

Partnership, Knowledge Translation, and Substance Abuse Prevention With a First Nations Community

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What Is the Purpose of This Study?

- To understand the benefits of culturally adapting and implementing a 3-year, school-based, drug and alcohol prevention program for First Nation children and youth.

What Is the Problem?

- Substance abuse is a significant area of concern within Aboriginal communities across Canada. However, effective school-based substance abuse prevention programs are not typically available to the majority of First Nations schools.
- Prevention programs that are available often fail to integrate the cultural beliefs and values of individuals outside of the dominant culture.
- More research is required on the benefits of culturally appropriate drug and alcohol prevention programs that incorporate the beliefs, values, language, and visual images of the community.

What Are the Findings?

- Qualitative measures revealed a positive effect of the culturally adapted program on youth.
- Elders and community members observed positive changes in student's cultural knowledge and cited observed behavioral changes as evidence of the adapted program's success.
- The culturally adapted program is seen as surpassing the original in terms of embodying the values of the community.
- Positive community developments occurred as a result of the program adaptation process, which followed a community-based participatory research approach.
- Results of the quantitative measures were mixed, in part as a result of inconsistent and unpredictable student school attendance.

Who Should Care Most?

- Educators, school officials, and health care providers working in First Nations communities.
- Policymakers in the areas of health and education.
- Community members and leaders.
- Substance abuse, public health, and youth program providers.

Recommendations for Action

- Highly effective, evidence-based substance abuse prevention programs for school-aged children can be successfully adapted to incorporate the cultural beliefs, values, language, and visual images of the community where the program is delivered.
- Community Elders are the keepers of the Nation's oral traditions and knowledge and their input and guidance is an important and necessary part of program adaptation, implementation, and evaluation.
- Culture, language, history, and spirituality are the foundations of Aboriginal identity and are essential components of program adaptation.
- Cultural adaptations should go beyond surface level cultural markers to include Aboriginal worldviews and ways of knowing, as well as recognition of historical impacts on health and education.
- A community-based participatory research approach is a catalyst for community development and an important component of program sustainability.
- Attention to both community capacity building and academic capacity building is important to ensure a successful project.