**Background**

Indigenous peoples with serious mental illness face unique health care barriers due to racism, oppression, and intergenerational trauma of residential school and child welfare systems. Current mental health services focus on crisis and short-term mental health programs; this network will move the focus to holistic culturally-based interventions that prevent illness and strengthen successful wellness.

**Objective & Rationale**

- HIMHW will be situated in at least 10 sites in Ontario, and will create a national shift from the current system response to Indigenous mental illness, which focusses on Western biomedical-based crisis and limited-term interventions and supports, to a coordinated strategic system that is based in Indigenous knowledges prevention.
- Indigenous mental illness is currently addressed by the health care system using Western biomedical-based crisis and limited-term interventions and models that are culturally inappropriate and ineffective in terms of symptoms reduction and remediation of diagnosis.
- HIMHW will provide Indigenous knowledge solutions, for practice and policy, that will help redress and remove barriers.
- The team will develop a cultural evidence-based Indigenous research network to improve mental wellness by generating data that shows that illness and crisis can be prevented with traditional knowledges, cultural safety, and Indigenous science, when applied to health systems.

**Research Themes & Methodology**

Consultation with the research team, community partners, and policy makers was undertaken in 2019; the process and outputs of the network are organized through a co-created and collaborative Indigenous community-engaged research plan guided by six interwoven themes (In Figure 1).

**Principal Investigator:** Suzanne Stewart, University of Toronto; **Knowledge Users:** Clay Shirt, University of Toronto; Renee Linklater, The Centre for Addition and Mental Health, Toronto; **Co-applicants:** Janet Smylie, St. Michael’s Hospital Foundation; Roderick McCormick, Thompson Rivers University; Jeffrey Anisows, University of Toronto; Alanase Goodwill, Simon Fraser University (UBC); Angela Mashford-Pringle, University of Toronto; Amy Bombay, Dalhousie University; Lynn Lavallée, Ryerson University; Holly Graham, University of Saskatchewan; **Collaborators:** Pamela Hart, Native Women’s Resource Centre of Toronto; Jeffrey Schiffer, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto; Chantelle Richmond, University of Western Ontario; Maile M. Taulaii, Kaiser Permanente Centre for Health Research Hawaii; Brenda Restoule, First Peoples Wellness Circle (Nipissing First Nation); Michelle Dickson, University of Sydney (N.S.W., Australia); Henry Harder, University of Northern British Columbia; Mikaela Gabriel, University of Toronto; Michael Hart, University of Calgary; Luana Shirt, University of Toronto; Wendy Phillips, University of Toronto; Pauline Shirt, University of Toronto; Christopher Mushaquash, Lakehead University; Sandra Eades, University of Melbourne; Karlee Fellner, University of Calgary.

**Impacts & Outcome**

- Indigenous knowledges data and evidence-based programs and interventions that will transform how health services respond to Indigenous mental illness, measurable through a reduction in mental illness and an increase in mental health and wellness; Ensuring Indigenous languages, diverse Indigenous cultures and identities, and land-based and planetary health solutions are developed and adopted throughout systems of health care in programs, interventions, and policy; Decolonizing Canadian society so that it enables marginalized and oppressed Indigenous peoples, to be able to access mental health services that successfully remediate mental illness and stabilize them in permanent mental health and healing, and to become connected with community and society, thus able to achieve their full potential in life; & Situating Canada as a global leader in preventing and ending Indigenous mental illness.

**Student Training & Mentoring**

Over the five years of the network, a total of 130 new and emerging scholars will be mentored by the team across each university site. There will be post-doctoral fellows (PDFs), an Indigenous central research coordinator, and inclusion of student thesis and dissertation as part of the training/mentorship plan; it is anticipated that 5 PDFs (1 per year); 15 PhDs (3 per year), 30 Masters; MPH, MSc-Epi & MSW, MAs (10 per year), 40 undergraduate students (10 per year), and 40 CRAs (10 per year as summer students) will be involved in the network’s research plan across all of the universities and its associated research activities—divided equally across the academic sites.

**By:** Devon Bowyer (WBIIH) & Roy Strebel (WBIIH)