Youth Health Promotion Project for Indigenous People in Canada: Together against Bullying and Cyber-Dependence

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Abstract : The Ashukin program that means bridge in Naskapi or Atikamekw language, has been designed to offer a partnership between nursing students and an indigenous community. The students design a health promotion project tailored to the needs of the community. The issues of intimidation in primary school and cyber-dependence in high school were some concerns in a rural Atikamekw community. The goal of the project was to have a conversation with indigenous youths, aged 10-16 years old, on the challenges presented by intimidation and cyber dependence as well as promoting healthy relationships online and within the community. Methods: Multiple progressive inquiry questions (PIQs) were used to assess the feasibility and importance of this project for the Atikamekw nation, and to determine a plan to follow. The theoretical foundations to guide the conception of the project were the Population Health Promotion Model (PHPM), the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model, and the Medicine Wheel. A broad array of social determinants of health were addressed, including healthy childhood development, personal health practices, and coping skills, and education. The youths were encouraged to participate in interactive educational sessions, using PowerPoint presentations and pamphlets as the main effective strategies. Additional tools such as cultural artworks and physical activities were introduced to strengthen the inter-relational and team spirit within the Indigenous population. A quality assurance tool (QAT) was developed specifically to determine the appropriateness of these health promotion tools. Improvements were guided by the feedback issued by the indigenous schools' teachers and social workers who filled the QATs. Post educational sessions, quantitative results have shown that 93.48% of primary school students were able to identify the different types of intimidation, 72.65% recognized more than two strategies, and 52.1% were able to list at least four resources to diffuse intimidation. On the other hand, around 75% of the adolescents were able to name at least three negative effects, and 50% listed three strategies to reduce cyber-dependence. This project was meant to create a bridge with the First Nation through health promotion, a population that is known to be disadvantaged due to systemic health inequity and disparities. Culturally safe care was proposed to deal with the two identified priority issues, and an educational toolkit was given to both schools to ensure the sustainability of the project. The project was self-financed through fundraising activities, and it yielded better results than expected.

Keywords : indigenous, first nation, bullying, cyber-dependence, internet addiction, intimidation, youth, adolescents, school, community nursing, health promotion
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