Designing a Culturally Safe Land-Based Healing Program in Chisasibi: the importance of building partnerships with Health Managers locally

Presented by Larry House & Eddie Pashagumskum
Chisasibi Mental Wellness Team

Applying First Nations Culture in Community Program Design
FNHMA National Conference
Vancouver, BC, September 23-25, 2014
CREATIVE POTENTIAL AND CULTURAL REVITALIZATION

Creative Potential

Quest for Social Justice

Desire for Cultural Revitalization

Dr. Charles Royal, New Zealand
INTRODUCTION

• Implementing liiyiyiu healing and knowledge in the delivery and management of health and social services as a local initiative

• Community members deem Cree healing methods as a complementary dimension to an integrated model of wellbeing and living a good life

• To expand liiyiyiu healing programming in Chisasibi and establish a structured process for implementing liiyiyiu healing in service provision in the community
2009
Miyupimaatisiun Committee established
Culture-based Knowledge and wellness program (9 months)

2010
1st symposium on Health and Wellness
Culture-based counselling & activities throughout the year

2011
2nd Symposium on Health & Wellness Consultation with Elders Council

2012
3rd Community Symposium: Traditional Healing
4th Community Symposium: Empowering the community

2013
Finalized 5-Year Community Wellness Plan
Developed Land-Based Healing Program Manual
Produced land-based program video
Secured Health Canada funding for Mental Wellness Team
5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

• Vision
  – Enhancing wellbeing for healthy Self, healthy Families, healthy Community and healthy Nation

• Values
  – Respect – All beings are important
  – Equality – All beings are valued
  – Responsibility – We are all interconnected, what one does affects the others
  – Openness – Building meaningful relations irrespective of the healing method the individual may choose
  – Transparency - Outcomes are measured, assessed and publicly reported
5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

• Guiding principles
  – *Holistic approach* – address the physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the individuals, families and communities
  – *liiyiyiu knowledge* – guided by liiyiyiu language, culture and spirituality
  – *Meaningful engagement* – create respectful and open dialogue with community members and increase their input on health and social service matters affecting their community

• Mission
  – Mobilize community participation in programming and increase the appropriation of service delivery in a way that directly responds to local needs and long-term vision of care and well-being
  – Develop and implement effective policies and strategies to promote the health and social welfare of the residents of Chisasibi
  – Promote closer collaboration and joint activities with relevant agencies and entities in the Community of Chisasibi
LAND-BASED PROGRAM

• The Chisasibi Miyupimaatisiun Committee in collaboration with Nishiiyuu Miyupimaatisuiin Department has led to the development of the present Land-Based Healing Program as a community-based approach to service delivery.

• There have been 8 intakes:
  – 25 participants
  – 3 repeats
LAND-BASED PROGRAM

• The Land Based Healing Model for Nishiiyuu is a healing and wellness program implemented and delivered on the hunting territory of each Cree community.

• To strengthen the ability of participants to lead a healthy, fulfilling and resilient life.

• Elders stress that the land and cultural traditions have healing power that can enable individuals in distress deal with pain and self-hurt.
LAND-BASED PROGRAM

- It aims to improve the mental health of individuals so that they can effectively participate in the life of their family and community and make positive contributions to the collective development of their Nation.
- Programming addresses issues related to substance abuse, trauma (physical and sexual abuse, unresolved grief), and the many intergenerational social suffering symptoms associated with residential school.
• liiyiyiu methods and teachings form the core principles of the program and promote personal, family and community wellness form a perspective rooted in the Cree way of life.

• The scope of treatment includes prevention, intervention and postvention /aftercare to ensure an effective continuum of care for clients.

• It uses an intersectorial and intercommunity approach to service provision that shares resources and knowledge to maximize local capacity building and promote leadership.
TEAM COMPOSITION

• Elder / Elder Assistant - Design treatment plan/individual wellness plan in collaboration with healer; holistic counselling and express their traditional knowledge; teach the spiritual and the sacred aspect of hunting fishing, trapping and gathering;

• Program coordinator - Oversees the organization of the program in consultation with elder/healer; identify & retain employees;

• Office manager - Data entry and processing program registrations; orientation support

• Camp helpers – provide daily camp services such as cooking, cleaning, provision and other assistance as requested by the team
CMWT

- **Year 1** – hiring staff and complete Nechi training
- **The team will be based in Chisasibi** and services will be extended in surrounding communities
- **Year 2** – Finalize service provision agreements with other communities and begin to offer services in one community
- **Year 3** – Fully functioning team with established collaboration agreement with other institutions
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

– Undertake community consultation on the 5 Year SRP
– Maintain traditional healing services in the community
– Expand on the bush programs in cooperation with the Nishiiyuu Department and the Council
– Organize Round Dances & other traditional ceremonial dances
– Research and document ceremonies, dances & songs
– Increase interagency collaboration to maximize benefits for community members
– Identify resource-persons in the community
CHALLENGES

– Intra/interagency collaboration at the local level
  • Access to specialist staff
– Harmonizing local and regional programming
  • Detailed protocols between entities within the Cree territory for referral/intake process, for intervention, and aftercare
– Training & Skill Development
– Monitor program outcomes/assessment
– Secure standard bush materials (canvas, stoves, axes, etc.)
– Capacity & resources for Aftercare
WHY SUPPORT FROM FNMA\'s IS IMPORTANT

- Wraparound services/continuum of care
- Aftercare/emerging issues
- Specialized staff
- Flexible multi-year financial resources
- Program assessment/long-term planning
- Efficient integration of community-approved culture-based services
SERVICE INTEGRATION

• **Role of community**
  – identifying needs in health and social services
  – engage more proactively with their immediate and extended families
  – Identify pool of local cultural resources & skill development
  – Strengthen aftercare
  – Better understanding and support for long-term aspect of healing
SERVICE INTEGRATION

• Role of Chief and Council
  – financial management and reporting
  – validation of culture-based programming through formal resolutions
  – facilitating collaboration with existing programs (e.g., Brighter Futures and NAADAP)
  – effective use of resources (financial & human)
  – avoid duplication
  – Political support regionally/nationally
SERVICE INTEGRATION

• *Role of Chisasibi Justice Committee*
  – developing restorative and culturally pertinent approaches to community justice
  – referrals to Land-based program
  – alternatives to conflict resolution and mediation
  – successful reintegration of offenders
SERVICE INTEGRATION

• **Role of health & social services**
  – Intake & referral (30% of client base for the Land-based program)
  – Case conferencing
  – Provide specialized staff
  – AFTERCARE
  – Service/program planning
  – Financial support (permanent Land-based programming throughout the year)
  – Validate culture-based programming in service provision
  – Validate community-approved priorities
ELEMENTS OF GOOD COLLABORATION

- **Inclusive and respectful dialogue** between community members, service providers and management - appropriate conditions for defining a collective vision of care and wellbeing.

- **Mediating institutions** (e.g. Wellness Committee) ensure community needs and worldviews are incorporated into the development of health and social policy and programming.

- Success of local initiatives depend on integration into regional institutional and financial arrangements as well as into the broader policy context.

- **Dedicated group of individuals** ensure institutional memory; efficient implementation of local initiatives; continuous engagement with stakeholders.
OPPORTUNITIES

• Intergenerational transfer of knowledge, Cree values and way of life from which individuals can draw strength and develop a positive cultural identity

• Creating safe and trustful spaces for sharing

• Individuals are inspired and empowered to make good life-choices and dedicate to their healing journey
Questions?

Miigwetch
Larry House
Chisasibi Mental Wellness Team – www.chisasibiwellness.ca
houselawm@gmail.com