

Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada: Beyond the Social

edited by Margo Greenwood, Sarah de Leeuw,
Nicole Marie Lindsay and Charlotte Reading

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Reviewed by Hannah Tait Neufeld

Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition, University of Guelph

In May 2012, Canada and other United Nations member states endorsed the *Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health*, which set out actions to address health inequities. Consistent with its commitment, Canada has pledged to invest in existing evidence-based health and social supports, while addressing challenges associated with outstanding inequalities such as Indigenous peoples' health (PHAC 2013). As discussed in the introduction of this timely edited collection, social determinants of health (SDoH) have historically acknowledged the need for an exploration beyond the individualistic, biomedical approaches to health that have dominated mainstream medicine and public health for many years (Commission on Social Determinants of Health 2008; Marmot 2005; Raphael 2009). The body of literature that has emerged in this area of research during the past decade has made it possible and necessary, I would argue, to investigate the complexities of health inequities that continue to exist for Indigenous peoples relative to majority population groups (Richmond and Ross 2009; Loppie Reading and Wien 2009; Adelson 2005). Previous SDoH approaches applied to Indigenous groups have not consistently addressed colonialism as one of the core determinants associated with the myriad of health disparities that persist (Gracey and King 2009). This edited collection proposes an evolution of the social. Chapter contributors integrate a broader perspective, with the incorporation of *Indigenous Knowledge* as a frame of reference towards a deeper understanding of current realities. The majority of perspectives presented are at the same time uniquely Indigenous, to allow for a reconceptualization of how the health of Indigenous peoples is determined in Canada.

The book is divided into four sections, with the first five chapters setting the context for a complex discussion of the unique dimensions of Indigenous health. Senior scholars such as Charlotte Loppie and Marlene Brant Castellano contribute their voices to the first part of the book. Dr. Loppie employs the eloquent metaphor of a tree's roots to represent the structural determinants or foundations from which the more visible determinants evolve. Rounding out this first section of the book are the holistic perspectives and dimensions of Indigenous knowledge systems described by Mi'kmaw Elders Murdena and Albert Marshall, in collaboration with Cheryl Bartlett. They present the concept of *Two-Eyed Seeing* as a guiding principle for bringing together Indigenous and Western worldviews, in order to expand perspectives and bring about balance and further understanding. Shirley Tagalik uniquely conveys an Inuit point of view in her chapter on knowledge systems. Like Dr. Brant Castellano, she advocates for spiritual harmony and healing by approaching health from a more interconnected and holistic outlook associated with Indigenous knowledge systems.

Locations and land form a central path beyond the social in part 2. Esteemed scholars Chantelle Richmond, Sarah de Leeuw, and Tribal Chief Terry Teegee describe and give examples of the relationships Indigenous

peoples have with their Territories, and how the land is an integral determinant of health. These authors build on the concept that health is a holistic phenomenon in their assertion that place is as fundamental to health as it is to cultural identity, and to self-determination in the re-possession of lands and resources. Authors of the three other chapters included in this section broach and bring unique perspectives to the critical topics of child health, youth suicide, and gender roles in Indigenous communities. In their chapter, Margo Greenwood and Elizabeth Jones build on the concept of control in the decolonization of early childhood education. Chandler and Dunlop similarly suggest advancing the resurgence of cultural practices and preservation of language as fundamental determinants to address in suicide prevention at a community level. Sarah Hunt advocates the restoration of diverse gender roles towards building more accepting, non-violent and therefore healthy environments through processes of decolonization.

The third and fourth sections of the book do a remarkable job of profiling examples of health and wellness among Indigenous peoples, both at a community level and in individualized medical practice. Indigenous scholar and Cree speaker Madeleine Dion Stout leads this conversation with the assertion that health determinants must be conceived as less mechanistic, and take into account the diversity of Indigenous languages, histories, imagination, experience, and knowledge. Distinctively personal Indigenous perspectives shared by other authors in part 3 provide justification for political responsibility in overcoming economic issues. Warner Adam, Karen Issac, and Katheen Jamieson recommend changes to policies across jurisdictions, to ensure preventative programming is delivered in collaborative partnership with Indigenous communities. The Blue Quills First Nations College's training program for Indigenous healthcare providers is profiled as a shining example by Steinhauer and Lamouche, as an act of sovereignty, resistance, and healing.

Overall, the chapters that stand out as part of this diverse anthology are those that contain personal perspectives and experiences with the healthcare system. Each of the chapters in part 4 bring to life, for example, the challenges and barriers that an Indigenous physician faces when tasked with honouring often divergent world-views. Drs. James Makokis, Nadine Caron, and Daniele Behn-Smith, in collaboration with Patricia Makokis and Leah May Walker, do a masterful job as storytellers struggling to bridge these boundaries. Other distinctive components of the book are the poems of Marilyn Iwama and Charles Peter Heit, along with the stories of Roberta Kennedy, Richard Van Camp, and Brenda Macdougall. Their words open a window into aspects of existence, knowledge, memory, identity, and humour that are not often found in academic collections. In unison, these are the images that further illuminate the realities of Indigenous peoples' health, far beyond the social determinants.

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