

Building community partnerships

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Inclusion of community members is an important step towards engagement and reconciliation involving diverse cultures. The first step towards building relationships and advancing partnerships is to recruit individuals who are willing to engage in research from the early stages of a project. Mutual engagement and motivation was an essential component throughout the project. In Canada, reconciliation efforts are underway between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations; however, reconciliation cannot take place without input from both parties. Effects from residential schools have led to emotional, psychological, and spiritual loss. Indigenous peoples have lost their culture, language and traditions. Furthermore, Indigenous peoples have dealt with loss through the behaviors of addictions; which, has resulted in high suicide rates among youth and adults. Understanding the trauma that Indigenous people have been through is important. Strengthening connections is important to rebuild the impact experienced by individuals in communities. In this study the significant contribution included the need for ethical space and healing centres in the community. Feeling safe is important to heal the wounds as a result of emotional and psychological trauma. Healing centres serve as a place to relate to spirituality and the loss of cultural roles.

The use of community-based research with an Indigenous lens has served as the foundation for bringing together community members and academic researchers to develop partnerships for exploring the lives of Indigenous people. A strengths-based approach was used to focus on the community and identify areas that could benefit with the findings from the study. Indigenous protocols and frameworks including the OCAP principles of ownership, control, access and possession have been used to guide the research and bring forward collaborative efforts for reconciliation. Recruitment of participants included representation of one individual from each family living in the community. Invitations to meet were sent out by electronic mail. Focus groups were held that involved round circle talks from individuals. Questions were presented that explored the holistic wellbeing of each individual and the importance of the seven teachings of wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth. Data collection and analysis involved members of the community. Findings of the study were indicative of the need for cultural inclusion and listening the needs of the community members. Determining the values and principles of inclusion and diversity were key factors in the study. Themes of communication, transparency, ethical space, and collaboration were seen as important findings towards reconciliation.

Strengthening community connections and building partnerships were identified as important steps towards reconciliation efforts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Identifying the strengths of the community while exploring the experiences of individuals has led to; find significance for the health and wellbeing of the community and its members. Understanding the impact that historical events have on a population is an important step towards reconciliation.

Keywords: Reconciliation, Building partnerships, Indigenous peoples, Strengthening connections.

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Biography

Dr. Sherry Arvidson is an Associate professor at the University Of Regina, Canada. Her clinical interests are Empathy, Excellent Communication skills, prioritise tasks, networking.

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