

# Indige-Health

National Hub for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Futures  
2020- 2021 report

Written by Marcus Reid & Shania Sandoval-Cross/Ken'niiohontésa Sontariakon

# About the Facilitators

## Marcus Reid

Marcus Reid (they/them) is a Two-Spirit Indigenous youth with Heiltsuk, Nisga'a and white ancestors that have arrived in Coast-Salish territories with some through displacement but also some participating in colonization. They currently reside as an uninvited guest in what is called Vancouver, Canada on the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations. Marcus prefaces that they have accessed spaces that have empowered themselves to be the expert of their own experiences and equipped with the knowledge and skills to advocate for their community and be a part of creating a better world largely through shaping public policy. Marcus points to their white privilege for accessing certain spaces that others who are racialized in their communities are not able to access the same. Because of the present ongoing inequities in front of their eyes, Marcus aims to use any privilege and lived experience to direct attention, amplify and support the voices of their community members. One entry point that has catapulted Marcus's interest in policy was becoming alumni and facilitator for Vancouver Foundation's LEVEL Youth Policy Program for Indigenous youth and racialized newcomer, refugee youth where Marcus conducted research on progressing employment equity through social justice under the mentorship of Nathalie Lozano and later became a facilitator alongside Nathalie and more folks holding space and support for the youth of colour. In terms of education, graduating high school in Surrey district 36 and obtaining an associate degree at NVIT, an Indigenous institution has also grounded Marcus' work in cultural resurgence and has prepared them to continue contributing to the field of Indigenous studies at UBC where they are currently enduring/disrupting institutional colonialism. What keeps Marcus energized to make change is being a part of a network of multi-generational, cross-community engaged folks that advance the rights and livelihood of youth, women, queer, trans, two-spirit folk, disability and climate justice with all the connected intersections between. These like-minded or open-minded change-makers have sparked Marcus' passions and brought them to engage with more non-profits after seeing the transformative power that organizations can do when divesting from colonial systems that perpetuate the non-profit industrial complex and invest in community and worldly justice.

## Shania Sandoval-Cross/Ken'niiohontésha Sontariakon

Shania Sandoval-Cross/Ken'niiohontésha Sontariakon (she/her) is a queer-brown-femme Kanien'kehá:ka from Kahnawà:ke, and Maya from Guatemala, with afro-Maya ancestry. Currently residing on unceded and occupied lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and Sel̓ilw̓itlh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. She finds herself here as the daughter of a Mayan political-refugee father and displaced Kanien'kehá:ka mother. Raised in a predominantly Latin American and diasporic Asian community shaping her relation to food, community and cultural norms that continue to inform the work and her relation to place.

# Mission Statement

Our goal with the “Indige-Health National Hub for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Futures,” was to place the agency of Indigenous youth, our nations, communities and kins at the centre of the wellness dialogue, ensuring our futures were being created for us by us. Acknowledging all the work that has gone into the previous report and the value of the knowledge shared has allowed us to build this year’s hub and our report in a way that centres Indigenous Futurisms and the ways it steers social justice and health movements. With recognizing the need to name these historical, and present injustices that affect First Nations, Inuit and Metis youth, we have chosen to move outside the trauma play narrative to expand on the conceptions of individual and collective wellness. Envisioning a meaningful and vulnerable atmosphere where everyone was allowed to come as they were, without having to perform--

racially, culturally, gendered, or otherwise-- in any capacity. We created a community environment that embodied our collective, and individual histories which did not exclude that of our shared challenges, but instead positioned us beyond the need to explain and perform that labour of explaining our positionalities and the validity of those experiences (both individual and relational), that allowed us to instead move into space where we could ask for the things we needed to learn within ourselves, and the layers that mould our relationships and what those require to be healthy from an Indigenized<sup>1</sup> perspective. Indigenizing our space makes it inherently inclusive to all genders, sexualities, cultural, territorial, and spiritual connections and is a radical push outside of the cis-heteropatriarchal, ageist, ableist, white supremacist and capitalist society we navigate outside this safe space.

## Summary & Context

In pursuit of honouring previous work invested into this program, we will be often citing the former report, refocusing attention to it, and building on the former work and outcomes to provide a fuller spectrum summary.

In this report, we start by providing a summary of hub gatherings in 2021 and share context to facilitators’ involvement in the programming of February and March.

1. Indigenized: working from an Indigenous perspective/methodology. To decolonize something it requires all people impacted by colonialism.

## February 19th Hub Meeting

The February hub meeting demographic/focus was pre-determined from previous work and the January launch as a gathering for bringing together young people, community programs, academics, policy-makers and funders to share successes and challenges, as well as to discuss the future of teen healthy relationships. Our approach for this hub's meeting was creating an accessible gathering for getting youth engagement, youth ideas and what youth want to do with the hub/initiatives. The key activities between a well-being check-in and closing were a group dialogue on how attendees relate to Indigenous healthy relationships and a smaller activity on what youth need to have healthy relationships. To write this report ethically, we shared a bit of information about our role as facilitators but also informed them about the report to gather consent of noting the outcomes of the meeting so throughout the gathering we collected the insight that attendees shared with us in all available tools between speaking over the mic, typing in the chat, or ideas from the tool Jamboard. One measurable outcome we consider highly informative of the personal impact was a tool called Menti that we utilized to grasp a sense of people's wellbeing in the check-in and closing. From the qualitative data folks shared with us, we found out many people entered with a wide variety of feelings and emotions ranging from nervous, shy, not feeling well, which helped us gauge where folks' well-being was entering the space. In contrast to the check-out, using the same tool as an opportunity for folks to reshare how they are feeling as they leave the gathering, we found a common sense of community, wholesomeness and generally feeling better by participating in the gathering. Overall, we received high evaluations, praise and thanks from the youth attending. However, we noted that some of the contributions that were not coming from youth would deviate from the collective dialogue, which led us to consider what demographic is accessing this space the most. It seemed that the same issue arose in the previous report (pg.10) of aiming to make gatherings more inclusive but still encountering non-youth that dominate the conversation. From realizing that this has been an ongoing problem, as facilitators we decided to shift away from space for folks who work with/for youth to grounding it in an accessible youth-centred gathering going forward.

## March 25th Hub:

Our second youth hub was a **Youth Panel on - Being BIPOC<sup>2</sup> (Black<sup>3</sup>, Indigenous and People of Colour) in Overlapping Pandemics: A Survival Guide and Guide to Thrive powered by storytelling and sharing lived experience and self-expertise**. For this panel, it was important to us to bring in folks who were not just pursuing an academic future, but to centre, value and elevate lived experience as expertise in the same ways that a settler-colonial society values academic qualifications. We chose to centre a community-care-based approach to the theme of that month's hub because navigating a global health pandemic has not just greatly affected Indigenous communities throughout so-called Canada<sup>4</sup>, but BIPOC as a collective. We wanted to bridge our communities through storytelling grounded in community care as praxis. It was equally important for us that the youth participating in this panel be equitably compensated for their labour in participating in this panel because we know that talking about one's lived experience requires an emotional, intellectual and spiritual labour that is rarely recognized or adequately compensated. In order to create a truly vulnerable environment for participants and panellists, the security and value of proper compensation were important. We wanted the people that made up the panel to highlight a variety of roles such as students (including mature/family-oriented students), graduates, people that haven't pursued post-secondary, and aspiring professionals. The diversity of people that contributed to the success of this event fostered a purposeful mutual learning environment that embodied a BIPOC liberation framework through the meaningful work and futures they were creating for themselves by centring what contributes to their wellness and in turn collective wellness.

2. Though there has been a push to put the "I" ahead of the "B" in some social justice spaces, we choose to place it first as to not decentralize our Black relatives and the work, space and knowledge they have done that has continuously informed Indigenous liberation movements. As well as recognizing the work that needs to be done to unlearn the anti-blackness that is still held and perpetuated in our communities.

3. We practice recognizing Peoplehood in one way through capitalizing words for Peoples such as Black and Indigenous and People of Colour.

4. We find it important not to capitalize a settler-colonial invader state that continues to actively oppress, and marginalize its Original Peoples while assuming power over the sovereign nations whose land they are on. We also name it "so-called" as it is named by a settler-colonial state and not as the individual nations name their relation to land.

# Themes



## Youth Centred:

- The shift in what kind of space the gathering became from an open invite of youth and folks who work with youth, to then what we heard from eliciting feedback that was geared towards making it a youth-centred space with the topics that youth want the hub to do
- Indigenized conceptions of self-care and community care
- Process of consent and group consensus, and how that is incorporated throughout our planning process, interactions, and meetings



## Compensation:

- Conscious of where the participants/ youth are coming from in terms of emotional/intellectual/ etc capacity and the value of their time
- Stating the importance of this value of youth/participants contributions, opinions, and knowledge
- Honouring folks involved time with an equitable lens to the labour of facilitators, presenters, and youth hub members



## Future of Programming:

- Co-creating the future of programming with youth facilitating the gatherings
- Supporting the ideas and direction that youth members of the hub imagine
- Importance of establishing and progressing an inclusive space for all marginalized folks, and creating/upholding a normalization of acceptance/safe spaces in an informed way
- Cross-cultural learning/teaching/community building
- Looking at the horizons for Inclusivity of Indigeneity beyond turtle island, inclusivity and bridging gaps/ communities and intersectionality of BIPOC communities and the importance of dismantling the lateral violence in Indigenous communities and others in BIPOC communities



## Accessibility:

- The importance of accessible and meaningful engagement through each activity from the check-ins, activities, and closing
- Inclusivity, accessibility of the sign-up/ participants-- regarding the previous requirement for representing an organization aspect of the registration form, as well as language around policymakers, etc.
- Language accessibility (terminology and translators ASL, French, Indigenous languages, close captions, etc.) and the continual need to spend time introducing language

## Successful Areas and Challenges

In debriefing how the 2021 launch of the hub gathering went in January, a primary concern became meaningful youth engagement due to a mutual feeling that the folks at the Canadian Women's Foundation and the National Association of Friendship Centers could have done better youth engagement by refraining from suggesting/decision making about the hub direction and instead facilitate the brainstorming trajectory differently to create more space to listen to what the youth want to do with the hub gatherings. Consequently, this influenced a youth-centred approach in the subsequent hubs.

From the February and March hub meetings, we pursued to continue building the field by advancing many of the priorities developed in previous work. Down below are priority areas we cite from the previous report alongside annotations we attach to citations of the report relating to the most recent developments of the Indige-Health National Hub for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Futures.

## From the Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships 2015–2018 Report to Field project, eight priorities were identified for strengthening and enhancing the field of teen healthy relationships

- 1. Supporting the work of teen healthy relationships program providers** - due to centring youth we shifted priorities so we did not substantially gear towards program providers in our hub meetings. *Perhaps in future work, there can be sessions for finding how youth and their loved ones' relationships are with program providers.*
- 2. Involving parents, caregivers and other support systems** - influenced our programming in the second gathering to encourage including the invitation to bring hub members to the families of youth.
- 3. Building a national leadership and network** - did not substantially prioritize in our hub meetings, due to the tremendous effort of trust/relationship building we gauge is needed in bringing together youth with national leadership and networks. *Like many focuses on youth leadership perhaps this can be its own program with dedicated resources to the youth in accessing leadership spaces.*
- 4. First Nations, Métis and Inuit programming** - As we opened our second gathering to BIPOC, we continued to ground our programming in cultural practices of our nations and Indigenous Peoples of the land we reside/where we hold this programming.
- 5. Community program settings** grounded our events in community settings informed by the folks and their communities attending hub gatherings
- 6. Access and engagement for youth not in school** - ensuring our programming went beyond only supporting/geared towards students to provide a fuller spectrum of youth accessing this space for instance by paying attention to detail in the representation of our BIPOC panellists (intersecting)
- 7. Online and digital programming** relying solely on digital programming has allowed us to further develop in the online realm and while there are inherent barriers to accessing the internet and devices, this development has provided the opportunity to surpass some barriers within facilitating online.
- 8. Youth Voices and Gender Diverse Youth** - From our positionality, this became one of our high priorities that influenced our values and how we facilitated the hub space.

Going Forward, to reach the priorities for program providers and national leadership, perhaps developing more trust and healthy relationships between stakeholders before connecting youth with program providers and youth-mentors might help advance the rest of these priorities.

# Values

We found it important to clearly lay out the expectations we held for ourselves as facilitators, and the type of environment we wanted to create and uphold for our participants. We wanted to consider the positionality we as facilitators are coming from, the type of access we've had to certain social, cultural, and work experiences considering the urban setting we reside in. We realize the freedom and access we've had to resources, inclusive work/learning/social spaces may not be the same for everyone, and so we must make a collective agreement and action plan to meet one another where we are and see how we can build a safe space in consideration of our participants' needs.

## Community Guidelines

- Share the space equally through any channel of engagement
- Safe and inclusive BIPOC space for queer, trans and two-spirit folks and all genders
- We encourage you to bring your full self into the conversation
- Center youth
- Listen attentively to others - while low engagement is completely accepted
- Be conscious of the privileges you carry and how much space you take up in a communal setting
- Refrain from interrupting others: please use the hand raise function
- Be mindful of the time
- Come with an open mind and open heart
- Everyone's experiences and knowledge is valuable and valid
- If you're naturally an extrovert, give space/time for others to speak

## Our conscious approach to equitable compensation

Taking a conscious approach to compensation meant ensuring the artists, youth participants, facilitators and any presenters taking part in creating the positive environment of the Indige-Health hub were being equitably compensated for the often unrequited labour that goes into creating a truly anti-racist youth-centred space. Compensation goes beyond the individual within our communities. There is a constant flow of reciprocal community care that requires a stable abundance of monetary support that our communities have been systematically deprived of, which we aim to bridge in this approach. Recognizing the need for self-care that is backed by monetary support allots time and means for the individual to tend to themselves in order to continue doing community work.

# Next Steps: Recommendations Moving Forward

From the 2021 gatherings, the new approaches to programming supported the agency and power of youth in determining the needs of their communities and themselves. Down below we collate the recommendations based on the new insight, learnings and time of the youth members and youth facilitators.

## Equitable Resource Distribution and Reciprocation

### Budget:

Continue to evaluate if the budget is adequate, equitable, and reciprocal monetary compensation for facilitators, participants, artists and panelists/guest speakers.

- Ensuring that is done through other forms of reciprocal compensation such as interactive aspects, which is another form of compensation/incentive for participation such as beading/paint nights with supplies provided, knowledge learning from guest speakers.
- In regards to the amount of time facilitators allocate to the planning and quality of these hub meetings, and the contributions of the youth participants these are some questions to consider:
  - *How much monetarily is that worth? Is it being adequately compensated? How do we ensure we are adequately compensating future facilitators in this position? How much, and are we, compensating the youth that commit to envisioning what these hub meetings will be, what they and future youth will be getting out of it, are we practicing consent in the extraction of knowledge sharing from those who are part of the planning of this program?*
- When planning for future hub meeting programming, the fiscal year budget needs to be a mechanism to parallel a grounded sustainable, Indigenized and equitable framework of accountability.
- To make the online hubs meaningful, engaging, and safe for youth participants both rural and urban, an evaluation of access to engagement tools is needed along with feasible solutions in order to bridge those access gaps.

### Priorities:

- Practice the value of the importance of centering and supporting youth in the hub gatherings and consider other places in the organization that need system change to better serve youth.
- Revisit unmet priorities such as national leadership and program providers within the youth-centred approach to then instead consider how to best support youth in conversation/engagement with leadership and program providers

### Succession:

- Connect future facilitators involved in planning the next gatherings with former folks involved in the planning to ensure a supported transition.
- Be willing to debrief about this report and spend time reconnecting the ongoing developments of the hub with previous work.

### Future of the Hub:

- To safeguard a BIPOC space that fosters a safer space for everyone, there must be initiatives focused on anti-racism to address, prevent and unlearn settler-colonial history that perpetuates xenophobia, anti-Blackness and other forms of racism so all hub members and people involved can access the space without encountering white supremacy.
- The organization must ensure they are supporting the staff who are tackling these equity goals to sustain their wellbeing and the future integrity of the hub.

## Closing Words

Our hope for the future of the youth hub, along with any direction the Canadian Women's Foundation takes the ethics model and methodologies created and practiced in the Indige-Health hub will be used to continue building a BIPOC space elevating our voices while centring our futures and successes. Celebrating a dedicated space as well as weaving the inclusivity model throughout other parts of the organization will actively contribute an equitable and anti-racist environment in the workspace as well as the work produced from this grounded normativity<sup>5</sup>. Space, where health and wellness are not only modelled but practiced through an inclusive, anti-racist lens, encourages the reclamation of agency needed in a truly radical movement towards wellness.

5. Divesting from colonial systems into indigenized practices.