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Moving Towards an Indigenous Research Process: A Reflexive Approach to Empirical Work With First Nations Communities in Canada

Abstract

Moving towards reconciliation within Indigenous research requires the careful examination of existing practices at all stages of the research process. Engagement in and dissemination of reflexive processes may increase the relevance of research results for Indigenous communities and partners. This article describes and contextualizes the results obtained from this qualitative research study examining parenting needs and child reunification in these communities. The initial results were deemed relevant by the partnering community but research stakeholders reported that they did not reflect all community values. Based on the advice of the Research Advisory Group, the research team decided to further analyze the results to address these shortcomings. The reanalysis process focused on improving the perceived meaningfulness and relevance to communities. Exploration of how these results were re-situated in an Indigenous framework of wellbeing is discussed. Researcher reflections about the project processes and considerations for future research are explored.

Keywords

Indigenous research, Indigenous research methods, First Nations mental health, qualitative research methods

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A wide variety of disciplines, domains, and community partners engage in Indigenous research; yet, knowledge mobilization related to these research experiences are not always documented (Roy & Campbell, 2015). Given the historically poor representation of Indigenous needs and values within institutional research endeavors, researchers working with Indigenous communities must be careful to ensure that their research remains both relevant and beneficial to the communities and populations with whom they work (Bainbridge et al., 2015). Research methods that result in both increased knowledge for and better partnerships with communities, as well as evidence that can promote wellbeing for Indigenous Peoples, are valuable. Overall, it is challenging to identify best practices or “gold standard” approaches for conducting research with Indigenous Peoples given the varying needs of individual communities. However, sharing research experiences—successful or otherwise—can facilitate better translation of useful methods between communities. While this type of communication is typically completed through formal and informal research networks, conferences, and research gatherings, peer-reviewed literature on this topic includes relatively few examples of individual reflections. In response to this gap in the literature, this article describes the process of completing a research project in collaboration with an Indigenous mental health agency and partnering First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario, Canada. This article describes and contextualizes the results obtained from this qualitative research study examining adult community members’ perceptions of the experiences and needs of children and their families in these communities. The initial results were deemed relevant by the partnering agency, but other research stakeholders reported that they did not reflect all community values. Based on the advice of the Research Advisory Group, the research team decided to further analyze the results to address these shortcomings. The reanalysis process focused on improving the perceived meaningfulness and relevance to communities. Exploration of how these results were re-situated in an Indigenous framework of wellbeing is discussed. Reflections on this process of description, analysis, and further contextualization are presented, particularly from experiences of two non-Indigenous student researchers involved with the project. Specifically, this article discusses researchers’ reflections on and experiences completing the project, including the reanalysis of results in order to disseminate results that could be readily implemented by Indigenous community partners.

Background

Indigenous research practices incorporate Indigenous values, beliefs, ways of knowing, and ways of understanding into research endeavors (Kovach, 2010). These practices have resulted in methods that are specifically designed to meet the individual needs of communities, resulting in a heterogeneous, and, at times, eclectic variety of research approaches (Drawson, Toombs, & Mushquash, 2017; Wright, Wahoush, Ballantyne, Gabel, & Jack, 2016). Drawson, Toombs, et al. (2017), for example, found that, although many research projects that engage Indigenous methods tended to use community-based participatory approaches, there was a broad range of Indigenous methods used within research literature. The methods used are important because they determine what information is collected, deemed relevant, and disseminated. Further, they found that reflecting on existing Indigenous research strategies promotes understanding of how knowledge is shared within Indigenous communities.

Historically, research practices have not represented Indigenous needs; research has been completed *on* Indigenous populations rather than *with* Indigenous communities (Canadian Institute of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences, and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014). Such research *on* Indigenous populations has contributed to the further colonization, assimilation, and marginalization of Indigenous Peoples (Skewes & Lewis, 2016). Indeed, violations of Indigenous rights through colonial research endeavors continue to exist through practices such as pursuing research priorities that are not valued by Indigenous communities, using measures that are not validated with Indigenous populations, or publishing results without consulting study participants (Canadian Institute of Health Research et al., 2014). This is particularly troublesome given that research findings that are interpreted with no contextual understanding of a community's cultural and social contexts can result in misleading conclusions (Drawson, Mushquash, & Mushquash, 2017). Drawson, Mushquash, et al. (2017) have demonstrated the necessity of cultural and contextual considerations when analyzing data. Specifically, they showed that, without such considerations, hierarchical regressions using a large data set could be interpreted to suggest a statistical finding that a community's use of its traditional language decreased its overall wellbeing (Drawson, Mushquash, et al., 2017). This finding makes it clear that it is essential to include cultural and contextual knowledge so that data are presented in a way that accurately reflects the experiences and needs of the populations who participate in research projects.

Attempts have been made to build research skills in ways that benefit Indigenous communities. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), for example, described four fundamental "R's" of research with First Nations communities, specifying the necessity of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility into every stage of the research process. Although initially conceptualized as tools to promote First Nations attendance in higher education, these principles have since been applied to research work with many Indigenous communities (Markiewicz, 2012; Moniz, 2015). Moreover, Walters et al. (2009) have expanded Kirkness and Barnhardt's principles to include reflection, resilience, retraditionalization, and revolution. Similarly, Indigenous scholars have developed theoretical understandings of research methodology and methods (Kovach, 2010; Wilson, 2001). The implementation of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession standards (OCAP™; First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2014) has also created formalized structures for respectful research practices with Indigenous communities. Researchers who abide by OCAP™ principles when working with Indigenous partners aim to eliminate exploitive research practices and share knowledge in a way that meets the requested needs of Indigenous communities (Canadian Institute of Health Research et al., 2014). More broadly, Gray and Oprescu (2016) have noted that changing perspectives on what is considered valuable research for Indigenous communities and stakeholders results in changing development, practices, analyses, and dissemination of knowledge. To this end, training non-Indigenous investigators within community-research partnerships can increase communities' access to specialized research knowledge. As a result, communities can use partnerships between themselves and non-Indigenous researchers to develop research projects that meet their contextual and cultural needs (Gray & Oprescu, 2016).

Recent developments within Indigenous research have reflected a convergence of multiple methods, methodologies, and epistemologies that have been created or modified to meet the needs of Indigenous communities. Despite their shared use of the term "Indigenous," the methods used within these approaches have varied so significantly that their differing conceptualization of "Indigenous" becomes relevant (Drawson, Toombs, et al., 2017). Although many approaches promote shared values or beliefs,

conceptualization of knowledge in Indigenous frameworks differs from non-Indigenous paradigms. This differing conceptualization can vastly change the way that knowledge is discussed and applied in research. For example, within many Indigenous communities, knowledge is often considered shared with all of creation (Wilson, 2001) while remaining relational, reciprocal, and respectful (Weber-Pillwax, 2001).

Moving towards reconciliation within Indigenous research practices requires careful consideration of existing research practices (Canadian Institute of Health Research et al., 2014). Discrepancies between academic and community research priorities, processes, and authorship have been identified and documented within Indigenous community-based research processes (Castleden, Sylvestre, Martin, & McNally, 2015). For example, the relational nature of community-based work often requires increased time for relationship building, collaboration, and partner engagement. Academic intuitions that prioritize research productivity may not allow for or value how long it takes to engage with community partners—especially when considering the career trajectories of people who work with Indigenous communities. If researchers are using these projects to bolster their careers or increase publication counts, then the actions required to timely complete these goals may be incongruent with the expectations and research processes in Indigenous communities (Castleden et al., 2015). In this sense, good intentions do not necessarily result in good research practices. Carefully reviewing individual research priorities among stakeholders *before* beginning a project can identify how partnership values are aligned and ensure the research is truly community-based (Simonds & Christopher, 2013). Analysis of frequently-used Indigenous research methods can both assess the utility of proposed approaches for Indigenous communities and consider the presence of existing implicit biases or assumptions (Drawson, Toombs, et al., 2017). However, it is important to—as stated above—balance such analysis with the specific needs of individual communities; research project decisions that are intentionally aimed at benefiting Indigenous communities may inadvertently promote inaccurate results that do not reflect communities' true values (Drawson, Mushquash, et al., 2017). The use of Indigenous methods is assumed to produce Indigenous data that remains situated within an Indigenous framework.

Though many researchers have demonstrated their good intentions engaging with Indigenous research, not all of them have produced research that aligned with Indigenous values (Foulks, 1989). Notably, research institutions do not typically require researchers to align their research results with existing bodies of Indigenous knowledge or describe how their research processes embodied best-practice research standards, such as the OCAP™ principles (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2014). Specific governing bodies—particularly through research ethics committees, granting agencies, and individual reporting at universities—often encourage researchers to identify these positive practices, but the responsibility of ensuring research is community-based falls on partnering communities. Although researchers must obtain ethics approval and establish community partnerships, they are often not required to define the specific Indigenous methods they used or will use to gather or analyze knowledge. Lavallée and Leslie (2016) have emphasized that, as the ethical responsibility placed on the academic institution now shifts to communities within community-based research, it remains the responsibility of the researcher to engage in appropriate ethical decision making. Reliance on singular researcher values, rather than those formed through partnerships, can result in an unhelpful or inconsistent application of appropriate methods within a community, even when the methods are used in the context of an ethically appropriate framework. Appropriate methods can include contextual understanding of the formulation of scientific inquiries, collection of data, and validation or

confirmation of results. Within Indigenous research, developing projects situated within community values can improve the relevance of research for communities (Walters et al., 2009).

The Study

Description of the Original Study

The data originally analyzed were obtained from a qualitative research study that was completed in collaboration with a First Nations mental health service delivery agency (Toombs, Drawson, Bobinski, Dixon, & Mushquash, 2018). The research team was comprised of two non-Indigenous graduate students in clinical psychology at a local university, and their graduate supervisor, an Indigenous faculty member and longstanding member of the partner agency. This supervision provided additional support to the graduate students in addition to ongoing collaboration with various levels within the agency. Additional support, including research assistants and secondary graduate supervision, was provided as required based on program-specific requirements.

A research advisory group guided and retained authority over all study activities. The Research Advisory Group consisted of organizational leadership within the First Nations mental health service delivery organization. The Group consulted with other project stakeholders, including additional Indigenous researchers and student investigators outside of the research team, when required. These stakeholders provided study directives or action plans. This research structure has been used to collaborate on numerous projects to date and aims to address research questions proposed by the partnering First Nations mental health organization. The Research Advisory Group retains control of all study data and activities, and it aims to champion the needs of their partnering communities and research stakeholders.

The aim of the study was to determine strengths, barriers, and community needs related to parenting and experiences with the child welfare system. To ensure participant discomfort was minimized, contacts in each community were asked to review and provide feedback about the study questions prior to the interviews. Participants were community members and they were asked to describe the experiences of children in their communities. We wanted to be inclusive of anyone that wanted to participate. Many were parents (or were kin or non-kin caregivers) of children in the community and therefore were able to share personal experiences. Given how small the communities were and the high rates of child welfare involvement, many could speak about experiences with or perceptions of the child welfare system. Despite it not being in the criteria for participation in the study, we were able to access local community knowledge on the subjects within a general community sample because of these community demographics. High rates of apprehension, child welfare agency involvement, and removal of children from communities due to placement with families in other regions (kin or otherwise) were identified as being of concern to community members (both parents and non-parents). Community definitions of child reunification with respect to child welfare services within communities were collected, and participants were asked to identify resources that would promote positive parenting practices.

Members from seven First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario participated in the study. In total, 24 adult participants participated in either a focus-group or individual interviews. Participants were recruited through a local community contact person, who was established with the permission of each community's leadership. Participants were also recruited through word-of-mouth and snowball

sampling techniques in partnering communities that were providing formal support for the study. Focus-group and individual interviews were recorded and transcribed with one exception. The participants in one focus group elected to not have their data recorded. Instead, they consented to note taking by the student researchers, which were analyzed in the same way as the transcripts. The data were analyzed using a blend of thematic analysis and grounded theory, with open coding completed using the techniques described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Results were validated by all levels of the Group, as well as any community members who were interested in or involved in the project. We used relationships formed through the Group to disseminate project information in order to check the results for accuracy and to also share findings with various communities. We did not have permission to consult with participants, but we did return to participating communities to share and validate results with them. There was the option for participants to attend these events. Interested communities chose how they preferred the information to be shared. We did some initial community presentations and asked for clarification the results; we also shared results internally through the partnering community organization. Additional members from other mental health agencies, Indigenous health service providers, and interested community members were also consulted based on prior collaborations.

Although the Group approved the study methods, the implementation of these methods by non-Indigenous stakeholders may have changed the way that participants responded to the study's questions. For example, it is possible that having non-Indigenous researchers inquiring about barriers or concerns related to parenting or child welfare may have reduced overall participation in the study, due to potential community discomfort surrounding the high rates of child apprehension by non-Indigenous child welfare workers. Further, engaging in these conversations while being represented by an Indigenous agency that provided mental health services to children, families, and communities may have made participants feel uncomfortable or vulnerable to agency intervention. Consequently, when the study's results were initially validated with research stakeholders, they were found to be congruent with the beliefs, values, and/or knowledge of this subject area held by the Group. Moreover, in follow-up knowledge dissemination activities—in which the study's results were validated by community members—participants noted that the results were representative of their communities' perspectives on parenting and child reunification. This positive representation was attributed to increased transparency of research activities, multiple community and advisory consultations, and a prioritization of research collaboration within the study's community-based participatory framework.

Results in the study's original analysis were coded into six main categories:

- The removal of children from their families,
- Support for families during placement,
- Reunification with parents,
- Identified community supports,
- Identified community barriers, and
- Requested services and supports.

Thematic analyses identified three themes (see Table 1) that were found to be relevant to all categories and were embedded throughout all participant discussions of child welfare. These themes emphasized broader aspects of ideas that had been obtained from participant data and emphasized areas of potential

intervention. These themes were then configured from combining similar sub-themes that were obtained from the codes generated by initial analyses.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis Results of Original Analysis

Obtained Themes	Description	Sub-Themes
1. Healing the Community to Help the Child	Social determinants of health, such as poverty, housing instability, racism, and gender were mentioned by participants as systematic concerns in communities. Many participants mentioned addiction concerns and the historical trauma of residential schools as influences within community circles, as well as a general lack of local services to address these concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building Communities ● Healing Communities ● Using Local Services
2. Empowerment and Self-Efficacy	Participants discussed the need to support one another. Having First Nations individuals engaged in First Nations services and being the ones who design and develop these services was noted as a critical need. Participants saw a need to reduce perceived stigma attached to accessing some parenting or child welfare services, specifically for fear of agency apprehensions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Helping Each Other ● Empowering Parenting ● Reducing Stigma ● Building Hope
3. Culture and Tradition	In regard to reunification practices, the importance of connecting First Nations children with traditional teachings and facilitating engagement with cultural practices was identified as a priority. If a child is removed from a home, participants were concerned about their access to culture and tradition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engaging with Values and Beliefs ● Traditional Teachings ● Prioritizing Culture

These results were reviewed by participating community leadership, the mental health service delivery organization that championed the project, and other interested community members. Reviewing these results through respectful communication with prior participants, additional interested community members, and members of the Group maintained ongoing community partnerships. Consultations with these research stakeholders helped the Group determine whether the study's initial results described communities how they wished to be portrayed. At this stage, the role of the researcher was primarily gathering information and synthesizing further results. Throughout the research process, reviewers indicated that they found the results depicted both community knowledge of parenting and child

reunification and community experiences of these concepts. However, these consultations also revealed that, although the analysis reflected the experiences of communities, the results were likely situated in a non-Indigenous, deficit-based model of health. Through multiple consultations, a variety of presentations, written dissemination of results, and oral feedback, research stakeholders reported that the analysis of the results failed to embody an Indigenous model of wellness and did not frame data in a way that was most useful to the organization. For example, although the initial study results described a holistic understanding of healing, it did not portray the connectedness to other aspects of healing, parenting, or child welfare. Many Indigenous models of wellness, such as the medicine wheel, emphasize the importance of obtaining balance. The medicine wheel, consisting of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness, reflects a holistic, interconnected understanding of wellbeing for many Indigenous communities; within this framework, one facet of wellbeing cannot be promoted in isolation, and a reduction in one domain can negatively affect others (Reading & Wien, 2009). A focus on deficit-based models of mental health, together with conceptualizing good health as an absence of illness, is thus not congruent with Indigenous models of wellbeing. Instead, "living the good life" through the balance of the four directions of the medicine wheel is a more positive, strength-based approach to wellbeing (King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009).

Given stakeholders' concerns, it was necessary to revisit the study's results and rectify the shortcomings of the initial analyses. Situating the results within an Indigenous model of knowledge synthesized information and reported results in a way that aligned with Indigenous conceptualizations of wellness. This helped to further meet the needs of our Indigenous community partners. For the researchers, this involved purposefully re-evaluating both the research process and the meaning of the results towards Indigenous models of wellness. This required self-reflection, a humble approach with the community and results, and an openness to new, relational ways of conceiving wellness.

Rationale and Process for Study Reanalysis

Project stakeholders recognized that the data obtained and initially analyzed were not a final depiction of participants' experiences. The initial results did not situate worldviews, assumptions, and lived experiences in the relevant context for partnering communities. In general, feedback from community members stated that the initial results:

- a. Were not appropriately situated in Indigenous ways of knowing and, as a result, may not be as easily understood or used by communities.
- b. Would be more useful if they were placed in a framework that had been implemented by First Nations communities and based on Indigenous knowledge.
- c. Needed to be described in greater detail and discuss next steps in terms of assessment or intervention to change these processes with communities.

By situating results in a framework relating to overall wellness, specific points of intervention could be created. Recommendations included creating parenting programs or groups, which are discussed in the original article (see Toombs et al., 2018). Using a framework of wellness for these results seemed to better organize ideas for future research projects as well.

Reanalysis of collected data to incorporate additional beliefs and changing environmental contexts can promote relevance, respect, responsibility, and reciprocity within existing research partnerships. Incorporating a relational approach to data analysis can realign results to incorporate various worldviews, which can then be modified to fit within various environments (Kovach, 2010). For example, a relational approach can assume that an Indigenous researcher and a non-Indigenous researcher may view the world differently and contextualize results differently due to differences in their lived experiences. Within a more relevant framework of Indigenous knowledge, information remains dependent on context. Value judgments of correctness, appropriateness, or worthiness of the knowledge are not assigned, and knowledge remains relational to the environment in which it is obtained.

Smithers-Graeme (2013), using Weber-Pillwax's (2001) articulation of Indigenous research values, has suggested six guiding questions to explore the presence of potential researcher bias when engaging with Indigenous research paradigms. These questions assessed topics related to:

- a. Methods that build respectful relationships between the topic and the researcher;
- b. Methods that build respectful relationships between researchers and research participants;
- c. Methods that create respectful relationships within research partnerships;
- d. Identification of the researcher's role and responsibilities;
- e. How to fulfil these obligations within research partnerships; and
- f. The reciprocity of the research relationship, including contributions made by the researcher.

As the original study results were not situated within a relational framework, members of the Group and the first author's thesis committee recommended returning to the data for reanalysis. Two non-Indigenous student researchers were asked to explore how the study's results might be better situated within the broader context of Indigenous understandings of knowledge held by our partnering communities. The goal of engaging in this reanalysis process was determined by the Group and specific processes were first conceptualized by student researchers and then approved by all stakeholders. The student researchers used Smithers-Graeme's (2013) six guiding questions to generate questions to both assess potential researcher biases and help clarify and further contextualize the study data for the Group. These questions were intended to guide the process in a systematic way in order to address the goals set out by the Group.

Questions used to guide the reanalysis process included:

- a. How do we re-cast this knowledge in a way that better connects with Indigenous teachings?
- b. Throughout the analysis, was there an imposition of beliefs or values that do not belong?
Did it change the way the evidence was analyzed?
- c. Is there an existing Indigenous framework that can be applied to these results?
- d. How would reworking the results change the way they are implemented or used by communities?
- e. How could the original data analyses better incorporate community-specific Indigenous knowledge, values, and beliefs?

Connecting Knowledge with Indigenous Teachings

Generally, qualitative methods have been described as strategies that can both contextualize knowledge embedded in existing data and represent data through interpretation (Creswell, 2009). Non-Indigenous

researchers completed data collection and analyses, which necessitated frequent consideration of existing biases when engaging in data analysis. It was not within researchers' duties to "find," "expand," or "give" representation to participants' knowledge, but rather attempt to find commonalities in the knowledge that participants had shared.

We connected this knowledge with previously documented Indigenous understandings of family, parenting, and wellbeing. For example, the Group provided guidance concerning how results could be contextualized with local values, beliefs, and community knowledge. We used the relevant peer-reviewed and community literature provided to guide fitting knowledge that emerged from the research within local Indigenous teachings. We deliberately kept interpretation to a minimum, and descriptions of the results were given to the Group in order to be integrated with their existing knowledge and community expertise. In the original analysis of the study's results, researchers did not attempt to generalize the knowledge or assume the results represented all experiences of the seven First Nations communities participating in the study—let alone Indigenous communities on a larger scale.

Identification of Existing Values and Beliefs Within Our Research

Although the study methods, including the plan for data analysis, were designed and reviewed by the Group, non-Indigenous graduate students from the research team completed the data analysis. The subjective nature of decisions relating to data categorization may have been influenced by researcher values and the research paradigm.¹ As a result, the obtained data, including the described themes, were reviewed to determine if the results aligned with the community partners' research paradigm. The Group assessed the relevance of these results and determined they could be aligned with previously conceptualized models of Indigenous wellbeing. Therefore, the results were recategorized to better align with this framework of Indigenous knowledge.

The Group encouraged the student researchers to reflect on their experiences throughout the research process, so they kept reflection journals in which they recorded their personal insights, potential biases, and moments of learning. Student experiences were brought forward through formal and informal supervision meetings with their thesis advisor. For example, one student reflection (modified for clarity with the student's permission) explained:

The absolute necessity of a Research Advisory Group in Indigenous research was made apparent to me within the entirely different domain of motorcycle safety research. Being an avid motorcyclist, I was interested to see what the expected results were, and how the research study could keep me safer on my bike. What I found was that, although the research was well-meaning

¹ A research paradigm is the overall approach, related to how theories, methods, and analyses are selected within research, taken by a researcher. Identification of a research paradigm can provide contextual information about researcher-made project-specific decisions. It can also provide a rationale for potentially subjective processes and decisions. Many paradigms can result in similar project goals and practices but can also influence the effect of researcher biases on the research, which in turn affects how the research aligns with previous studies, community values, and best practices within the literature. For example, within Indigenous health research, researchers have identified a diverse range of research paradigms (Drawson et al., 2017) that can influence how results are contextualized within communities.

and well-researched, the fundamental measures used in the study to capture motorcyclist safety behaviours were not relevant or accurate for actual day-to-day biking. It turned out that no members of the research team drove a motorcycle. As a non-Indigenous researcher, and the non-expert, I was concerned that general community knowledge was not being incorporated into this project. Given that I was not a member of any one of our partnering communities, it was unlikely that I would know for sure if this was the case.

Ongoing discussions with the Group promoted growth in the students' understanding of the roles of non-Indigenous researchers engaging in Indigenous research practices. The students found their reflection journals promoted insight, documented personal growth, and described lessons for future research. Moreover, the journals helped students identify their own beliefs associated with research processes and challenge their assumptions related to knowledge acquisition.

Situating Obtained Results Within an Indigenous Framework

We sought to analyze the data and categorize the findings in a way that would better reflect Indigenous ideals of wellness. Our goal was to situate results into a previously documented model of Indigenous health that was already being utilized by the community organization and that aligned with their values and service mandate. There was a limited number of Indigenous models of wellness available that encompassed these organizational values, which made it challenging to consider multiple, contrasting models. As such, the researchers chose a model that had been developed by First Nations peoples and embodied their cultural knowledge: the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework (FNMWCF; Health Canada, 2015). Given that the partnering organization's mandate included improving the wellbeing of First Nations individuals, the FNMWCF was a well-utilized and useful tool within the organization.

The FNMWCF was developed as a holistic representation of Indigenous wellbeing. The FNMWCF aimed to describe broad determinants of health and wellness on a continuum that incorporated multiple facets of health, including spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing. Rather than using a deficit-based, symptom-dependent model of health, the FNMWCF promotes overall mental wellness for Indigenous Peoples (Health Canada, 2015). Indicators of wellbeing within each of these domains were developed that include hope, belonging, meaning, and purpose. Spiritual wellness was associated with hope for the future and holding a sense of personal identity. Emotional wellness was associated with a sense of belonging within a community, culture, and family. Mental wellness was associated with an increased sense of meaning in one's life. Physical wellness was described as a sense of purpose, determined by living one's life with wholeness (Health Canada, 2015).

One goal of the initial study was to establish ways that may improve the overall wellbeing of both individuals and communities. All research partners agreed that the use of a wellbeing framework was a viable way to recontextualize results. Therefore, the study data were reanalyzed and recategorized according to the FNMWCF outcomes of hope, belonging, meaning, and purpose in order to develop preliminary themes (see Table 2).

Table 2. Reorganization of Original Themes Using an Indigenous Model of Mental Wellness Outcomes

FNMWCF Outcomes	Description	Reorganized Study Sub-Theme	Supporting Quotation
Hope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual wellness • Hope for the future • Sense of personal identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building hope • Traditional teachings • Prioritizing culture 	<p>“More people are getting back to their roots that way (referring to cultural engagement), and I think that’s also been important for our community.”</p>
Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional wellness • Belonging within community • Belonging within family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using local services • Helping each other 	<p>“I think it’s important for us to keep our kids, um, within the community or, you know, that making them feel like they still belong.”</p> <p>“I think when you’re taken away from the community, I’ve never been separated from my family, but I think they lose something in their lives.”</p>
Meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental wellness • Meaning within an individual • Meaning within a family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building communities • Healing communities • Engaging with values and beliefs 	<p>“A healthy family and a healthy community makes [sic] a healthy child. You need to have, um, a healthy community in order to ... that’s the future. Like, whatever we’re doing as parents, we’re teaching our kids.</p> <p>“They know the ... the values of the community, the people of the community.”</p>
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical wellness • Sense of purpose • Living life with wholeness • Contributing to communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing stigma • Empowering parents 	<p>“I think that because there’s a lot of social programs that happen here, and a lot of people ... different people come out and they participate, so, you know, that encourages more community togetherness.”</p>

Sub-themes were recategorized based on FNMWCF's four outcomes. Coded participant descriptions within each sub-theme were assessed to determine whether they matched the description of a FNMWCF outcome. The sub-theme data were not recoded because they accurately reflected the common threads in the participant data. Rather, they were situated within a broader framework that the Group deemed to be the most useful to the community. After the sub-themes were recategorized, the Group deemed the final reorganization to be appropriate.

Usefulness of the Modified Results

Situating the study's results within the FNMWCF was beneficial to both the Group and the study's community partners. Recategorizing the results aligned the outcomes of the study with a meaningful Indigenous wellness framework that community partners were already using in their work. Furthermore, using this framework to guide the reanalysis of the data generated results that were more useful to community partners. The new results enabled communities to more readily mobilize the knowledge emerging from the study in their work with the community. In aligning the results with the goals of FNMWCF, local Indigenous communities can integrate community parenting knowledge with strategies that promote Indigenous family wellbeing. Relating the initial project knowledge to a previously documented model of wellness further affirmed that the study's depiction of parenting and child reunification practices as ways of promoting wellbeing was valid. A measure capturing outcomes of the FNMWCF has been developed and validated with local communities and has been used by the organization to capture wellbeing for children (unpublished data).² The reconceptualization of the current project results to these outcomes may be able to contribute to measurement of helpful parenting strategies or successful child reunifications within partnering communities. The identification of positive parenting practices and strategies to promote Indigenous family wellbeing directly aligned with outcomes in the FNMWCF. This additional interpretation ensured that the study comprehensively explored its research questions and goals and demonstrated that there were no noticeable gaps in its data.

Reflections on the Research Process

Weber-Pillwax's (2001) guide to Indigenous research that is based on respect, relationality, and reciprocity is a useful tool for non-Indigenous researchers. Smithers-Graeme (2013) has asserted that Weber-Pillwax's framework provides an appropriate guide for researcher self-reflection, arguing that Weber-Pillwax's questions should be reviewed at every step of the research process.

Non-Indigenous researchers working on this study embodied a co-learner, non-expert approach throughout the project, as described by Castleden and Kurszewski (2000). All research activities, including the reanalysis, were completed by students coming from a position of humility, genuine

² The FNMWCF is currently being used by a few multiple-community agencies to guide implementation of the framework within Indigenous communities. The Assembly of First Nations (2015) and Thunderbird Partnership Foundation (2016) have funded initiatives, but outcomes have not been reported to date. For example, the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation (2017) developed the Moving from Crisis to Wellness initiative, which aims to help communities develop their own crisis planning resources and supports, using the FNMWCF to create a service delivery model.

curiosity, and a desire to learn, rather than from a position of formal expertise. This was a novel experience for some students, who had learned through non-Indigenous research methods that the researcher is typically the knowledge holder or expert. In this study, however, Indigenous partners maintained responsibility for the authentic representation of community knowledges. Although community knowledge was represented within the study's original results, it was challenging for the non-Indigenous researchers to assess if the results encompassed all aspects of the communities' knowledge. As a result, the reanalysis requested within the partnership better encompassed community knowledge and translated it in a way that was more useful to communities.

Conclusion

This article described the process of resituating results from a community-based, qualitative research study within an Indigenous wellness framework— the FNMWCF. The steps completed by the research team throughout this process, with guidance from an Indigenous research advisory board, were outlined. By working with project stakeholders, which included partner First Nations communities, an Indigenous health agency, and an Indigenous advisory group, through all phases of the research, we were able to improve the relevance and usefulness of the research results for our research partners. We utilized an existing Indigenous wellness framework to modify the initial results to better align with community knowledge and practices. Analyses were initially completed by non-Indigenous student researchers. By presenting and disseminating initial results to Indigenous research stakeholders, we were able to use their feedback to reanalyze the data so that the results supported community-based action. These practices increased the relevance of the results for communities, encouraged researcher responsibility (to maintain ongoing partnership and collaborative agreements), facilitated stakeholder reciprocity (through generation of useful results and incorporation of additional knowledge), and prioritised ongoing respect of community values.

Obtaining research results and publishing manuscripts does not conclude the research process. Smithers-Graeme's (2013) reflection questions emphasize that research is a continuous, reciprocal process of learning, growth, and sharing. Disseminating shared knowledge built through research relationships holds researchers accountable to their partnering communities and ensures that their data analysis fully captures participants' perspectives and experiences. This type of result validation by participants, community members, and community experts (such as Elders or community leadership) provides additional information about the relevance and contextualization of results. It can also potentially increase the utility of data by conceptualizing the results in the way that is most relevant for the communities that own and intend to use it. For this study, rather than assuming data offered a final depiction of the results, reanalysis involved further considerations of both culture and context. Such processes were necessary, as they increased the accountability and relevance of this research to community stakeholders. Our experience highlights the critical importance of collaborating with Indigenous research partners through all phases of the research—not just the planning phase. A major strength of our partnership has been the involvement of research partners throughout the analysis, results, and dissemination phases of the research project. It shows the depth and ongoing reciprocity required for meaningful community collaboration.

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