

Health Promotion in Saskatchewan: Three Developing Approaches

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Abstract

The advancement of Health promotion in Saskatchewan over the past 12 years or so is framed by two major developments: 1) the grounding of policy, practice and research in a health determinants approach, and 2) the emergence of Aboriginal approaches to health promotion that are distinctly indigenous. The first is predominantly grounded in Western worldviews and assumptions, is often practiced out of bio-medically orientated institutions, and addresses a range of determinants of which “culture” is one. Emerging Aboriginal approaches on the other hand take Aboriginal World-view, culture and identity as their starting point from which all other thoughts and actions (including those to address health determinants) follow. That these two approaches should frame health promotion development in this province is hardly surprising given its large and rapidly growing Aboriginal populations who are increasingly asserting their right to self-determination in ways that are culturally relevant. A third entity that somewhat bridges both approaches and has a developmental trajectory of its own is the “Northern Way”. This constitutes a set of beliefs, attitudes and approaches to health promotion adopted by Saskatchewan’s Northern, rural and largely Aboriginal communities in response to resources shortages, their isolation and perceived marginalization from decision-making institutions. While governments may come and go, it is these three entities that continue to give meaning to health promotion in Saskatchewan, albeit within a legacy of colonial relations.