

RESEARCH CONNECTION

A healthy neighbourhood: Voices of Indigenous youth

By Kathy Moscou, Ph.D., Karen Rempel, Ph.D., & Chris Beeman, Ph.D.



Why this research is important

A healthy urban neighbourhood meets the physical, social, health, economic, and cultural needs of all community members including children and youth. Some of these needs include employment opportunities, access to public services, safety, cultural centres, and green spaces. Healthy neighbourhoods are inclusive, creating feelings of connectedness. For the growing population of urban Indigenous children and youth, living in a healthy neighbourhood helps shape their sense of belonging, personal aspirations, and civic engagement. Relationships among neighbours create feelings of trust that can last a lifetime.

Statistics Canada 2016 census data indicate that approximately half of the Indigenous population in

What you need to know

The Healthy Neighbourhood Photovoice Project mobilized Indigenous youth in Brandon to use photos and narratives to provide their perspectives on the characteristics of a healthy neighbourhood. The photographs and stories were also used to encourage conversations about issues and actions that can help build and sustain healthy neighbourhoods and communities.

The project involved a team of Indigenous youth, researchers from the Faculty of Education at Brandon University, the Brandon Friendship Centre, and Manitoba Métis Federation Southwest Region.

Canada is under the age of 25. As well, more than 50% of the Indigenous population in Canada now lives in metropolitan areas of at least 30,000 people. For communities like Brandon, the Indigenous youth population has grown and is expected to continue to expand. As a result, the perspectives of Indigenous people in Brandon about healthy neighbourhoods are essential components of community conversations. The photos and narratives from these Indigenous youth provide some of these perspectives and helping to extend broader conversations about Indigenous children and youth in the community.

How the research was conducted

This research was based on a community-university partnership using a photovoice research process. Photovoice research empowers groups whose voice is traditionally under-represented. Participants in photovoice research are both the subjects and researchers. Photovoice also encourages social action and change. For example, the Indigenous youth involved in this project contributed to civic engagement and promoted social change in Brandon by drawing attention to factors that they believe contribute to or detract from a healthy neighbourhood.

What the researchers found

The photos and narratives revealed that the Indigenous youths' perspectives of a healthy neighbourhood were grounded in their strong sense of spirituality, personal and family relationships, and a connection to the natural world. We found that many of the Indigenous youth participants felt a strong connection to the land and believed that a healthy neighbourhood had green spaces as well as spaces for engaged social growth. We also found that the people, environment, and infrastructure are essential to a healthy urban neighbourhood. Access to community centres, safe housing, and educational institutions are important elements.

How this research can be used

This research can be used to generate critical conversations about the characteristics of a healthy neighbourhood as viewed by Indigenous youth.

About the researchers

Kathy Moscou, Ph.D., is an Adjunct Professor at Brandon University. During the past four years, she has been collaborating with Indigenous youth in Brandon and Winnipeg on photovoice research. Additional research includes governance and drug safety policy in Canada and internationally. MoscouK@BrandonU.ca

Chris Beeman, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Brandon University. His research focuses on Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, specializing in understanding the philosophical underpinnings of learning through Indigenous position and perspectives. BeemanC@BrandonU.ca

Karen Rempel, Ph.D., is the Director of the Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies in the Faculty of Education at Brandon University. RempelK@BrandonU.ca

Keywords

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Publications based on this research

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Editor: Christiane Ramsey RamseyC@Brandonu.ca
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