

POSTER ABSTRACT

Healing in Partnership: Integrating Traditional Knowledge and Allied Health Services to Improve Mental Wellness

International Conference on Integrated Care (ICIC26), Birmingham, 13-15 April 2026

Nicole Blackman¹, Darryl Souliere-lamb¹

1: Indigenous Primary Health Care Council, Canada

Background: Mental wellness in Indigenous communities requires integrated approaches that address intergenerational trauma, cultural identity, and wholistic healing. Indigenous Primary Health Care Organizations (IPHCOs) have developed innovative models combining clinical care, cultural practices, and community supports. This presentation shares IPHCC's work documenting and supporting these integrated, culturally rooted mental wellness pathways.

Aim: s/Objectives: To describe how Traditional Wellness Practitioners such as Knowledge Holders, Elders, and allied health professionals collaborate to deliver integrated, culturally safe mental wellness services.

Methods: This qualitative study draws from community-led program evaluations, client narratives, and staff reflections across IPHCC member organizations. It examines co-designed care models involving counselling, primary care, land-based healing, and peer support. Themes were identified through Indigenous research methodologies emphasizing relationality and storytelling.

Results: Programs demonstrated improved engagement, reduced stigma, and enhanced emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Integration of traditional healing within primary and mental health care improved care continuity and client satisfaction. Cross-disciplinary collaboration fostered mutual learning and strengthened workforce capacity. Participants emphasized that cultural safety and trust were foundational to successful integration.

Conclusion: s Integrating traditional knowledge and allied health practices represents a powerful approach to healing and resilience. IPHCC's experience demonstrates that Indigenous-led, community-based models can transform mental wellness care, offering lessons applicable to diverse populations. This presentation will share practical strategies and success stories for embedding culture, community, and connection into integrated care design.

Keywords: mental wellness, traditional healing, integrated care, cultural safety, community partnership, Indigenous health.