Breakout 4D: Finding and Measuring Well-being
1:15PM-2:45PM
Thierry Rodon, Shuvinai Mike, Audrey Giles

Thierry Rodon

Well-being is a subjective concept; views of what constitutes well-being differ within and between societies. This presents difficulties in terms of measuring well-being.
For instance, the Community Well-being Index is based on income, education, housing, and labour force activity; this serves to measure integration into the Western economy and the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Definitions of Indigenous well-being have focused on participation in traditional activities, quality of life, land and way of living, language, culture, and ultimately acknowledge the complex relationship between social, spiritual, cultural, economic, environmental, and political elements. As such, Indigenous well-being needs to be measured in a way that captures these differences.

Community-based participatory approaches (i.e. community values and concerns are identified through focus groups) can be attentive to Indigenous views of well-being and provide a baseline to see how the community evolves over time, however they are not as useful for comparison over space. It is therefore important to also develop indicators that allow for comparison across populations as well as indicators that control for outside forces (i.e. government policies, climate change, global economic conditions and so on).

Shuvinai Mike

Inuit well-being is not about the measurement, rather it is intimately tied to culture. The Government of Nunavut provides wellness funding through cultural programs. Many of these programs are community-driven, have an elder advisor, and deal with a social or self-esteem issue. These cultural programs are welcoming and inclusive, and have resulted in cultural pride and dignity, improved self-esteem, and healing. Shuvinai expressed how these programs create space for healing to occur in an Inuit way: “When you have that quietness, you seem to find something that you need to talk about, it is difficult to explain in English.”

Audrey Giles

Project Jewel is a healing on the land (OTL) wellness program in the Inuvialuit Settlement Area that embodies a client-centered and culturally sensitive approach. The program helps maintain the connection to land and culture, which in turn benefits one’s sense of cultural

identity, self-esteem, self-worth, and overall wellness. One of the main reasons the project has been so successful is after-care planning and follow-up camps. Although formal evaluation of the program is needed to improve the program, identify gaps, understand how and why OTL programs work, and ultimately strengthen funding proposals, these evaluations do not capture the essence of the program, specifically the individual stories.

Discussion

- There is a history of trauma that needs to be addressed; there is a trickle down effect that goes and affects entire communities. Investing in both children and adults is essential.
- Some of these cultural programs may be cost-saving, but that is not the way we should be thinking about it.
- Emphasized the importance of communally sharing knowledge, particularly between generations.
- The natural environment is nurturing. When you have these kinds of sessions outside of the building, it is very effective.