MODULE 2

Partnership, Culture and Values, Meeting the Opportunity of Diversity

PARTNERSHIP

Homelessness as it relates to youth is a systemic problem that has, to date, largely been addressed by siloed, individual-level perspectives and interventions. This likely explains the limited gains that we have seen at a population level despite decades of efforts.

With the development of HOP-C specifically and through this guide we emphasize the importance of partnerships and shared values. Here we are speaking about partnerships across disciplines and stakeholders, service providing organizations, and across geographic and cultural domains. These partnerships are grounded in the shared values of equity, youth empowerment, and tailoring collaborative approaches to individual youth goals, needs, and interests. Partnerships across disciplines and stakeholder groups cultivates the strengths of multiple perspectives and integrated responses to the very complex challenges being faced by youth transitioning out of homelessness. Partnering across organizations allows interventions to wrap around youth and remain available to youth as they move through a given service system – transcending numerous problematic gaps and barriers that attend siloed service systems. Partnering across geographic and cultural domains increases the relevance of the approach to many different populations in different places. More importantly, cultural-level collaborations, when done well, cultivates a growth in perspective of all of the participating groups that enhances work at local levels and greatly increases the momentum of collaborative, systems-level responses.

Dakota Bird
Mishkeegogamang First Nation

Culture, Values, and Partnership within HOP-C

Dilico Anishinabek Family Care's mission is to promote healing and well-being in Anishinabek people using an integrated holistic approach in a way that honours values, culture, and traditions. As a means of accomplishing this mission, the organization is guided by seven core values: client centered services based upon teamwork; quality service delivery that is ethical, caring, compassionate, and sensitive; partnerships that advance the well-being of the Anishinabek; role models who demonstrate positive leadership; an environment that creates positive morale; effective and accountable management, and; long-range strategic planning. In partnering with HOP-C, the model and collaborative fit was evident. HOP-C aspires to produce innovate ways in which supports and services can engage the youth they serve in a manner that keeps their needs and preferences in focus. These overarching shared values serve as orienting principles that continually remind the team of the importance of engaging in a good way.

Biimaadiziwin Wiidookaagewin

After selecting a team that will provide all the wrap around supports involved in your program, consider what training or educational activities may be helpful to increase cultural safety. Providing your staff with the tools to understand the histories of the youth they are working with will help them be most effective in their roles. Below you will find an outline of the type of training used in an Indigenous setting. The first part is education around cultural concepts and a comprehensive overview of the history of Indigenous Peoples, including the influence of colonialism. The second part speaks to the specific cultural supports built into the program that staff can access for the youth they are working with.

Part 1: Cultural Concepts

- Ojibwe Creation Story
- Knowledge and the Medicine Wheel
- Myths and Assumptions
- Pre & Post Contact – Indian Act, Residential Schools, Treaties
- Walk-A-Mile Film – Legacy of Struggle
- Colonialism – Impacts, Sixties Scoop, Resiliency, TRC

Part 2: Cultural Program within the Organization

- What we Offer Client and Non-Client Related
- Cultural Program, Cultural Referral Form
- Common Cultural Interventions
- Our Cultural Team

Cultural Safety

- Moves us beyond cultural awareness, the acknowledgement of differences between cultures;

- Transcends cultural sensitivity, which recognizes the importance of respecting differences;

- Helps us understand the limitations of cultural competence, which focuses on the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of workers;

- Begins with the worker rather than the client (child, youth, family);

- It is a way for our clients to determine if the service is safe for them; gives power to the client; the more safe the more they will engage.

- Cultural awareness/sensitivity/competence is about "me" the worker. Cultural safety is about the other person – they decide what is culturally safe. Instead of learning about them, "I" we learn from them.

- When a worker and the agency can establish cultural safety, according to the family, the family will trust more and be less resistant to the worker trying to help them on their healing journey.

- Cultural safety means creating an environment where we (staff/agency) make it safe for people spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically safe.

- It is about shared respect, respecting people accessing services for who they are and what they need.

- The person receiving the services from the agency/worker determines whether or not it is culturally safe.

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BETHANY KOOSTACHIN

Why Do We Smudge?

❋ We cleanse our eyes so that they will see the truth, beauty and gifts of the Creator.

❋ We cleanse our mouths so that all we speak will be in a truthful, empowering and positive way.

❋ We cleanse our ears so that we will hear spiritual truths given to us by the Creator and Grandfathers.

❋ We cleanse our hearts so our hearts will feel the truth, harmony and compassion for others.

❋ We cleanse our feet so that our feet will seek to walk the true path, seek balance and love.

HOP-C North Example

1) Case management

Case management not only includes connecting youth to the services needed to support their transition into housing, but it is also sometimes meant to accompany them to meetings. In Thunder Bay, many Indigenous youth have experienced various forms of discrimination when entering establishments and engaging with providers. For example, one youth was apprehensive about going to the bank to get a new bank card based on previous experiences, and so the case manager went with the youth to provide support through this process.

Take away: case management duties needed to be flexible to meet the needs of the youth.

At HOP-C North, having a cultural mentor within the program was very important to the program and it removed many barriers for the case managers. Instead of having to wait on a referral to provide the youth with access to cultural services, the case managers were able to easily connect the youth to a mentor as needed, who was very much part of the team and was flexible to the youth's cultural needs and the extent to which they were prepared to engage with their culture.

Take away: in-team cultural supports reduced barriers to care.

2) Mental health support

At HOP-C North, the main mental health support is provided by a clinical social worker. She immersed herself in the HOP-C program, including attending cultural programming and other forms of programming offered to youth outside of mental health groups. This allowed the youth to get to know her, become more comfortable with her, and it gave them the opportunity to build trust before deciding to engage in mental health services. As she did this, it coincided with youth beginning to seek out appointments with her as needed, and eventually youth sought full 12 session protocols for treating various mental health difficulties.

Take away: mental health care became accessible to youth through sustained efforts to build trust and therapeutic alliance.

Another important take away from the HOP-C North program relates to how mental health and cultural programming were delivered. The mental health provider attended many non-mental health-related groups, including cultural teachings and other programming. She understood the mental health difficulties the youth faced by gaining an understanding of the historical trauma and the social context the youth were facing. This allowed her to integrate culture into therapy sessions. For example, exposure-based activities incorporated land-based activities. Similarly, cognitive behavioural therapy sessions would at times

incorporate the 7 grandfather teachings to complement the psychoeducation involved in CBT. This also included understanding the way in which cultural identity helped individuals engage and overcome mental health difficulties. In this way, cultural groups and mental health groups were not viewed as separate, distinct supports offered but worked together and built off each other.

Take away: Mental health supports and cultural programming were integrated.

3) Peer mentorship

At HOP-C North the approach to peer mentorship was somewhat different than other models. Many Indigenous youth engaging in the HOP-C North programming have never had opportunities to have their opinions valued or honoured, nor were they used to being in a leadership role. Because of this, how youth stepped into peer mentor roles was fluid. Youth were met where they were at in terms of the level of leadership they were willing to take on.

Take away: Peer leaders were met where they were at and their strengths were valued as they stepped into their leadership role.

Peer mentors at HOP-C North were given their spirit names which reflected the steps they were taking as they became leaders. This also supported the development of their confidence and independence as peer mentors, which helped support them as they continued to grow as leaders. They worked to create the By Youth for Youth Guide. This guide was created to provide Indigenous youth in the Thunder Bay community as well as in Northwestern Ontario at large with practical information on navigating resources as well as to help foster skills to support mental health and engagement in culture. The guide was built through a cultural lens, incorporating many teachings and using a framework based on Indigenous ways of knowing.

Take away: Meaningful and culturally relevant experiences can help support the autonomy and confidence of peer leaders.

SKYLER PATAYASH
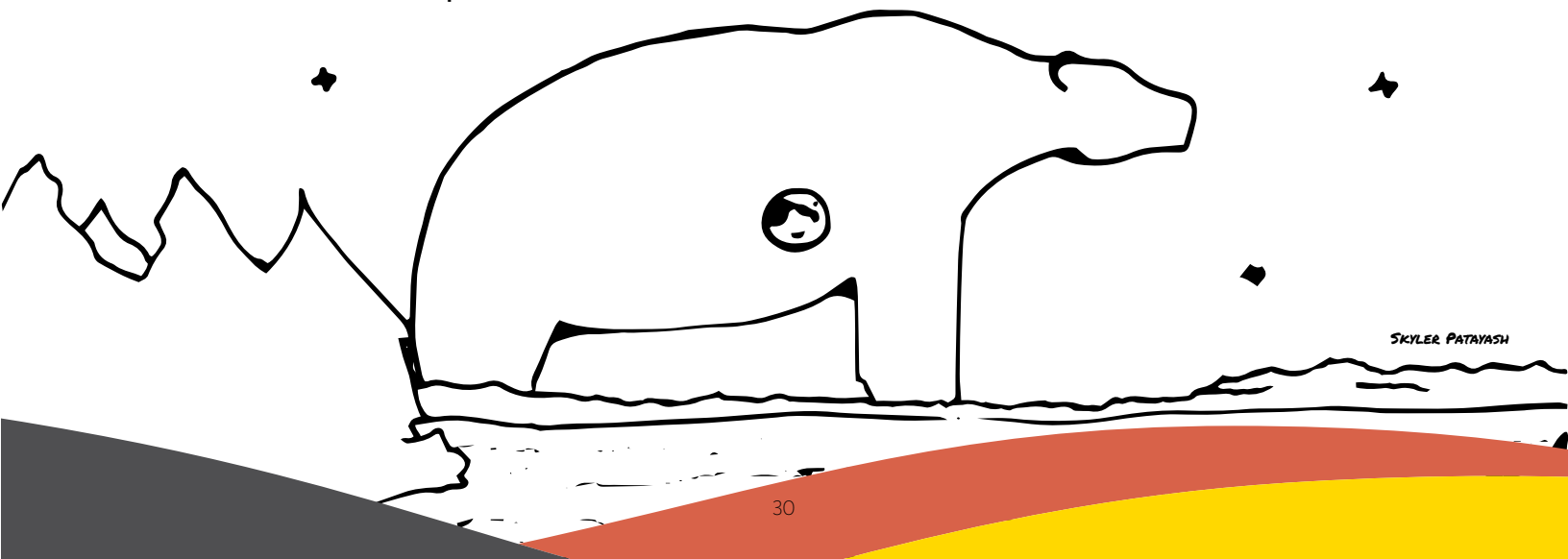
WORKSHEET 1

Below are some questions to help you reflect on how best to incorporate culture within your program.

1. Based on the diversity of the youth you are working with, what kind of cultural supports might be beneficial to be built into your programming?

2. What are some specific barriers the youth in your community face when accessing mental health supports? What steps might you take to minimize these barriers?

3. What sort of experiences can you offer peer leaders to help support the development of their cultural identity and/or their autonomy?

REFERENCES

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