

# Relational Knowledge Transfer

*Decolonizing relationships in  
preventive health care*

Dawn Smith, RN, PhD

Loyer Da Silva Research Chair in Public Health Nursing  
School of Nursing, University of Ottawa

# Relational Knowledge Transfer

- A process wherein relationships are the focus of capacity building
- Gap or weaknesses in system requires ‘understanding’ (vs. ‘knowledge’), and exchange of multiple ways of knowing
- Helpful in situations with a history of distrust (and even oppressive relationships)
- Attitude and value shift or openness is often required, making the focus on “heart connections” versus cerebral connections.

# Engaging stakeholders in relational KT: An Example

- The *Improving Access Study*: A participatory study exploring factors influencing access to preventive care for Aboriginal families in an urban setting
- Participating Organizations:
  - 2 Aboriginal (Women's support center; Primary health care organization)
  - 2 mainstream (public health & community health centers)
- Advisory committee of an Elder, organizational leaders and researchers

# Participatory research & KT

- Collaboration between researchers and community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Part of a community-based, participatory research process
- Partnership ensures that research evidence is relevant and timely to the CBO and/or the community
- Links CBO with research and linking research with possibilities for change

# Participatory Research among Aboriginal & mainstream organizations

- Ensures research is relevant and timely
- Shares knowledge and related processes:
  - researchers will learn local Indigenous processes of knowledge creation, dissemination, and utilization
- Builds understanding each other's positions, perspectives and difference/similarities
- Opens possibilities for healing relationships
  - ... depending on readiness among stakeholders for authentic relationship-building
- → build capacity for Relational Knowledge Exchange

# Relational KT Purpose & Objectives

- Purpose:

- build capacity that will enable transfer and exchange of multiple ways of knowing.

- Objectives:

1. Create greater awareness to current reality of Aboriginal people living in urban settings;
2. Facilitate orientation to how access to safe and responsive care fits with mainstream providers' and administrators' responsibilities;
3. Build relationships between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people and organizations.

# Innovative relational KT approach

- a) engage study participants and other urban Aboriginal community members in discussion and interpretation of study results (“so what for me?”)
- b) incorporate Aboriginal ways of knowing to achieve attitude, understanding and commitment for change (art, aboriginal protocols)
- Method:
- Develop one KT event in partnership with each organization, linking with existing outreach to 2 target audiences: 1) mainstream providers, leaders, policy makers; 2) aboriginal community members and staff