

Inaugural Indigenous Roundtable

IAC Conference, Malta

July 8, 2016

As this was the inaugural meeting of the Indigenous Roundtable, the agenda was aimed at introducing the idea behind the roundtable, explaining the purpose of the roundtable, and eliciting ideas from the attendees as to how to develop the roundtable.

Blythe Shepard (Chair) and Jen Rowett (Roundtable facilitator) led the discussion by sharing their stories on involvement with Indigenous peoples in Canada; Blythe as a status Indian and Jen as a doctoral student who has long been involved in Indigenous communities in Canada and elsewhere. Members of the circle (approximately 20) shared their interest in attending the roundtable meeting and common themes identified include:

- Adding to their transcultural counselling knowledge
- Learning more about the spiritual aspects of Indigenous Cultures
- Expanding their knowledge of the term “Indigenous”
- Identifying commonalities to their own cultures (particularly Indigenous people in Africa and the concerns around “moral decay” – and how to retain their cultures as a resources for their youth).
- Reclaiming and taking back space that has been taken away and finding roots of their culture again
- Broadening our understanding of well-being and sense of self through holistic ways and ties to the land (e.g., eco therapy, tuning into earth’s cycles).
- Understanding how one’s roots play a role in one’s well-being
- Learning more about how traditional knowledge is transmitted.
- Adapting counselling/psychotherapy approaches for Indigenous populations.

The terms of reference and purposes of the roundtable as approved by the IAC Executive Council were shared with the group:

- establish a community of counsellors who are interested in clinical practice and research relevant to Indigenous people;
- to acknowledge the historical and political issues that impact Indigenous mental health;
- share the practices of Indigenous people to promote holistic health and healing; and
- advocate for culturally appropriate counselling and research for Indigenous people internationally.

Roundtable Activities

To support: Provide ongoing support and recommendations to the IAC Executive in developing a plan of action for the enhancement of Indigenous counselling internationally.

To network: Establish and develop relationships with Indigenous practitioners, associations and communities internationally. Create a network of mutual support among practitioners and researchers who have an interest in Indigenous counselling.

To advocate: acknowledge the significance of Indigenous perspectives on counselling in theory, research, and practice.

To promote: Recognize how Indigenous Ways of Knowing is naturally relevant to the teachings of all earth-based people and has the potential to transform the profession of counselling by orienting individuals to their surrounding environments and their perceived or intended impact on that environment.

To educate: Distinguish between Western and Indigenous perspectives of mental health and illness.

Building on the five pillars of support, networking, advocating, promoting, and educating, the group identified a number of ways in which to address the pillars. Due to time limits we were only able to discuss two pillars: educate and network.

Educate by:

- Contacting Indigenous filmmakers and develop a list of films that individuals could watch
- Developing a list of autobiographical books written by Indigenous people to read
- Uploading important documents on Indigenous people to the IAC website (e.g., UN documents)
- Creating short videos to upload to the IAC website of interviews with Indigenous counsellors
- Sharing with members common values held by various Indigenous communities
- Increasing our understanding that Indigenous communities are distinct so that IAC members do not make assumptions.
- Deconstructing the word “indigenous” to explain to members what it means.

Network by:

- Forming relationships with Indigenous communities who are interested in the work of the IAC Indigenous roundtable
- Identifying other professionals who work with Indigenous people who can assist IAC in making these contacts.
- Consulting with a variety of Indigenous communities and Elders to see what would be the best way to set up communication channels (e.g., videoconferencing, SKYPE or something other way).

Submitted by

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