



Communities, Conservation, Livelihoods Conference

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Halifax, NS

An international network for exploring wellbeing and connection to the environment for northern Indigenous youth

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Context

Environmental dispossession: “process by which Indigenous peoples’ access to their traditional lands and resources are reduced or severed” (Big-Canoe and Richmond, 2014)

+ Environmental degradation



Declining wellbeing of Indigenous youth across northern countries

(Juutilainen, 2014; Zurba and Trimble, 2014)

- Need to understand the experiences of youth, as well as the intergenerational aspects of communities that support youth and create pathways for them to be engaged in activities that support their wellbeing and connection to the environment
- Indigenous communities maintain a strong desire to sustain their responsibility for caring for the environment, and contend that health and environmental governance structures should be adapted to support more meaningful forms of Indigenous participation and decision-making (Tobias and Richmond, 2014, Koivurova, 2015).

Partnership development

Goal: Address the connection between environmental dispossession and Indigenous community wellbeing through community-partnered research project and curriculum development

Build a *Research Community of Practice, (R)CoP:*

Domain: “concern, set of problems, or passion about” the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and communities, in particular youth, and how it relates to environmental dispossession and degradation

Practice: actions and knowledge generated by the group

Community: the interpersonal relationships that are built through engaging in practice and learning together

(Wenger, 2000; Wenger, McDermot and Snyder, 2002)

Meetings in Oulu, Finland

Approach: Meetings with Sámi community leaders and scholars specializing in Sámi and northern health and wellbeing

Partnership Development

Academic partners in Finland reached out to Sámi community leaders from different organizations who are involved in supporting different aspects of wellbeing

- Educational centres (including land-based / environmental education)
- Spiritual organizations
- Arts and cultural organizations
- Sámi cultural historian



All with connections and interests in improving the wellbeing of Sámi youth

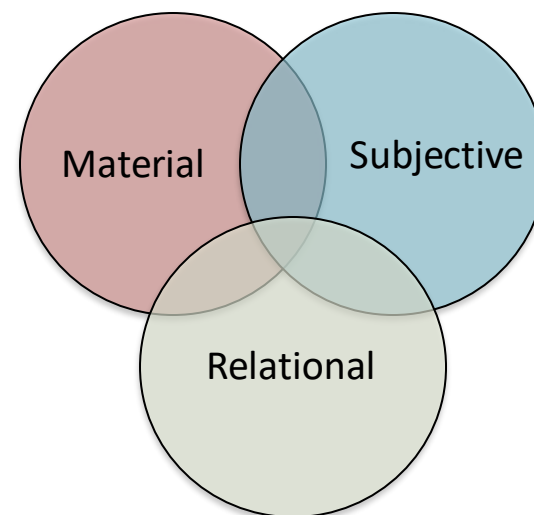
Social / three-dimensional wellbeing

Social wellbeing = wellbeing in connection with others

Material wellbeing (objective): economic, health, education, environmental quality

Relational wellbeing (objective): relationships with others, self, and the environment

Subjective wellbeing: culture, spirituality



(Gough et al., 2007; Armitage et al. 2012)

Armitage et al. (2012) point out that it is consistent with Sen's (1999) capabilities approach to understanding development (and environmental governance) as a broader and deeper set of entitlements that enhances a person's freedom to choose their in ways that are reflective of their value system

Potential for boundary work

Co-led research often involves “boundary work”: “acts and structures that create, maintain, and break down boundaries” (MacMynowski, 2007, p.3)

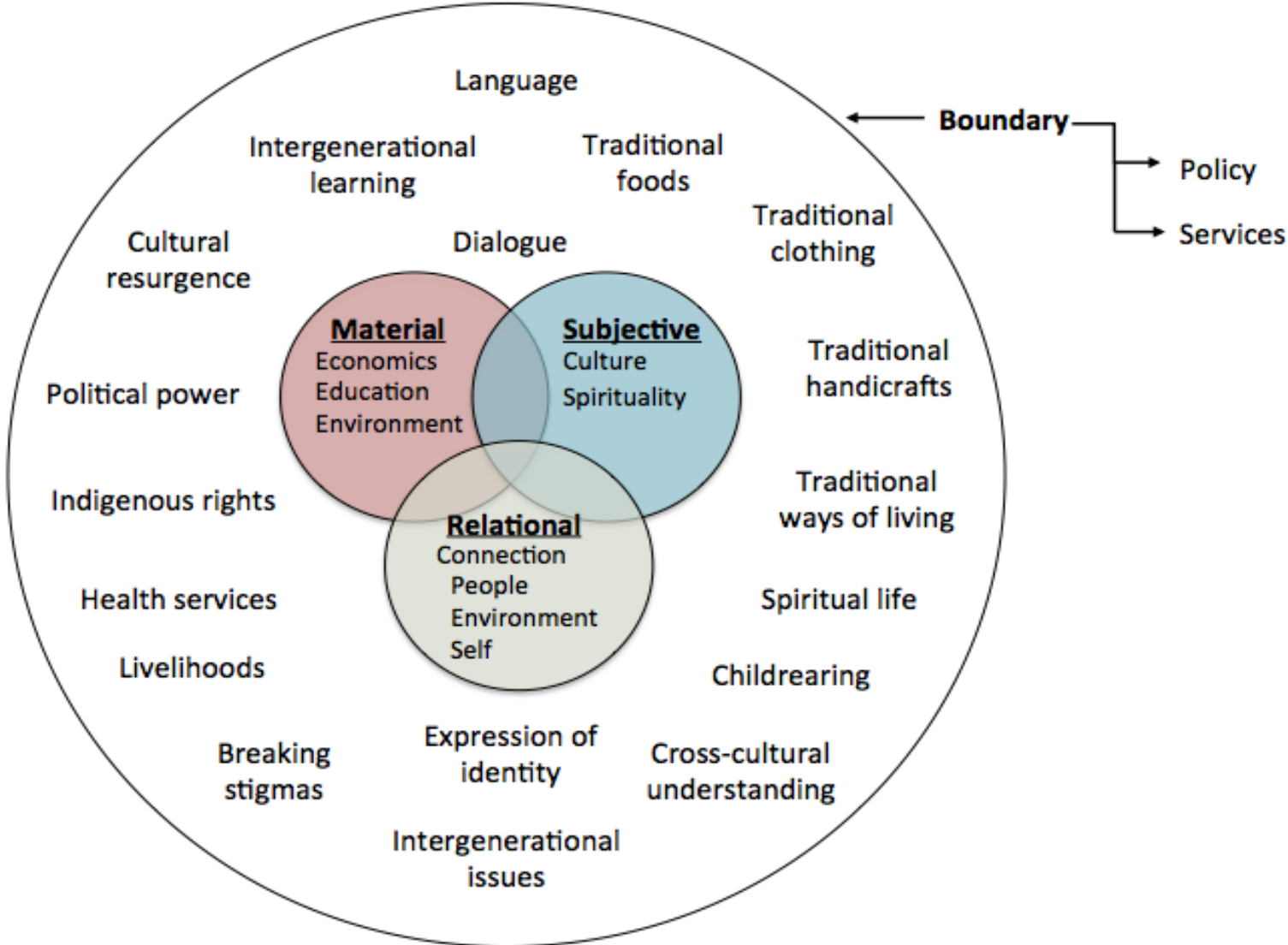
Supports the legitimization of marginalized perspectives and knowledge systems

Can also involve the creation of a boundary object: items that are “valued on both sides of the boundary and provide a site for cooperation, debate, evaluation, review, and [institutional] accountability” (Cash and Moser, 2000, p. 115)

- can be any kind of material (e.g. art, publication) or non-material (e.g. discussion topic, story) object

The process can strengthen relationships within the (R)CoP through exploring mutually shared values and committing to research that is beneficial to communities

Exploration of wellbeing for Sámi people



Outcomes of meetings

A network was created with Sámi community leaders

Norms, values and principles for advancing the partnership were established within the collaborative space:

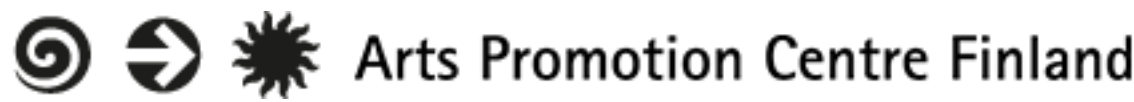
- Indigenous community leaders to define the research topics and lead the project development with the support of academic partners
- Youth to play a central role in defining wellbeing in their own terms
- Supporting the participation of Indigenous youth as much as possible (reaching out and providing funding)
- Other Indigenous community leaders and scholars from across the north (Canada, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Greenland) to be invited to join the network

Current partners

Community partners



**FOUR ARROWS
REGIONAL HEALTH
AUTHORITY**



Sámi spiritual organizations:

- Diocese of Oulu
- Inari Parish



Saamelaisalueen koulutuskeskus
Sámi oahpahusguovddáš
Säämi máttááttâskuávdáš
Sää'mvuu'd škoou'l'jemkōōskōs
Sámi Education Institute

Academic partners

The University of Winnipeg

Dr. Jaime Cidro – *Indigenous health*

Dr. Shailesh Shukla – *Indigenous development*



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Team from Diaconia University of Applied Sciences:

Drs. Ulla Timlin, Lea Rättyä, Marja Katisko and Tiina Ervelius – *Health for Sámi people and northern communities*



Diak

Diaconia University of Applied Sciences



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University of Oulu

Dr. Veli-Pekka Lehtola – *Sámi history and culture*

Dr. Arja Rautio – *Northern health and wellbeing*



GIELLAGÁS



UArctic

University of Manitoba

Dr. Roberta Woodgate – Youth and family engagement in health research (CRC)



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Connection outreach activity

Land-based learning

2-days of activities focused on wellbeing and connection to the environment facilitated by George Land (Elder) on Wabaseemoong Independent Nation's Traditional Land Use Area



Workshops

1) Curriculum Building Workshop

Full-day workshop using tools that are appropriate for developing curriculum in Indigenous (e.g. National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation) and international contexts (e.g. UNESCO Bureau of Education resources)

Connection outreach activity

2) Project Planning / Proposal Building Workshop

Full-day workshop using research project planning tools. Will identify research priorities, project frameworks and supports (e.g. funding and partnerships).

3) Youth Workshop

Full day arts-based workshop at the Graffiti Gallery in Winnipeg - led by an Indigenous youth facilitator and an arts facilitator.

Involves the creation of a boundary object

GRAFFITIART
PROGRAMMING INC.



Connection outreach activity

Symposium

Invitations will be sent to Indigenous communities and organizations, academics, service providers, policy makers, government representatives

Components:

- Presentations on the land-based learning and presentations from community partners (Four Arrows RHA, FNHSSM, Sámi Education Institute)
- Poster session inviting a variety of contributions relating to the there
- Sharing circle, facilitated by an Elder, on the topic *Connecting Indigenous wellbeing and northern environments and how to build meaningful allied community partnerships*

Sharing of outreach outcomes

- Co-authored publication(s) with community leaders
- Reports from all portions of the outreach: land-based learning, workshops and symposium
- Frameworks and grant proposals for future partnered research
- Plain language report translated into Cree, French, Ojibwa and Sámi
- Video documentary – tool for partnerships building and curriculum development
- Arts-based boundary object created by youth leaders (will decide custodianship and how they would like it to be shared)

Summary and conclusions

- Partnership guided by participatory action research principles – co-led research with community leaders
- Youth are included in the leadership from the beginning of the partnership
- Wellbeing defined by communities
- Exploration of the potential for continued boundary work
- Goal of expanding the network to include other northern community leaders and scholars
- Co-led research guided by norms, values and principles
- Flexibility and continued adaptation of the partnership

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