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Adapting Communities That Care in Urban Aboriginal Communities in British Columbia: An Interim Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

A considerable amount of research has been conducted on Aboriginal mental health and health promotion. However, implementation and impacts of culturally relevant health promotion strategies have not been equally addressed. This article provides an interim evaluation of Connecting the Dots, an innovative project designed to support and promote the mental health of Aboriginal youth and families in urban areas in British Columbia. Connecting the Dots adapted the Communities that Care (CTC) model, a prevention planning program promoting positive youth development and reducing risk factors that predict youth's future involvement in problem behaviors. This article devotes specific attention to the necessitated adaptations of the CTC model to promote cultural relevancy in urban Aboriginal communities. Evaluation findings suggest that Aboriginal communities can successfully adopt mainstream evidence-based programming, provided that programs permit adaptations to meet the communities' needs. For urban Aboriginal communities, programs must be re-conceptualized so that the linear, western delivery model is transformed to a holistic and circular implementation approach congruent with Aboriginal worldviews. In the Connecting the Dots project, inclusion of traditional Aboriginal practices and key Aboriginal representatives were among the most well received model adaptations. Evaluation participants reported that the adaptations made to the CTC framework have been critical to sustainability.

KEYWORDS

Aboriginal; Community; Health Promotion; Mental Health; Prevention; Urban; Youth

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