

Culture-based Literacy and Aboriginal Health

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Abstract

This is a summary report of the Aboriginal content of the Language and Culture theme at the Canadian Public Health Association's Second Canadian Conference on Literacy and Health. Our key premise is that Indigenous conceptualizations of literacy need to build on Indigenous understandings and perspectives. We support this premise through a review of the relevant literature in the disciplines of Aboriginal literacy, Indigenous education, health literacy, health promotion, and knowledge translation and our synthesis of the presentations, workshops, and discussions at the meeting. Key emergent themes include: the unique and culturally determined ways in which Aboriginal peoples and their languages conceptualize learning, education, and health; and the recognition that self-determination of language and learning are human rights. Aboriginal concepts of and approaches to literacy naturally link to and overlap with Aboriginal concepts of and approaches to health. The paper includes an overview of gaps in the field and an example of the way that research and practice can be brought together in the context of one First Nations community.