

# Indigenous-led health care partnerships flourishing in Canada

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Innovative, Indigenous-led health care partnerships and cultural healing practices have shown improved health outcomes and access to care, and have become important features of the medical landscape in Canada, according to a new analysis in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

Indigenous-led health care partnerships incorporate traditional Indigenous knowledge as key in their approach to treatment and healing for Indigenous patients.

The article reflects a collaboration between Elders David Courchene and Burma Bushie, community physician Dr. Sabina Ijaz, and health researchers Dr. Andrew Hatala and Ms. Lindsay Allen from the University of Manitoba's Rady Faculty of Health Sciences.

"Addressing health inequities requires a deeper understanding of the diversity within and across First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, as well as how different models of Indigenous-led health partnerships can respond to context-specific service needs," write the authors.

Canadian physicians often lack training in how to support the holistic cultural, emotional and spiritual dimensions of Indigenous patients' illnesses and well-being. Healers, Elders and others skilled in Indigenous cultural worldviews and experiences are therefore needed in medical partnerships, decision-making and [patient care](#).

"A largely biomedical approach to health fails to address Indigenous patients' myriad, unique needs in an integrated, holistic manner," say Elders and coauthors David Courchene, founder of the Turtle Lodge Central House of Knowledge and cofounder and member of the Elders' council, along with Elder Burma Bushie and other [community leaders](#), of Giigewigamig Traditional Healing Centre.

Turtle Lodge and the Giigewigamig Traditional Healing Centre have pioneered Indigenous-led approaches to [health care](#), which are described along with examples of other health service partnerships in Canada and other countries.

"If the swell of efforts of Elders, Knowledge Keepers and healers can be supported by the larger medical community, and if barriers to full health care rights for Indigenous Peoples can be lessened or removed," the authors conclude, "then systemic racism can be overpowered and health equity can be more easily approached."

**More information:** *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2020).  
[www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.190728](http://www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.190728)

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