

Spirituality in cancer survivorship healing for First Nations & Metis people: The National Picture study

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Background

- Spirituality is deeply embedded in cultural traditions, ways of knowing and holistic healing for Indigenous people
- In cancer survivorship, spirituality has been shown to impact treatment decisions and healing.
- A holistic approach to care decreases cancer burden, increases survival rates and enhances well-being & quality of life
- A better understanding of spirituality in cancer survivorship is necessary to provide culturally responsive healthcare & programs.

Objectives

- To explore the meanings of spirituality in cancer survivorship with First Nations and Metis.
- To explore how First Nations and Metis people incorporate spirituality into cancer survivorship healing.

Results

Spirituality was described as having multiple dimensions:

Fusing Self With Traditional Roots And Culture

That's when you remember who you really are... and realizing that everything has energy and we're all part of that...

Connecting Body & Mind as Integral to Holism

You know, healing begins, it begins at the root, because if you don't take care of the root it just carries on through the rest of the tree.

Interconnecting Creator, Ancestors, Community & Nature

*Because you are actually connecting to who you really are. You know you're that God force energy, Great Spirit.
And you connect to others who are connected too.*

Giving Meaning, Strength & Belief in the Journey

I still don't know where the strength for that came from. Maybe from my Ojibway grandfather...

Spirituality was incorporated into healing by:

- Giving thanks
- Attending places of spiritual connectedness
 - Song
- Prayer and speaking to the creator
- Engaging the sun and the moon

Approach

- This study is part of a larger arts based project that created cancer survivorship knowledge with Indigenous peoples to establish a foundation for culturally responsive psychosocial interventions
- 31 Cancer survivors from 5 communities in 3 Canadian provinces (BC, Ontario, Quebec) participated. Data included:
 - Interviews (n=20)
 - Sharing sessions (n=8)
 - Journals (n=5)
- Data were inductively analyzed into descriptive themes related to the meanings of spirituality in healing and the ways in which participants incorporated spirituality into survivorship.

Conclusion

- Spirituality is embedded within the cancer journey for First Nations and Metis people.
- Spirituality gave survivors a sense of strength and connectedness, while providing meaning to the experiences of cancer.

