

How Young Indigenous Persons in Alberta Want to be Supported to Live a Life With Continued, Resilience, Meaning and Hope

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AbSPORU
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HONOURING LIFE
INDIGENOUS WELLNESS CORE

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Background

- Indigenous life promotion aims to identify proactive efforts that can be implemented to provide helpful supports. Supports must include culturally and individually relevant strategies such as connection to community, identity, land, and language and offer validation of realities of Indigenous lived experience.
- Strategies that aim to promote self-determination in health, wellness, and quality of life and consider the diversity of Indigenous People are promising for reducing harmful stigmas. A gap was also identified in a collective understanding of shared successes and adversities faced by Indigenous young persons.
- A further gap was found about what "living well" beyond "surviving/existing" means and how young Indigenous persons in Alberta want to be supported in living a life with continued resilience, meaning and hope.

Objective

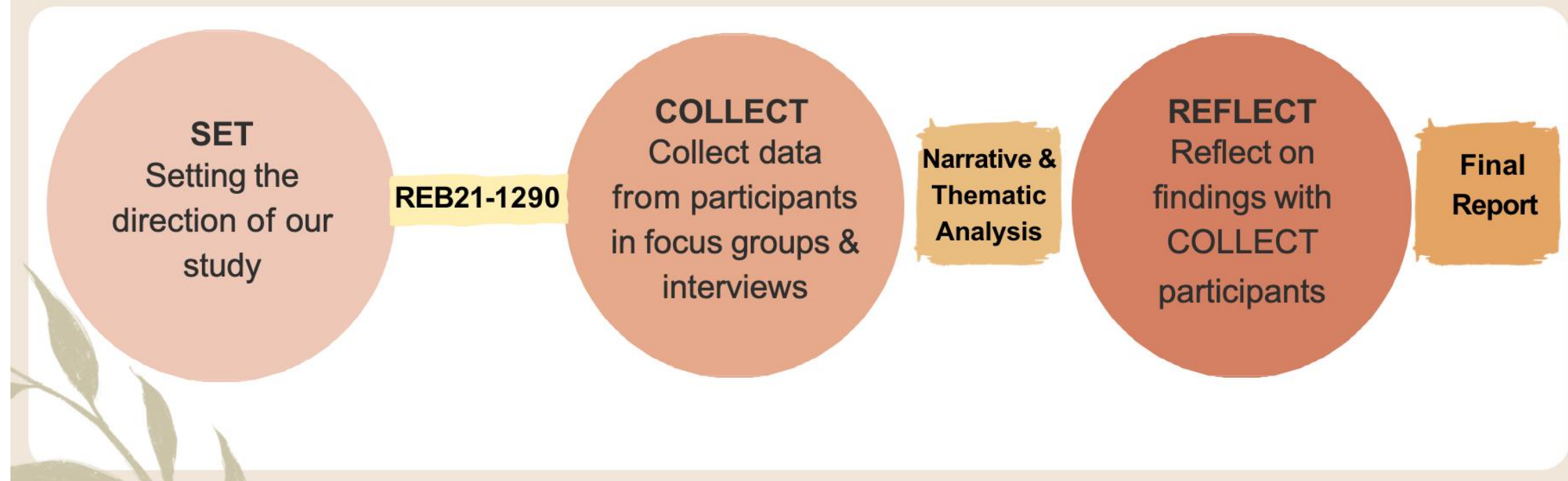
To explore and describe how young Indigenous persons in Alberta want to be supported to live a life with continued, resilience, meaning and hope.

Methods

PaCER Process

Patient and Community Engagement Research (PaCER) guides patient and community members to bring patient and community-informed health research evidence into healthcare planning, practice, and policy.

BY, WITH, & FOR PATIENT & COMMUNITY MEMBERS



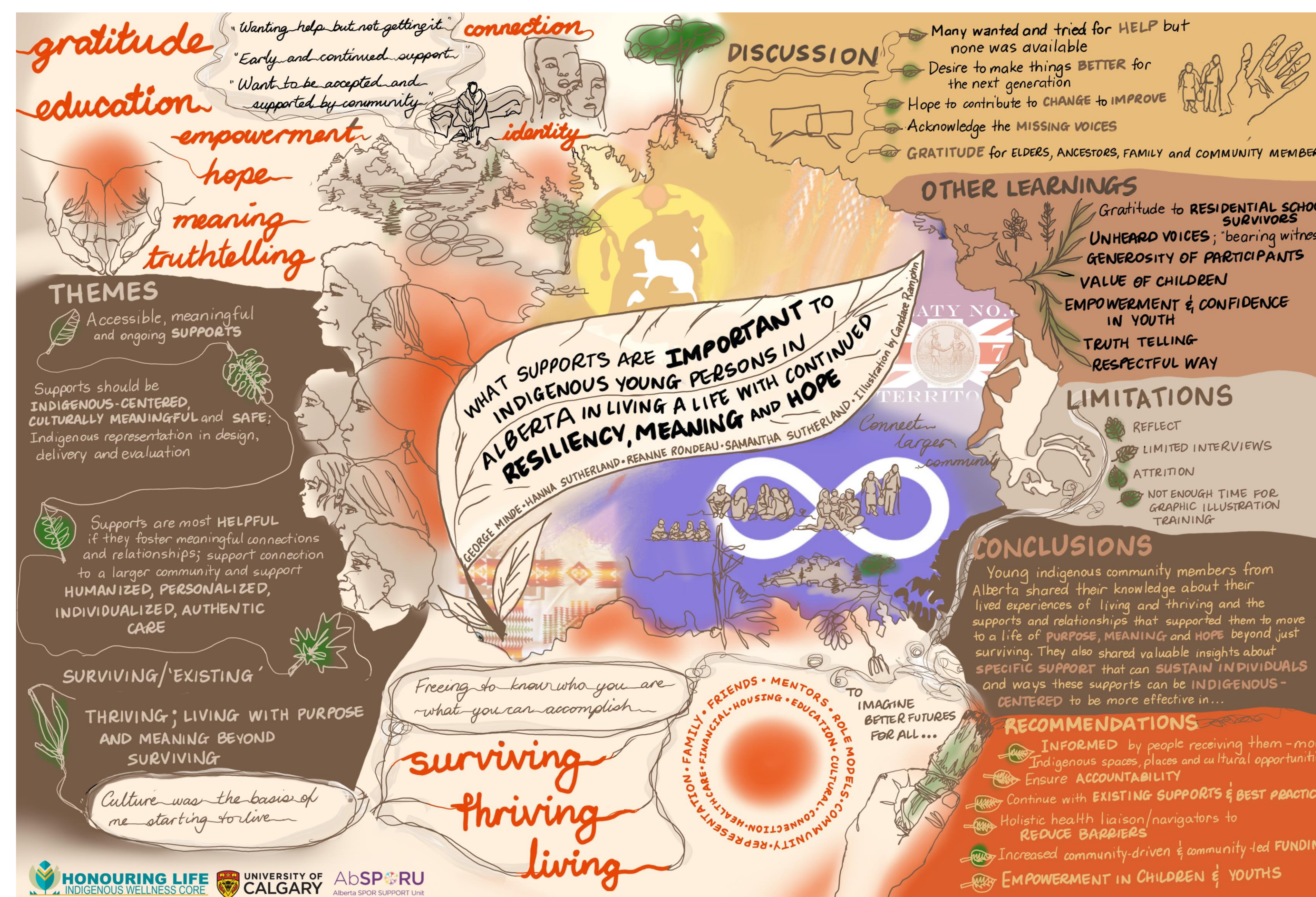
- A process of qualitative inquiry using a SET-COLLECT-REFLECT approach to integrate the community perspective throughout the research.
- Focus groups (n=3) and interview (n=1) were recorded and transcribed, and then this data was analyzed collectively and iteratively by the team using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- A graphic representation of key findings and learnings was co-created with support from the AbSPORU Learning Health Systems team. This will be shared back with COLLECT participants for member checking and validation of accuracy.

Results

Characteristics	Participants (n=11)		Characteristics		Participants (n=11)		
	n	%			n	%	
Indigenous Identity	Status First Nation	6	55%	Gender	Man	3	27%
	Non-Status First Nation	0	0%		Woman	8	73%
	Métis	4	36%	Age, years	18-21	2	18%
	Inuk/Inuit	1	9%		22-25	4	36%
					26-30	5	45%
Do you identify as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ Community?	Yes	5	45%	AHS Zone	Northern Zone	4	36%
	No	6	55%		Edmonton Zone	3	27%
					Central Zone	1	9%
					Calgary Zone	3	27%
					South Zone	0	0%
Do you or have you live(d) on reserve or on a Métis settlement?	Yes, currently	1	9%	Education Experience	K-12	1	8%
	Yes, in the past	2	18%		College/Trades	6	46%
	No	8	73%		University	4	31%
					Graduate	0	0%
					Post-Graduate	0	0%
				Place based/cultural learning	2	15%	

Results

Theme	Description	Illustrative Quotes
Theme 1: Accessible, meaningful, and ongoing support Subthemes: 1. Barriers to Supports 2. Authentic Help 3. How and When Supports are Delivered 4. Individualized Supports 5. Need for a Health Liaison Role	Participants experiences accessing the supports they needed for healthy day-to-day living as well as supports for moving beyond surviving or 'existing' - to being able to live a life with purpose and meaning. Participants described barriers to accessing more tangible supports; challenges with when and how supports were offered; and whether the supports were indeed supportive or helpful to the participants circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "There's a lot of support that people can access where it's like a one-time or one-stop or there's not follow-up, there's not consistency with it. And I think that's what a lot of people need in any type of supports is that check-in later on and that accountability." "My experience with the supports that I've had to go through, or that I tried to get in contact with, they always have different requirements. And sometimes I just don't meet the requirements, but then there's nothing else available. It also weighs on you mentally because then you are in the mindset where oh, well, maybe I shouldn't be feeling this way because they only help people who are going through this and I'm not, so maybe I shouldn't be feeling this way. And then that just adds to the list of problems. And then it add to the list of like mental health issues that you're dealing with." "My nation has a lot of resources for community members, but I'm not a part of that after moving. So just trying to find the different resources for that, that are open to everyone, to make everyone feel welcome." "Most people don't go to doctors because they feel like they're being stigmatized or, "Well you're just a druggie, you're just an alcoholic, you're just going to use this to get high, or you're just going to sell these to get what you need." It sucks. So, I think it needs to - we need more Indigenous healthcare workers, doctors and nurses, everything." "These people have the keys to what you're trying to do. You ever have someone who's just hanging in and you're just like "Why does it have to be this person?"" "Having someone Indigenous walk you through, or the navigators, Indigenous navigators to walk you through the minute you walk in the door to go with you to all the appointments and you need to see and wish you well and explain to you what resources are there, what you need to do. And there's a support line."
Theme 2: Indigenous-centered, culturally meaningful and safe supports	Supports should be Indigenous-centered, culturally meaningful and safe; Indigenous representation is needed in design, delivery, and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having representation, "show's to our Indigenous people and say's "This is a safe place. This is a safe place to come to. This is a safe place to help you, to support you, whether, you know, whatever kind of supports you have, you're welcome to come in." "Connection, acceptance, being proud, being confident, identity, all is linked together. That's what we need more of, whether you're in your community, whether you're outside community, there should always be, an Indigenous people, we need to have each other's backs." "If you're not knowing where you are, who you are, where you come from...you need to belong, you need to belong somewhere"
Theme 3: Fostering meaningful connections and relationships	Supports are most helpful if they foster meaningful connections and relationships (ways culture and community connection can help youth recognize their identity); support connection to a larger community and support humanized, personalized, individualized, authentic care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The more people I could talk to and spaces that were safe, Indigenous people my age, and we can all kind of relate just really took some of the external and internal pressure and how I was feeling." "Breaking down those like silos, those like silos standards that make us compartmentalise ourselves when we go into different contexts, and we go into different environments, right? There needs to be a humanising aspect and all the spaces, we can't express ourselves so easily like other people. We feel that if we say something they're going to put us down because there's always that stigma on Indigenous people."
Theme 4: Surviving/ 'Existing'	Participant definitions of surviving or 'existing'; experiences of basic needs not being there or barely there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Surviving and living, they're all kind of like different mind states that you're in. Growing up, a lot of people are in survival mode, just trying to get by, just trying to get through the day. And I find that a lot of people don't have the support that they need and the resources they need to be able to change that mindset to get into living, instead of just trying to get through the day, to be able to enjoy every day and be grateful." "I believe that living for me is honoring who I am and living in my own truth and that is going to ceremony, living a cultural life and being in a cultural setting, so that I can continue to move forward. Surviving was what I did for most of my life when I didn't have culture and when I didn't have community behind me. And that was just - I was literally floating through life and was surviving. It wasn't - honestly, I wouldn't say it was - I wouldn't say it was surviving - I'd say it was just being there, honestly like I find when you're in that living mode, you get a whole another set of barriers because you didn't foresee what was to come once you're out of survival mode. So it's easy to set yourself back."
Theme 5: Thriving; living with purpose and meaning beyond surviving	Specific supports that moved people to this space and the ways these were helpful in the delivery of them including consistent, coordinated, and continual supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Having hope or having people in your life where you can be anything you want to be and do anything you want to do." "I think to me personally, living with purpose, meaning and hope is connecting with my culture, finding that sense of self, the sense of stability, 'm practicing gratitude and affirmations every day to help change the way I think. It's definitely helping. Once I'm able to help myself to be able to help others, help the ones who didn't have help, help the ones who weren't able to access the help, I feel like that's very important to me."



References

- Allan, B., & Smylie, J. (2015). *First Peoples, second class treatment: The role of racism in the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada*. Wellesley Institute.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Patient and Community Engagement Research (PaCER) | Home. (2023, February 16). University of Calgary. <https://www.ucalgary.ca/patient-community-engagement-research>



Recommendations

Recommendations	Description
1. Indigenous-centred Resources	<p>Interventions and programs need to be informed by the people who will be receiving them. They need to be Indigenous-centred, and ideally delivered by Indigenous people for Indigenous people.</p> <p>The evaluation of resources must incorporate the voices of those receiving services to ensure they are accessible, timely, appropriate and helpful. Those who provide contributions of this kind should be adequately compensated and recognized for the value of their lived-experience expertise.</p> <p>Indigenous young persons expressed their desire to connect as a larger Indigenous Community. There needs to be a greater number and accessibility of Indigenous spaces, places, and opportunities for cultural (re)connection. This includes both physical and virtual locations to connect. This is especially important for those no longer living in their home community.</p>
2. Accountability	<p>There has been ample research linking the effects of colonialism as a determinate of Indigenous health. Allan and Smylie (2015) note that "in Canada, there have been significant contributions towards understanding the specific determinants of Indigenous peoples' health and well-being through Indigenous worldviews (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2012; Loppie Reading & Wien, 2009; Reading, 2009; Smylie, 2009). These Indigenous conceptualizations of the social determinants of health emphasize the fundamental role of colonization, racism, social exclusion and a lack of self-determination in the alarming disparities in Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples' health" (p.7).</p> <p>Our participants shared their experiences accessing supports which further emphasised the need to address racism in health policy, research, and service provision, as well as within the training and continued education of health professionals. (Allan and Smylie, 2015). Accountability includes evaluation (using an Indigenous lens/framework/approach) of how services are made available and delivered. All resource providers must be accountable for the continued cultural safety of their services, and continued education and training.</p> <p>Indigenous persons should receive accessible, equitable, and safe spaces and care with every provider.</p>
3. Person-Centred Support	<p>Person-centred support involves offering continuous and ongoing resources that are proactive and responsive as opposed to reactive. There is a need for creating simple and clear processes for accessing supports; offering humanizing care that does not reproduce power imbalances or traumas; and ensuring supports are delivered in ways that are trauma-informed and culturally safe. Person-centred support would not, for instance, ever involve police in mental health responses or care.</p>
4. Enhancing Empowerment in children & youth	<p>Closing the mental health gap for Indigenous youth and children requires a commitment to learning & educational resources and opportunities that are culturally relevant and safe and foster life skills, self-esteem and courage through connection to family, community, culture, and ancestry. Programming that addresses this need could include family-centered resources; sports and physical activity opportunities; life skills training (cooking, parenthood, financial literacy, and others); awareness sessions on substance use, grief, and other mental health topics; and Indigenous history and ways of knowing and doing.</p> <p>Indigenous young persons expressed their need to feel understood and to connect. Indigenous representation within these types of programming's is an important aspect to empower youth and allow them to be seen.</p>
5. Holistic health liaison/navigators	<p>Health liaisons or navigators can help reduce barriers such as language, complex systems, and unclear or convoluted eligibility criteria for programs. Health liaisons or navigators can help clients find the best modality for accessing treatment or services; reduce the burden of paperwork, support access to referrals, transportation, and other essential services. This could help reduce the re-traumatization many participants shared about having to tell your story again and again.</p> <p>It is important to acknowledge the barriers to accessing support add additional, and sometimes overwhelming work, in times of surviving rather than living.</p>
6. Increased funding	<p>Community directed and managed financial commitments are required to support the above recommendations, including improving existing Indigenous-centred resources and creating new ones; improving the accountability and evaluation of supports; and establishing Indigenous health liaisons and navigators throughout the province.</p> <p>This also includes greater accountability and evaluation within health care systems to ensure Indigenous person receive accessible, equitable, and safe spaces and care.</p>

Conclusion

- Indigenous young persons identified the characteristics of supports that are successful, including:
 - Accessible, meaningful, and proactive and ongoing;
 - Indigenous-centered, culturally meaningful, responsive and safe;
 - Foster meaningful relationships and connections; and are
 - Holistic and connected.
- Our team developed six key recommendations to strengthen supports for life promotion for Indigenous youth in Alberta.
- Being able to have equal access and treatment in any health area means being able to walk into anywhere and get a treatment that is fair to everyone.
- More research needs to be done to continue with the priorities and recommendations we have identified. As well, it is essential that those impacted by the research are included in the research that impacts them. We have shared Indigenous community centered, peer-to-peer approaches to effectively and meaningfully including essential lived-experiences into the way we do research. This can serve to greater accountability and decolonization of larger health care system and services.