



"STRUCTURAL EXCLUSION BY DESIGN: THE ABSENCE OF INDIGENOUS-LED KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION IN CENTRAL TORONTO'S DEMENTIA DAY PROGRAMS"

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Background

- In 2025, Toronto is home to roughly 15 dementia-focused Adult Day Programs, yet there is not one single client Indigenous older adult living with dementia
- Gap is not incidental; rather, it exposes a systemic exclusion by design—a failure to integrate anything Indigenous, including ways of knowing, governance, and knowledge translation

Objective

- Examines the policy barriers and evidence gaps that perpetuate the exclusion of Indigenous older adults
- Propose an Indigenous-led integrated Knowledge Translation (iKT) framework to advance culturally-safe spaces, Indigenous foods and languages

Methodology

- Conducted a policy and literature synthesis of peer-reviewed and grey literature published between 2020 and 2025, focusing on culturally safe dementia care and iKT
- Synthesized evidence to identify actionable strategies that would enhance the scope and effectiveness of Indigenous leadership, improve cultural safety, and guide the co-design of dementia day programs.

RESULTS

Indigenous-Led Knowledge Translation for Equitable Dementia Care

"Nothing About Us, Without Us — Indigenous Leadership for Equitable Dementia Care"

Promising CSDC Models Exist in Canada

Shrestha et al. (2024)

- Joint Indigenous dementia advisory group
- Traditional healers + Elders + biomedical providers
- Holistic healing is essential, not supplementary

Hulko et al. (2021)

- First CSDC nurse training program (BC)
- 34 Secwepemc Elders · 4 teaching stories · 15 nurses

webkamigad et al. (2020)

- Anishinabek Sudbury · language, culture, medicine wheel

Five Priority Strategies

Indigenous-led partnerships

Culturally safe environments

Workforce education

Healing circles

Foods & languages

Aligned with TRC Calls to Action · Sustained political commitment + long-term funding
CSDC extends beyond cultural competence → healing relationships

Indigenous-Informed Framework

PEOPLE
Elders · Families
Communities

PLACE
Culturally Safe Spaces
Urban & Land-Based
Connections

KNOWLEDGE
Indigenous Ways
of Knowing
Languages · Stories
Healing Practices

ACTION
Equitable Programs
Policy Change · Accountability

Local Governance Epistemic Justice Land-based Ethics Relational Accountability

Rooted in local governance, epistemic justice, land-based ethics, and relational accountability —
a foundational guide for culturally responsive urban dementia day programs.

Conclusion

- Systemic exclusion of Indigenous older adults at dementia day program and fundamental transformation in the design, governance, and implementation.
- Integrating Indigenous-led knowledge translation to honor the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and intellectual well-being of Indigenous older adults living with dementia.
- Practical policy directions for enhancing urban dementia care and reducing health inequities.

References

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