



FINDING OUR POWER TOGETHER PRESENTS

RECONCILI-ACTION IN PRACTICE:

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A discussion on culturally safe practices to support youth beyond reconciliation

STARTING IN A GOOD WAY

Welcoming, land acknowledgment, and opening





AGENDA

Welcoming and Opening

Embracing all attendees, honouring the land, and introductions to who we are and what we do.

Contextualizing Indigenous Children and Youth in Canada

Exploring the experiences and well-being of Indigenous young people within the Canadian context.

Indigenous Teachings to Guide our Path

An exploration into the 7 Fire Prophecies and how they can guide us in our journey beyond reconciliation.

Wiingushk Okaadenige: The Sweetgrass Braid

Our research and approach to working with Indigenous young people across Canada.

Employing Reconcili-ACTION

Findings of the implementation of our approach and methods of employment.

Closing and Reflecting

A closing circle to reflect on the day's teachings and any outstanding questions.



ABOUT US: FINDING OUR POWER TOGETHER

Finding our Power Together is an Indigenous-led national charitable organization that seeks to support Indigenous children, youth, and communities across Canada to access resources that enable them to thrive.

WHAT WE DO:

- Individualized mental health coaching
- Group psychoeducation programs and activities
- Cultural ceremonies and events
- Youth capacity building and leadership
- Research and resource development
- Mental health training
- Community-based programs and interventions

To get involved with any of our programs or services, get in touch!
info@findingourpowertogether.ca or check our website at findingourpowertogether.com

THE SPEAKERS

Nyle Johnston



Kaitlyn Wilcox



Nicole Ineese-Nash



WHERE OUR UNDERSTANDINGS COME FROM

The information presented in this presentation has been derived from Finding Our Power Together's research to determine the most effective and culturally safe approaches of care for Indigenous young people.

1. Systematic Literature Reviews:

- Indigenous Youth Mental Health
- Child and Youth Care Approaches with Indigenous Youth
- DBT with Indigenous Youth

2. Key Informant Interviews

3. Thematic Analysis

4. Program Evaluation Data and discussions with Youth

Research conclusions led to the development of the Braided Approach which is our framework in working alongside Indigenous young people. The effectiveness of this approach is assessed through ongoing program evaluations.

A field of daisies in soft, golden light, with the title text overlaid.

RECOGNIZING THE PAST

Historical Context of Indigenous Youth Experiences

RECOGNIZING THE PAST: HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH EXPERIENCES

Pre-colonial Indigenous Societies

- Complex social structures and governance
- Deeply rooted connections to land and water
- Diverse languages, ceremonies, and educational systems
- Children's role: Central to community & its continuity

Impact of Colonization

- Forced displacements & loss of traditional territories
- Introduction of European diseases and subsequent population decimation
- Cultural suppression: Banning of languages, ceremonies, and traditional ways
- Residential schools, day schools and adoption: Forced assimilation, abuse, and cultural erasure

Lasting Impacts

- Generational trauma: Emotional, physical, and spiritual scars passed down
- Systemic inequities: Education, healthcare, justice, and employment disparities
- Loss of languages and cultural practices
- Ongoing challenges of land rights and resource access

HISTORIC FAILINGS OF CANADA'S SOCIAL SYSTEMS

Canada's past attempts at supporting Indigenous youth are marred by cultural blind spots and systemic oversights, underserved and sometimes harmed Indigenous youth. Recognizing these failings is the first step in building a more inclusive, respectful, and effective system.

- **Access Challenges:** Services have been sparse or non-existent in remote Indigenous regions, making access difficult. Language barriers, especially for Elders, have largely remained unaddressed, creating communication challenges.
- **Service Gaps:** The system has frequently overlooked the profound effects of historical traumas such as colonization and forced assimilation. Symptoms displayed by Indigenous youth have often been misinterpreted through a western lens, leading to inappropriate treatment.
- **Service Fragmentation:** Coordination between various services has been poor, leading to fragmented care. Mental health care has been siloed, making holistic treatment difficult.
- **Cultural Disconnect:** Services have often been designed and implemented without Indigenous input or consultation. Many providers have been unfamiliar with or dismissive of Indigenous cultural norms and values.
- **Traditional Healing Oversights:** There has been a strong priority given to Eurocentric models of mental health, often at the expense of Indigenous healing practices. Traditional Indigenous methods of healing and therapy have been sidelined or deemed "unscientific."
- **Erosion of Trust:** The legacy of past exploitations, like residential schools, has fueled apprehensions and mistrust. Many Indigenous individuals have feared discrimination or misjudgment within the mental health system.
- **Bias & Stereotyping:** Prevailing preconceived notions about Indigenous peoples have influenced therapeutic decisions. These misconceptions have often hampered the quality of care received.



UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT

The Contexts, Needs, and Desires of Indigenous Youth Today



UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS YOUTH TODAY

Indigenous youth are a diverse demographic in Canada. They are a vibrant and resilient population, yet they continue to face significant challenges



Urban vs. Rural Divergence: While some Indigenous youth in urban areas may access modern amenities, they can feel culturally dislocated. Conversely, those in rural regions, although closer to traditional lands, face barriers to education, healthcare, and services.



Intersectional Identities: Many Indigenous youth navigate intersecting identities each adding layers to their lived experiences and perspectives. These intersections are often overlooked in mainstream services.



Digital Age Connectivity: Indigenous youth are leveraging technology for community building, information sharing, and storytelling. This provides opportunities and challenges, such as cyberbullying and online discrimination.



Socioeconomic Disparities: Indigenous youth frequently confront socioeconomic disparities, including higher rates of poverty, food insecurity, housing security, unemployment, and inadequate access to quality education and healthcare. These disparities can hinder their overall well-being and opportunities for personal growth and success.



Cultural Identity Preservation: Many Indigenous youth struggle with preserving their cultural identity in a rapidly changing world. Balancing the pressures of modern society with the desire to maintain their cultural heritage can lead to identity conflicts and challenges in finding a sense of belonging.

INDIGENOUS YOUTH STATISTICS

- In Canada, there are approximately **1.8** million Indigenous people, making up **5.0%** of the total national population.
- Within this demographic, **17%** are young individuals aged between **15 and 24**, illustrating a youthful population dynamic.
- A pressing concern is the representation of Indigenous children in the foster care system. Although they make up only **7.7%** of the child population, a staggering **53.8%** of children in foster care are of Indigenous descent.
- From a health perspective, Indigenous youth face challenges with higher disability rates, being **2-3** times greater than the national average.
- The suicide rates for Indigenous communities are also significantly higher: Inuit youth experience rates that are about **24** times the national average, while First Nations youth face rates that are three times higher.
- Additionally, Indigenous youth confront socio-economic challenges, having higher poverty rates. More specific data is currently being researched to understand the full scope of these challenges.

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH TODAY?

- **Access to Culturally Relevant Mental Health Support**
- **Revitalization of Cultural Teachings and Ceremonies**
- **Education and Employment Equity**
- **Reconnection with Land and Environment**
- **Empowerment Through Mentorship**
- **Infrastructure & Basic Needs**

By recognizing these needs and understanding their historical context, we can take meaningful steps toward addressing them and supporting Indigenous youth in their journey to healing and thriving.



ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

Promising Possibilities for Indigenous Youth Futurity

TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS TO GUIDE OUR WAY

Led by

NYLE MIIGIZI JOHNSTON



OUR APPROACH: THE SWEETGRASS BRAID

The Braided Sweetgrass Approach to youth mental health, is a comprehensive and culturally safe strategy developed through the synthesis of knowledge from systematic literature reviews and consultations with mental health providers. It weaves together principles from:



Indigenous mental health models



Child and Youth Care approaches

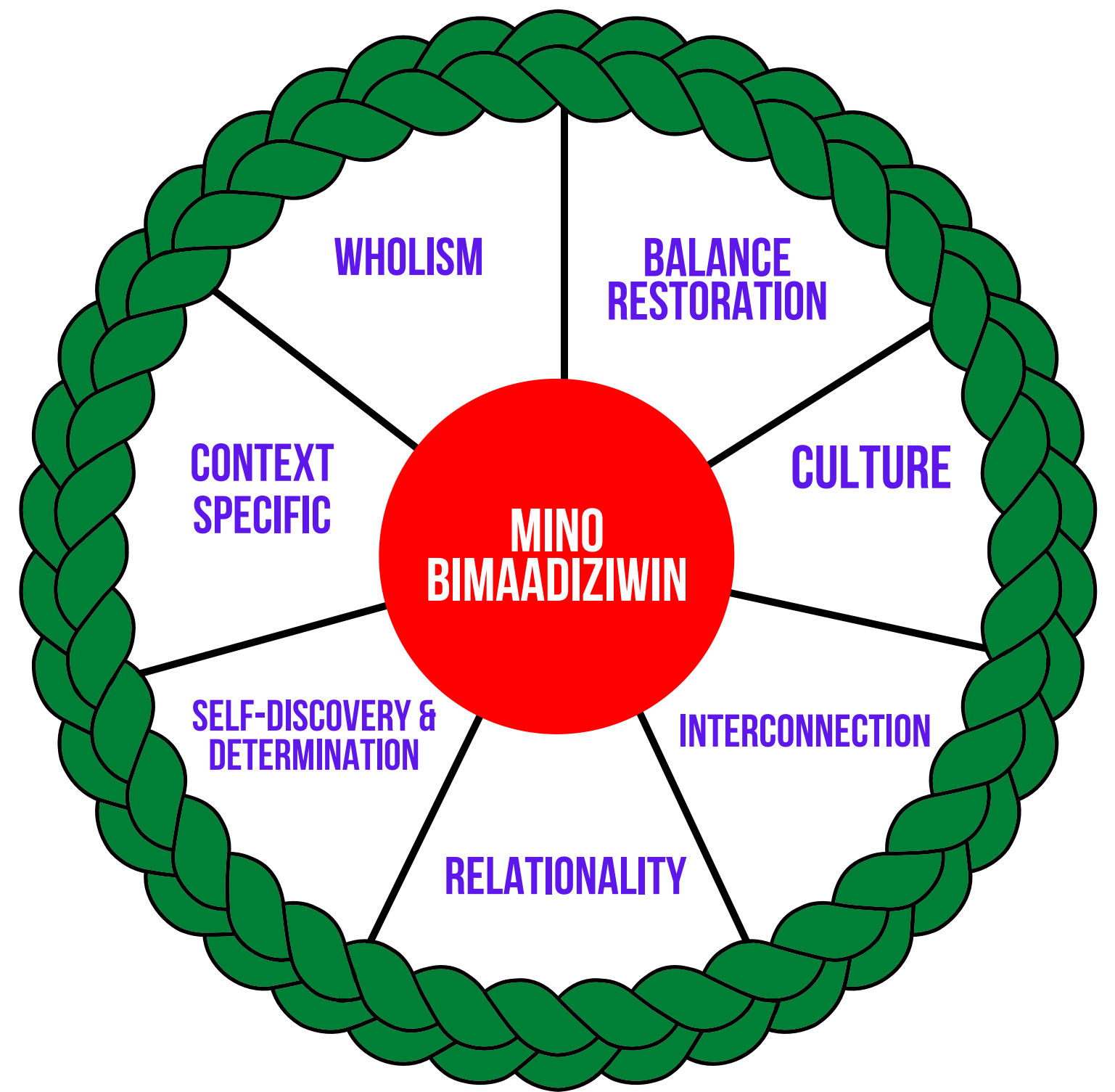
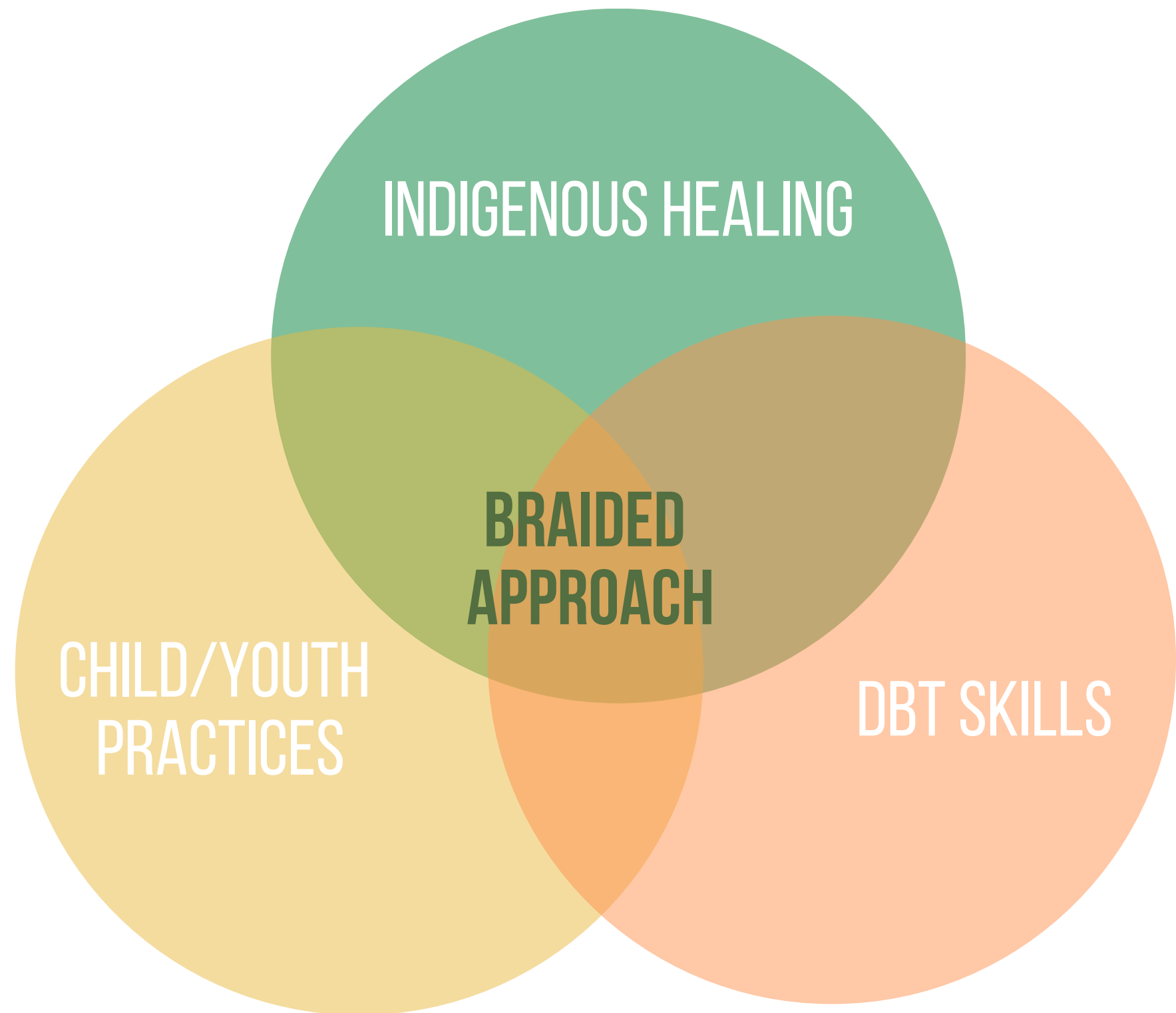


Dialectic Behaviour Therapy practices

This approach is designed to address the mental and spiritual well-being of Indigenous youth in Canada. It recognizes the importance of integrating traditional wisdom, modern mental health practices, and culturally relevant care to best support the unique needs of Indigenous youth.



PRINCIPLES OF AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CULTURALLY SAFE PRACTICE

- **Cultural Safety:** Prioritize cultural safety and having an awareness about the history, traditions, and unique needs of the Indigenous community you work with. Ensuring to dismantle colonial narratives of homogeneity of Indigenous populations.
- **Self-Determination:** Allow for Indigenous young peoples and communities to exercise their inherent right to self-determination. Engage in regular consultations and feedback sessions to ensure that the space remains culturally relevant and responsive to the community's evolving needs.
- **Fostering Relationality:** Prioritize the establishment of genuine, respectful relationships with Indigenous youth and their families within the culturally safe space. Understand that building trust is an ongoing process that may take time. By nurturing these authentic relationships, you create an environment where Indigenous youth feel valued, supported, and connected.
- **Indigenous Leadership and Staffing:** Employ Indigenous staff members or consultants who can provide cultural guidance, language interpretation, and a deeper understanding of the community's unique needs. This is fundamental in making sure that Indigenous knowledges and traditions are not employed incorrectly.
- **Trauma-Informed Care:** Acknowledge and address the intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous communities within the culturally safe space. Implement trauma-informed care practices that promote healing and resilience.
- **Traditional Healing Spaces:** Designate areas within the space for traditional healing practices, such as smudging or prayer. These spaces should be both accessible and respected and maintained in a culturally appropriate manner.



RECONCILI-ACTION IN PRACTICE

Conceptualizing Care Beyond Reconciliation Frameworks

MOVING BEYOND RECONCILIATION TO RECONCILI-ACTION

Reconciliation is not an endpoint but a foundational step. To truly support Indigenous youth in thriving, practitioners must take meaningful actions that go beyond reconciliation frameworks.

- **Centering Indigenous Voices:** Actively involve Indigenous youth, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and communities in decision-making processes. Center their voices and lived experiences in care initiatives.
- **Culturally Safe and Holistic Care:** Prioritize culturally safe and holistic care that addresses the interconnected mental, physical, spiritual, and cultural well-being of Indigenous youth.
- **Continuous Learning and Unlearning:** Commit to ongoing education and self-examination. Challenge biases, stereotypes, and colonial attitudes. Engage in cultural humility training.
- **Community-Led Solutions:** Collaborate closely with Indigenous organizations and communities to co-create solutions tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of Indigenous youth.
- **Advocacy and Policy Change:** Advocate for policy changes and systemic reforms that address the root causes of disparities faced by Indigenous youth, particularly in areas like mental health, education, and housing.

These practitioner actions represent a commitment to Reconcili-action, where practitioners actively contribute to a future where Indigenous youth not only survive but thrive in their communities.



QUESTIONS

Opportunities to ask questions or share



DONATE!



THANK YOU
Miigwetch

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SIGN UP, VISIT OUR WEBSITE
WWW.FINDINGOURPOWERTOGETHER.COM**