

Updates & Insights

Community Engagement Edition

November 2024



Focus Groups & Survey: Community Insights and Next Steps

As follow-up to the 2023 Gathering on Indigeneity, Neurodevelopmental Disabilities/Differences (NDD) and Mental Health, we hosted two virtual focus group sessions in August 2024 and shared an online survey with those unable to join us. We gained valuable insights from the community that helped us develop two virtual knowledge-sharing sessions this December (see details below).

Who Participated?

The focus groups were attended by 35 individuals, including participants from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. We had a mix of caregivers, people with lived experience of neurodevelopmental differences, and service providers. Attendees represented urban, rural, and remote areas across Canada and the U.S., with 16 additional people contributing their views through the online survey.

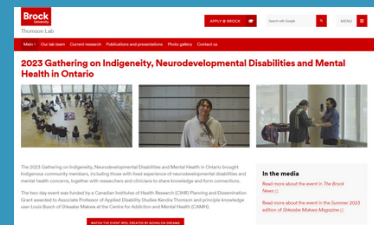
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What We Asked

We wanted to hear from community members about what topics would be of interest for virtual sessions and what a national network on this topic would look like.

What Did We Hear?

A few key themes emerged that were similar to what we learned from attendees at the 2023 Gathering including:

1. Cultural Importance:

Indigenous traditions, including healing practices and storytelling, were highlighted as essential in supporting neurodivergent individuals. Elders and Knowledge Keepers

What Did We Hear? (Continued)

play a crucial role in maintaining these cultural connections. One participant shared that her language is “my medicine,” emphasizing how powerful Indigenous languages are for healing.

2. Community-Driven Approaches:

There was a call for community-led initiatives that respect self-determination. Many participants stressed the need for accessible, culturally-safe services, particularly in rural areas.

3. Trauma-Informed Care:

Participants advocated for trauma-informed care that recognizes intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities. Culturally relevant approaches to mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical wellbeing were seen as key to supporting neurodivergent individuals and their families.

4. Systemic Barriers:

Participants discussed challenges in navigating mainstream, western-centric systems. Many shared concerns about the need to decolonize services to make them more inclusive of Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Suggestions for Knowledge Sharing Sessions:

- Participants made several suggestions for the virtual knowledge-sharing sessions
- Engage Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and people with lived experience.
- Offer interactive, culturally grounded workshops, incorporating land-based healing, storytelling, traditional arts, and Indigenous languages.
- Create inclusive spaces that welcome diverse perspectives and abilities.

Recent Presentations

We have had opportunities to share this work at recent conferences

- Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities (St.Catharines, ON in April, 2024)
- Beyond Limits (Winnipeg, MB in October, 2024)
- Ontario Association for Behaviour Analysis (Toronto, ON in November 2024)

Suggested Topics for Upcoming Sessions:

1. Indigenous Cultural Approaches in Neurodiversity Support:

Focus on integrating traditional frameworks, languages, and healing practices to support neurodivergent individuals.

2. Trauma-Informed Care for Indigenous Families:

Emphasize healing from intergenerational trauma, incorporating traditional healing practices into care approaches.

3. Advocacy and Empowerment:

Equip participants with tools to advocate for culturally safe services both in Indigenous and mainstream systems.



Suggestions For Building a National Network

Participants shared ideas for a national network that aims to connect communities across Canada, share resources, and advocate for systemic change including:

- Offer educational opportunities, such as webinars and conferences.
- Be grounded in a community-driven, culturally relevant approach, with Elders and community leaders at the heart of decision-making.
- Use technology to create a centralized platform for knowledge sharing, alongside in-person gatherings and national workshops.

Feedback about the Focus Groups

Participants expressed high satisfaction with the focus groups. Positive comments highlighted the welcoming environment and affirming discussions. One participant noted, “It felt good to have these conversations and my perspectives welcomed.”



We're excited to move forward with these insights and we would like to invite you to join us for two upcoming virtual knowledge-sharing sessions. These sessions are free and open to all and will provide valuable insights and foster meaningful conversations around the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous individuals and their caregivers.

Session 1: Lived Experience Perspectives

Hear directly from Indigenous individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities/differences as they share their personal stories.

Date & Time: December 4th, 2024, 1 PM - 2:30 PM EST

Session 2: Caregiver Perspectives

Listen to those supporting Indigenous individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities as they share their unique insights and challenges.

Date & Time: December 11th, 24, 1 PM - 2:30 PM EST

Chrysta Wood from Shkaabe Makwa will facilitate both sessions. Join us to hear directly from our wonderful panelists during the sessions!

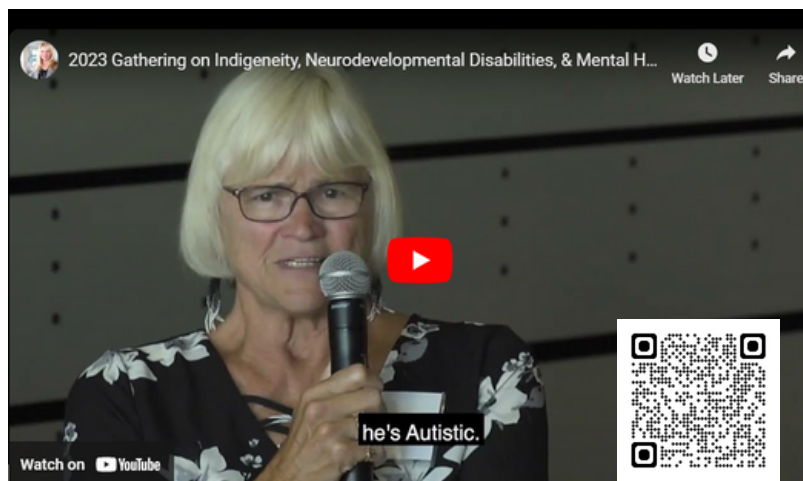
To register, use the QR code or please click [here](#). Please feel free to share widely.



Photos from the 2023 Gathering:



The 2023 Gathering Event Reel Created By Going on Dreams:



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Join Us for Two Knowledge Sharing Sessions on Indigeneity, Neurodevelopmental Disabilities/Differences, and Mental Health



Hosted on Zoom | Open to All

Session 1: Lived Experience Perspectives: We will hear from Indigenous Peoples with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities/Differences about their experiences

Date & Time: December 4th, 2024 1PM-2:30PM, EST

Session 2: Caregiver Perspectives: We will hear from those supporting Indigenous Individuals with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

Date & Time: December 11th, 2024 1PM-2:30PM, EST

Facilitated by Chrysta Wood, Shkaabe Makwa

Join us to hear and learn directly from our wonderful panelists during the sessions!

 [Register Now!](#)



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