

N'ginaajiwimi: An Indigenous Framework for Resisting the Language of HIV in Research from a Place of Strength

OHTN 2012 Research Conference *Research with Real-Life Impact*

Doris Peltier, Randy Jackson, Earl Nowgesic
Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, McMaster University & University of Toronto

Toronto, Ontario
November 2012

“By controlling the self-image and imaginatively reinventing viable ways of being Native through [language], post-indian warriors defy the impositions of the dominant culture and, most importantly, define their identities for themselves: ‘touch’ themselves ‘into being with words’” *(McKegney, 2007, pp. 139; quoting Vizenor by Coltelli, 1990: pp.160)*

Caveat

- Our use of language is Influenced by our Anishinaabae social and cultural identities
 - Respectful of diversity

Issues (1 of 3)

- Thirty years in the HIV epidemic in Canada
 - (e.g.) Marginalized, vulnerable, high-risk, over-represented, disproportionately represented (etc.)
- Language shapes how we think about Aboriginal peoples and HIV infection (McKay-McNabb, 2006; Lavallee & Clearsky, 2006; O'Neil, Reading and Leader, 1998)
 - Stigmatizing use to justify continuing control
 - Detrimental to Aboriginal identity, wellbeing and survival
 - Aboriginal youth hold fatalistic views about the future (Larkin et al, 2007)

Issues (2 of 3)

- Language is used to sustain medical colonialism and health inequities for Indigenous peoples (Brown et al, 2012)
- Language influences medical practitioners' knowledge and assumptions about Aboriginal people (Browne, 2005)
 - intertwined with dominant social stereotypes and were sometimes expressed as fact even when they conflict with egalitarian ideals

Issues (3 of 3)

- Potential consequences when we ignore language in research
 - Contributes to stigmatization and marginalization
 - Vulnerability in research has not been clearly or uniformly defined
 - Barriers affecting HIV/AIDS researchers' ability to conduct clinical trials with pregnant women, prisoners, and children, for which the regulations specify additional protections
(Sengupta et al 2010)
- Aboriginal peoples adopt this language to describe themselves

Description

- A team of scholars and community members have been meeting to begin work
 - Two face-to-face meetings
 - Collaborate online via email
- Conducted a preliminary literature review (n=23) of Aboriginal HIV literature in Canada
 - Critical discourse analysis
 - Grouped words and findings of studies
- Plans include working with a team of Indigenous scholars and community members to further this work

Lessons Learned

- Double-speak (Fiske & Browne, 2006)
 - Simultaneously support principles of inclusion, equality, meaningful involvement etc. while paradoxically describing them in the literature as 'discredited medical subjects'
 - Further oppresses, marginalizes, discredits and makes vulnerable
 - Engenders fatalistic attitudes and beliefs

Recommendations (1 of 2)

- To decolonize the language of HIV in research
- To use language that emphasizes our reality as Anishinaabae people
 - Ways of being
 - Ways of knowing

Recommendation (2 of 2)

- Leave space that cultivates deep listening and appreciation
 - Do we perceive beauty? Do we stop to appreciate it? Do we recognize beauty in unexpected contexts?
 - Actively search for beauty and strength in ways that are balanced against broader socio-structural challenges impacting Indigenous health

knowledge is handed down ancestors
adjusts to changing conditions
shpendan e-aawiyin dibaadendizowin
ajichaak Métis minodaapin kina gwaya experiential
aakwa'ode'ewin naagadawenim g'jichaag
Home Land First Nation connection reciprocity dynamic language dream oral
boonigi'odetaagwewin connection
e-zhitwaayin zhi-bimaadizin holistic n'ginaajiwimi
the winged ones sacred all my relations
the two legged creatures
need to walk on the land to know it
consensus adaptable unique relations miikaan culture intuition traditional teachings
Inuit cosmology Indigenous-centred mashkoziwin
respect sacred teachings kinship those that crawl the four legged ones spiritual wisdom of Elders
mnaadendan bimaadiziwin zaagi'idizon nda-mino'daapinaan e-aawiyaanh
distinct revelation diversity E-zhitwaayin zhi-bimaadizin visions responsibility
giizhendamowin dreams Minodaapin kina gwaya those that swim Tradition survival
I can only tell you what I know self-determination miigwechiwendamowin
oral teaching story bwaajigewin cultural wisdom timeless truths