indigenous worldviews at the centre

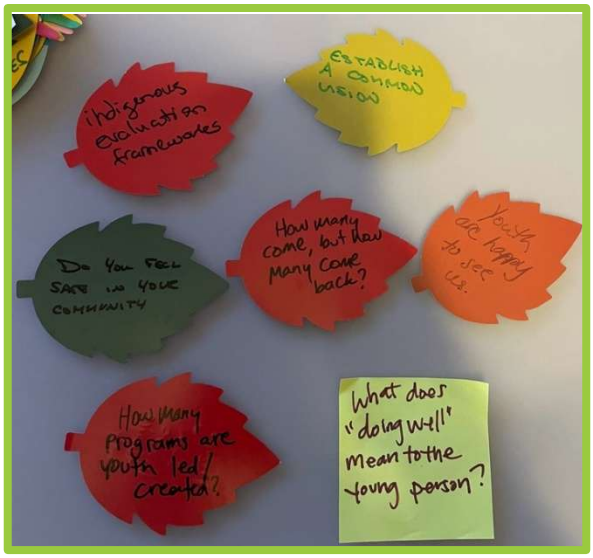
Youth voices and Knowledge integrated into systems

Important to have Indigenous specific spaces and collaborative spaces

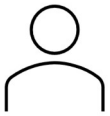
Knowledge sharing

Build trust

*The ACCESS Open Minds Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network is a **national initiative** dedicated to enhancing the mental health and wellness of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth across Canada. It serves as a **collaborative gathering and learning space** for **Indigenous youth, Elders, Knowledge Holders, families and carers, community members, leaders and organizations**; provincial and territorial Integrated Youth Services **(IYS) networks**, and both **Indigenous and allied service providers and researchers**, including **Indigenous Research Champions** from IYS networks, early career researchers and trainees.*



Part Two: What to Measure and How?

What are the individual and population outcomes we should aim for? How do we measure these outcomes?	
Individual outcomes 	• Consistency in care • Has quality of life improved? • Increase in cultural identity • Number of return visits • Are youth happy to see us? • How many programs are youth-led? • Number of phone calls • Hope, meaning, belonging, and purpose • Social determinants of health • Service provider experience • Level of engagement and connection • Number of suicides, number of hospitalizations • Having choices and opportunities
Population outcomes 	• Decrease in opioid deaths • Decrease in gender-based violence • Decrease in youth crime rates • Decrease in substance use • Increase in school attendance and graduation rates • Having basic needs met (water, housing, food) and affordable cost of living • Improved food security rates for youth • Increase in employment rates • Decrease in substance use and youth crime rates • Youth feel safety in their community/safe spaces • When families and caregivers are doing well • Number of programs available and accessed • Number of Indigenous languages spoken • Number of housing requests and reported issues • Strong connection to culture, identity, language, family, kinship, community, and land • Resilient youth and communities

Part Two: What to Measure and How?

Outcomes, measurement frameworks, and processes	
Measures and Frameworks 	• Asking Indigenous youth how they understand wellness • Indigenous evaluation frameworks • Establish a common vision • Engagement • Asking youth often and in different ways • Diverse ways of telling your story • Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs • Define what "doing well" means to young people • Capture different realities of Indigenous youth • Level of engagement and connection • Parents/caregivers present and engaged • Number of strength-based assessment tools being used • Having a longitudinal cohort with multiple indicators • Measuring connections • Indigenous measures of wellness • Number of strength-based offerings • Accuracy indicators of social determinants in communities • Multiple language offerings • Service providers are present (avoid transience) • Measuring wellness of youth by measuring wellness of system • Cultural safety
Methods	• Sharing Circle • Storytelling • Audio • System mapping • Mapping communities
Process 	• Each community can determine what to measure and how • "No one size fits all formula" • Indigenous communities feel included in IYS

Future directions

We want to thank the attendees of the ACCESS Open Minds Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network workshop which was part of the Integrated Youth Services Learning Health System Summit in Winnipeg. The rich discussions and ideas will help us envision what the Indigenous Network should look like, how we could measure whether the network is meeting the mental health needs of Indigenous youth and communities, and how to move forward in a good way.

If you would like to like to get involved in the ACCESS Open Minds Indigenous Youth Mental Health and Wellness Network, we would love to hear from you! Some ways you can get involved are: attending virtual network gatherings, contributing to and receiving our network newsletters, and being added to our mailing list. Please feel free contact us at access@douglas.mcgill.ca or gina.marandola.COMTL@ssss.gouv.qc.ca.

Thank you to all the attendees for providing your rich perspectives! The workshop was hosted in collaboration with the Network's Advisory Circle and Ways of the Heart Youth Council members, and we thank you!

Members of the Network, Advisory Circle, and Ways of the Heart Youth Council*
(*Please note, not all members were present at the time of the photo)