



Exploring the Health Experiences of Indigenous Trans, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diverse Communities: A Scoping Review


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Indigenous Leadership Group





TODAY'S PRESENTATION

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. About Trans PULSE Canada
 2. Rationale and Objectives of Scoping Review
 3. Scoping Review Methods
 4. Preliminary Findings
 5. Discussion and Implications for Future Study
- 



IN THIS CENSUS, TRANS & NON-BINARY PEOPLE COUNT!

Trans PULSE Canada is a community-based research survey for all trans and non-binary people aged 14+ in Canada.



Indigenous and trans, non-binary, gender diverse or Two-Spirit? Trans PULSE Canada includes questions designed by and for Indigenous community members to better understand our health, wellness, and strengths.

About Trans PULSE Canada

Trans PULSE Canada is a national community-based survey of the health and well-being of trans and non-binary people in Canada

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Comprised of Indigenous co-investigators who are academic or community researchers (including with the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network) as well as a larger group of research team members, Indigenous gender-diverse persons, and elders.



Scoping Review: Rationale

OBJECTIVES



Systematically map the literature in the field of Indigenous health and gender identity research



Identify existing knowledge gaps, expand knowledge in this field, and identify future research recommendations



Inform a research grant to develop a follow up project using decolonizing, community-based and strengths-based methodologies



Scoping Review: Methods

Information Sources and Search

Database (n= 11)	# of Results	Last Date	# of Results (after duplicates)
Web of Science	342	July 15, 2019	127
CINAHL	90	July 18, 2019	15
Ovid Medline	147	July 18, 2019	0
Embase	280	July 20, 2019	121
PsycINFO	464	July 20, 2019	260
ProQuest (48 databases)	1048	July 20, 2019	202
Sociological Abstracts	181	July 16, 2019	23
Social Services Abstracts	49	July 20, 2019	0
EBSCOhost	700	July 20, 2019	244
LGBT Life with full text	244	July 20, 2019	1
iportal Indigenous Studies Portal	96	July 22, 2019	54
Total	3641		1047

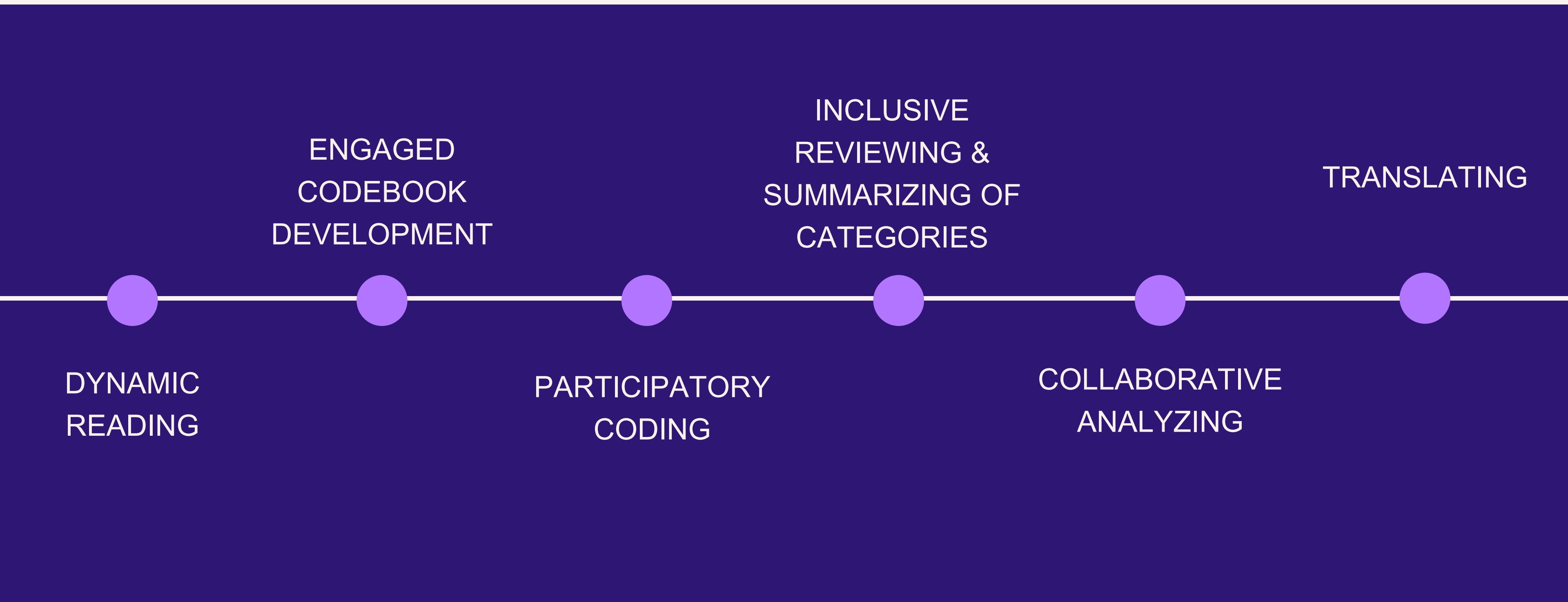
Selection of Sources of Evidence

Does the article include a focus on Indigenous peoples?		Does the article include a discussion of gender identity?		Does the article include a discussion of health, well-being, or health care in general?		Include/Exclude/Unsure (if unsure, why?)	
Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2

NOTE: for an abstract and article to be included, all 3 of the inclusion or exclusion criteria must exist (i.e. an abstract will be included if it has a focus on indigenous peoples **AND** discussion of gender identity **AND** discussion of health/well-being).

Thematic Participatory Data Analysis

Flicker & Nixon's (2014) DEPICT Model





Scoping Review: Preliminary Findings



RESULTS

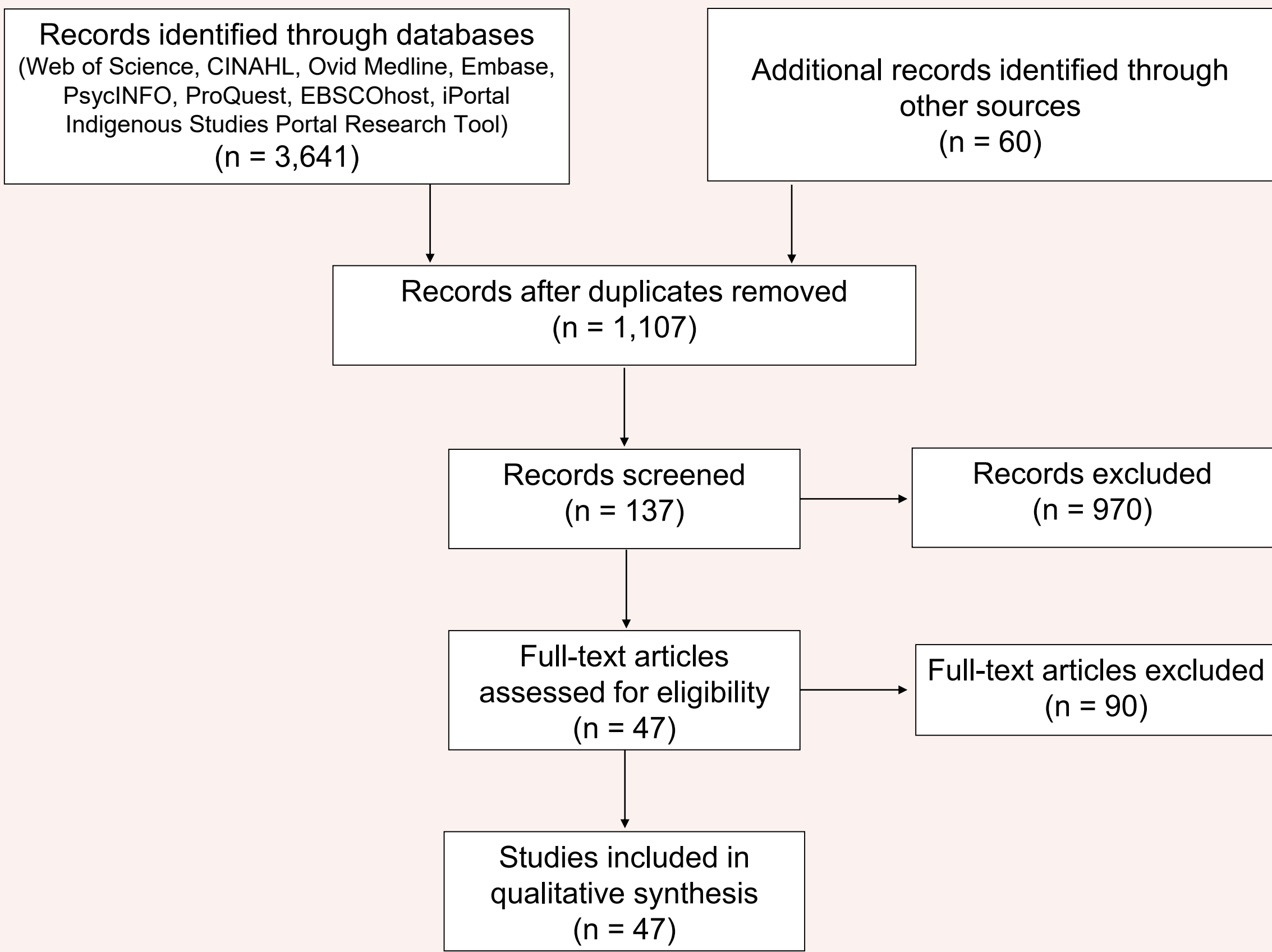
Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram for the scoping review process (Peters et al., 2015).

Identification

Screening

Eligibility

Included



Thematic Analysis Findings

HEALTH EXPERIENCES

- 1. Health Experiences
- 1. Factors that Influence Health
- 1. Responses to Health Experiences

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS &


- 1. Traditional Medicine and Food
 - Perceived Value
 - Reasons for Use
 - Impact on health
- 1. Experiences combining Traditional and allopathic/alternative approaches to health

TRADITIONAL PRACTICES & ACTIVITIES

- 1. Types of traditional practices and activities
- 1. Impacts of participation on health
- 1. Challenges to participation
- 1. Community Reactions

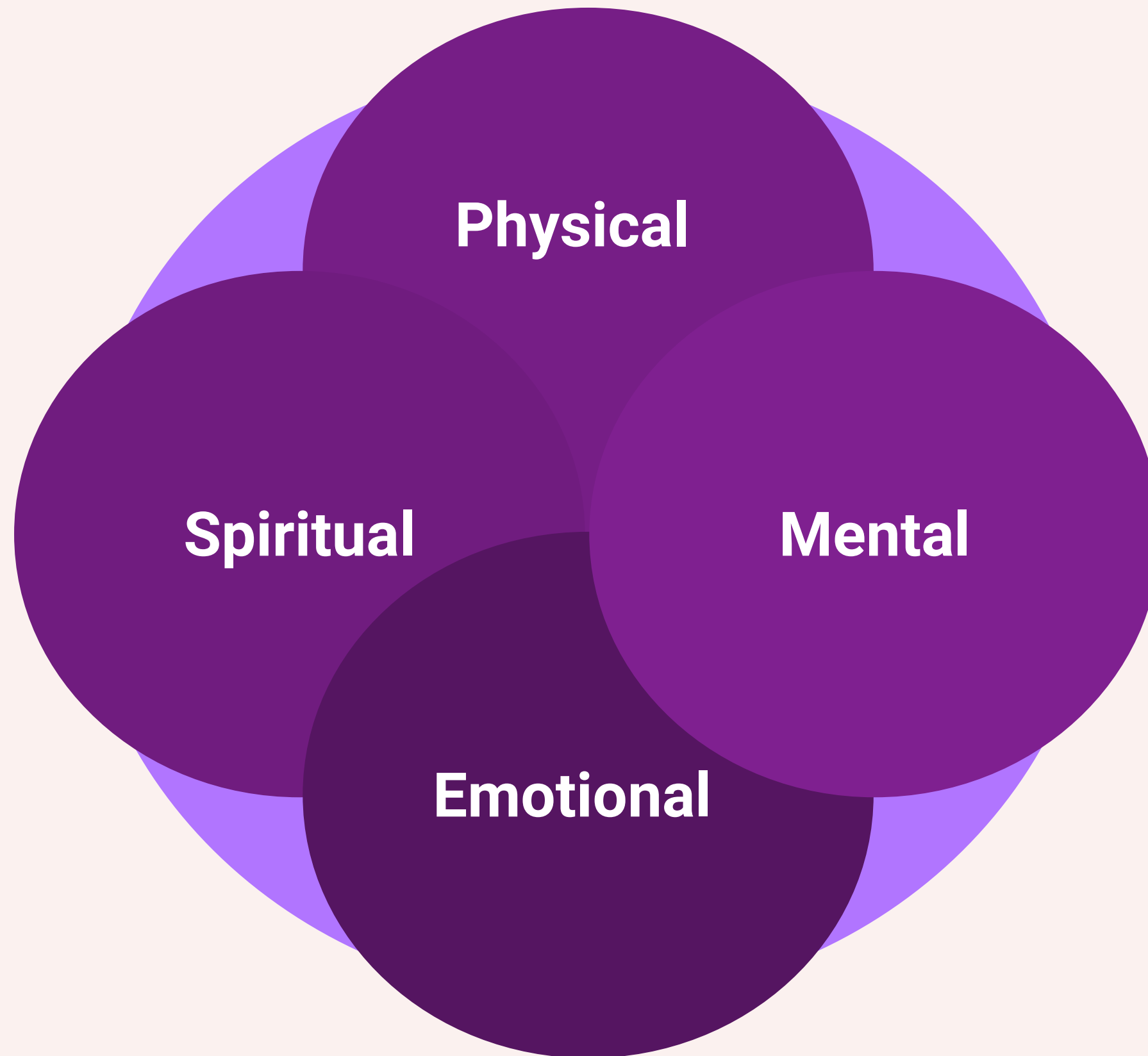
CONNECTION BETWEEN LAND & HEALTH

- 1. Traditional Understandings of the land
- 1. Perceived Health Benefits of Connection to Land
- 1. Positioned in Relation to Western Social Determinants of Health



1. Health Experiences


Health Experiences





Factors that Influence Health


Negative Factors

- Social Determinants of Health
 - Colonialism
 - Violence
 - Racism and Discrimination
 - Transphobia and Homophobia
- 



Factors that Influence Health

Positive Factors

- Two Spirit Identity
 - Spirituality
 - Connection to land
 - Connection to traditional cultural practices and activities, medicines, and foods
 - Self-determination
- 

Responses to Health Experiences

INDIVIDUAL



- Use/not use of substances
- Improved relationships with self
- Familial support
- Sense of community
- Connection to culture and identity as Two Spirit

HEALTH PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- Supports self-determination
- Cultural programming
- Understanding of sexual and gender diversity
- Accessible, affordable, non-judgmental support from counsellors who are informed about trans/Two Spirit issues

HEALTH POLICY

- Decolonizing environment
- Support of self-determination
- Create an environment of safety and support



2. Traditional Knowledge Systems & Practices

Traditional food is
medicine

Traditional foods can be
both plants and animals

Use of traditional foods
and medicine as a
practice that has
connection to the
spiritual

What are Traditional Foods and Medicines?

Acquiring traditional
foods and medicine is a
spiritual practice

Storytelling

Connected to ceremony



Traditional Food is Medicine

- Aboriginal concept of food as medicine
- Use of evergreen tree extracts and blueberry plant roots to control Type II diabetes
- Traditional diet and lifestyle patterns provide protection against western diseases, as rates of chronic, degenerative disease were historically very low in Indigenous populations
- Eating traditional foods leads to good health



Traditional Foods are Both Plants and Animals

- Traditional foods as both plant and animal harvested from the local environment
- Connection to the land, the plants, and the animals



Traditional Foods and Medicines: Connection to the Spiritual

- Plants are alive and have spirit
- Can be healed by traditional medicine, ceremonies, and healers
- Strong link between traditional medicine and spirituality
- Harvesting medicine is medicine
 - Therapeutic and healing aspect of being spiritually connected to the land



Traditional Foods and Medicines: Connection to Ceremony

- Holistic healing properties associated with being out in the land
- Holistic healing properties in partaking in preparations, ceremonies and all aspects of the harvest



Traditional Medicines and Food

PERCEIVED VALUE

- Can contribute to curing and healing from illness
- Indigenous medicines makes the connection between land, language, and culture
- Spiritual connection

REASONS FOR USING TRADITIONAL MEDICINES AND FOODS

- Used to treat illnesses (either physical, mental/emotional, or spiritual)
- Offers protection against Western diseases
- Food is medicine

Experiences Combining Traditional with Allopathic/Alternative Approaches to Health

Combination of Approaches

- *Traditional Medicine:*
 - Treating underlying cause
- *Western medicine*
 - Treating the symptoms

Tensions

- Use of marijuana and sweat lodges

Curing vs. Healing

- *Curing*
 - Treatment of illness
- *Healing*
 - A lifelong process

Traditional Medicine/Food Impacts on Health

POSITIVE

- Traditional diets viewed as healthier
- Traditional medicines/food use to maintain culture
- Maximized in the context of deep beliefs related to efficacy
- Facilitates a connection to the land as key Indigenous determinant of health
- More economical

NEGATIVE

- Shift to Western diet impacts health
 - Processed food less healthy
 - Loss of culture

**Practices and
Activities**

Traditional Practices and Activities

Impact of Participating

**Indigenous
Community
Responses**



Practices and Activities

- Diverse range of practices and activities varying by tribal identity
 - Can be ceremonial (e.g., talking circles, pipe ceremonies, sweat lodge, etc.)
 - Subsistence activity (e.g., hunting, fishing, trapping, etc.)
 - Arts and crafts (beading, painting, etc.)
 - Physical activity (e.g., sports, such as lacrosse)
- Participating is conceptualized as a right
 - Supports identity
 - Cultural continuity, etc.



Impact of Participation

- **Positive influences**

- Shapes values (e.g., sharing, etc.), a healing journey, used to cope, cleanses the soul, an expression of gratitude, an expression of one's cultural identity
- A connection to the spiritual world / to one's ancestors
- An expression of “living the good life”, “walking in balance”, “walking the Red Road”
- Creates space where one can be ‘normal’ and where social/cultural capital is accrued
- Aligns with and supports the development of and living and Indigenous identity

- **Challenges related to Scientific Studies exploring traditional activities/practices**

- Doesn't lend itself to scientific study
- Scientific rules around proof and evidence difficult to establish
- Marginalizes Indigenous knowing and doing



Community Reactions

- Changing attitudes: opening participation in ceremony
- Confers acceptance and belonging
 - Collective resilience that includes gender-diverse people
 - Facilitates cultural attachment
- Inclusive of traditional, pan-Indigenous and Christian approaches
- Recognition of traditional roles for two-spirit
- Assign ceremonial roles to two-spirit
- Can align with harm reduction approaches
- Community cultural programming
- Offers a protector factor
- Traditional activities considered a right

**Relationship to
the West**

Connection between Land and Health

**Traditional
Understanding of
Land**

**Perceived Health
Benefits of
Connection to
Land**



Relationship to the West

- Critique of colonialism and its impact for Indigenous LGBTQ2S
 - Place to begin / mindful of need to focus on strengths
 - Under researched, particularly and specific to Indigenous trans/gender-diverse populations
- Western “progress and development” (i.e., colonial expansion)
 - A commodity to be exploited and controlled for profit vs. relational and connected
 - Negative impacts on Indigenous health
 - Marginalizes traditional knowledge systems
 - Environmental racism that curtails traditional activities
 - Health and social crises



Traditional Understanding of Land

- **Indigenous conceptualizations of land/health**
 - Feminine spirit (i.e., Mother Earth; nurturing)
 - “Of the land” (e.g., reciprocal balance, connected, everything is alive, relational, accessed via ceremony)
 - Extends usual biomedical parameters of physiological wellbeing
 - Notions of “being alive well” or “living the good life” / being part of the web / feeling connected



Perceived Health Benefits of Connection to Land

- Cultural gender-diverse identity matters
 - Via ceremony, prayer, meditation, etc. / supports Indigenous identity
- Belief that the land is alive
 - Direct link to health, wellbeing, and healing practices / fostering relationship to land part of one's healing journey
 - Confers a sense of “agency and choice” / self-determination
 - Provides a sense that one isn't alone / “always there when in need”
 - Reduces stress and improves resilience/strong mind / balance



Discussion: Lessons Learnt

- There is not a **clear definition** of transgender identity from an Indigenous lens in the literature
- Methodological limitations that don't lend itself to scientific study / proof or evidence rules in Western traditions
- Indigenous knowledge continues to be at the margins of Western thought
- Most of the literature is deficit-based and framed around lack of “fill in the blank”
- Lack of research on the link between land and health

Future Indigenous Trans Study: Preliminary

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

- What does wellness look like for Indigenous trans and gender diverse peoples?

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

- Community-Based Research (CBR)
- Indigenous & Decolonizing Approach
- Two-Eyed Seeing
- Strengths-Based

PROPOSED METHODS

- **Data Collection**
 - Urban/Rural
 - Body Mapping
 - In-Depth Interviews
- **Participatory Analysis**
 - Participatory (DEPICT Model)
 - Narrative and Visual Analysis



Questions/Answers?