

Land as a Process of Reconciliation: Transforming Health Narratives Among Land-Based Healing Camp Facilitators

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Introduction

Colonialism has resulted in isolation, lack of services, and health disparities experienced by Indigenous peoples (IPs)¹ which increased risk for COVID-19. Despite this, **IPs have found ways to thrive**. For example, they have implemented land-based healing (LBH) interventions^{2, 3, 4}. **Increasing cultural continuity through reconnecting to the land has broad implications for the health and wellbeing of IPs**^{5, 6, 3}. As such, CIEDAR **partnered** with Taché Waters Healing Society (TWHS) to achieve the following objectives.

Objectives

- ▶ To co-develop a LBH camp grounded in culture to facilitate healing from the ongoing impacts of settler-colonialism, exacerbated by the pandemic.
- ▶ To evaluate the LBH camp pilot by asking the following question: How does being guided upon the land influence facilitators perspectives of health and wellbeing?

Methods

To begin developing the healing camp, 3 TWHS members and 6 CIEDAR members carried out a camp pilot in July 2022.

Figure 1. Image of CIEDAR team before travelling to the land-based healing camp.

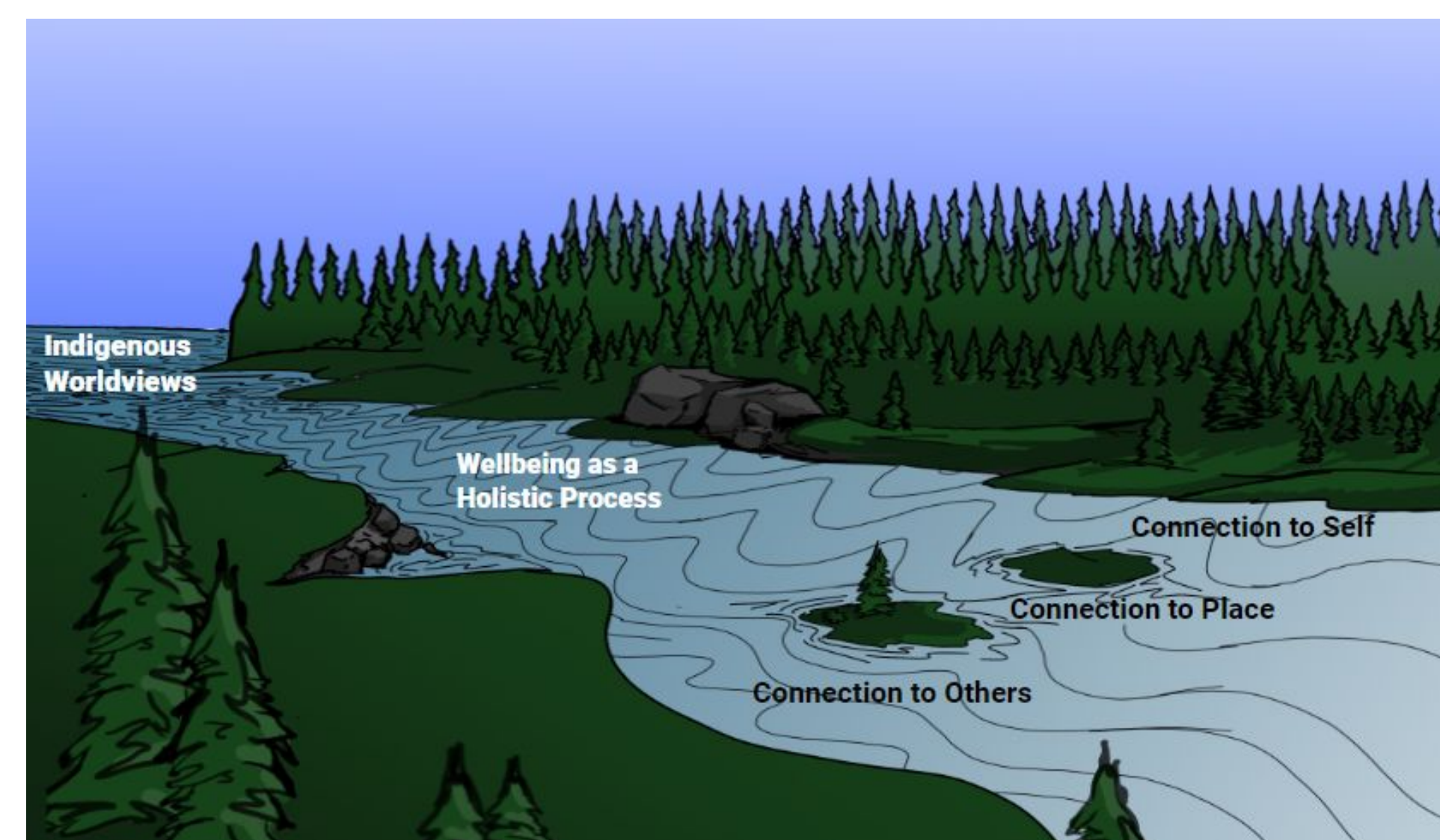


To answer the evaluation question, pre- and post-camp **written and oral interviews** were conducted among the 9 camp facilitators. Subsequently, the interviews were **qualitatively analyzed** in 3 phases: Retroductive Analysis, Thematic Analysis, Coding the Codes.

Results

The **Indigenous Worldviews** that informed the camp created a decolonizing space. This allowed camp facilitators to shift their narrative about health and wellbeing from one that was Westernized towards one that sees **wellbeing as a holistic process**. After this shift in understanding occurred, facilitators formed **connections with others, themselves, and place**, which facilitated wellbeing.

Figure 2. Conceptual diagram of Land as a Process of Reconciliation findings.



Theme 1: Indigenous Worldviews Create a Decolonizing Space

"I noticed when I came back from residential school that **the elders always had a strong reverence for land and water**. Every time they talk to us, they're always excited. They always told us that the way they express themselves when the land was mentioned, it was really something to hear. **They really love the land**. The way they expressed it, the tone of voice and a lot to do with memories, a lot to do with the way it was because now they're getting old and they're living in a community. And **all they could do is just rely on their memories of the land**." - Participant 1



Theme 2: Understanding Wellbeing as a Holistic Process.

"I guess health in a way, like eating healthy and being fit, and all that is part of wellbeing, but for me I think **identity and culture** are really important for your wellbeing. And I think after this trip – I guess it's kind of just made me think about that even more about how reconnecting with your culture and working through your identity really **does reflect in your wellbeing**. [At camp] you have time and you have space and you can go and really explore that I think that will then reflect back to your wellbeing and your health" – Participant 6

Theme 3. Connection to Others Facilitates Wellbeing.

"This is a spiritual experience that gave me a **new perspective** of it. It is hard to put it into words. If you could put all of these pieces together, this **collective health and wellbeing**, Indigenous worldviews of being, and start being in tune with yourself and your intuition, and also just understanding your environment and your past and your present. It feels **spiritual** how **you can feel connected to everything** and that everything has a spirit. Yes, I guess it has changed the way I think of spirituality" – Participant 8

Theme 4. Connection to Self Facilitates Wellbeing.

"I would have to say that through the process of acquainting myself with the **water**, with the **trees**, with the **land**, with the plants, and with the beautiful **sky** there; I felt wonderful **happiness** and also was more aware of others, of myself. I think my **stress definitely decreased** when I would focus on these things" - Participant 4

Theme 5. Connection to Place Facilitates Wellbeing.

"I'm coming home, gone home, homecoming. That's the sense I feel my body totally. It's important. **It makes me release a lot of trauma**" – Participant 1

Figure 3. Images of the land-based healing camp.

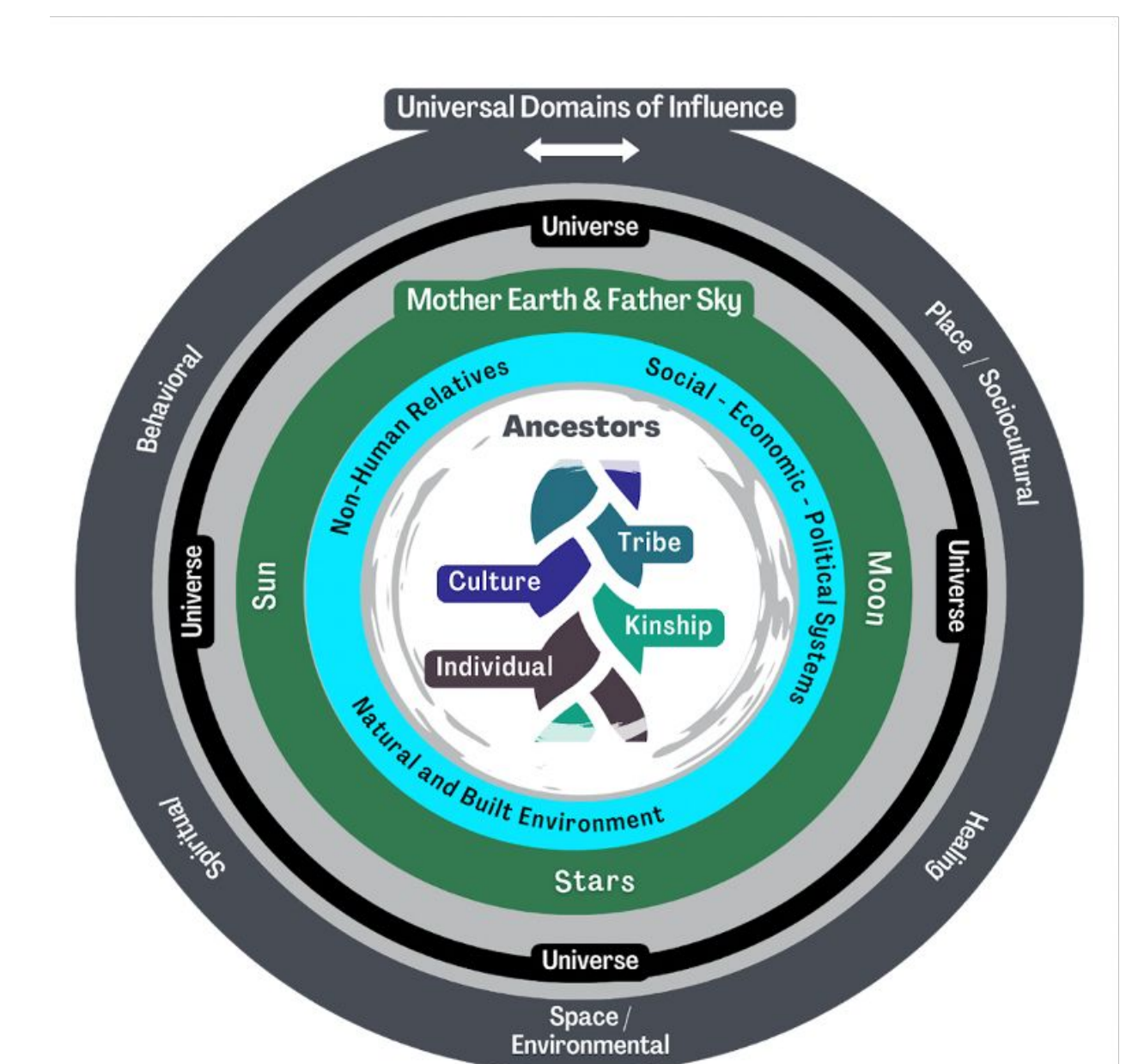


Conclusions

The social determinants of health consider individuals as braided within:

- ▶ Connection to natural world is interwoven with health outcomes
- ▶ We are connected and influenced by the greater universe- across generations forward and back
- ▶ Need multilevel intervention methods such as measuring holistic land-health metrics (i.e., measuring blood pressure and water health for instance)
- ▶ Healing occurs across these domains and more

Figure 4. Indigenous Holistic Health and Wellness Multilevel Framework⁷.



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Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without TWHS and funding from CoVaRR-Net.