

Psychiatry and law

with Professor Emmanuelle Bernheim and Professor Eva Ottawa

Talking points

Knowledge & comprehension

1. What is the concept of *miromatisiwin*?
2. Why is it important that Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok mental healthcare is based on *miromatisiwin*?

Application

3. What questions do you think Emmanuelle and Eva ask during interviews with psychiatrists, police officers and community members?
4. All First Nations cultures are unique. What questions would you ask members of a different community if you were working with them to adapt the *miromatisiwin* services for their use?

Analysis

5. Forced hospitalisation is intended to protect individuals. Why do you think people who experience it do not view it as a caring form of treatment?
6. How has colonialism affected the psychiatric and legal treatment of First Nations peoples?
7. How do the differing worldviews of Western and Indigenous cultures affect their approaches to mental healthcare?

Evaluation

8. Different cultures have different 'theories of reality'. Do you think there is one true unifying theory of reality, or are all valid? How do you think this conclusion should affect how people with differing theories of reality are treated?

Activity

Imagine a fictional community that has values, worldviews and a theory of reality that are similar to those of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, and which faces similar social injustices, especially in the fields of psychiatry and law.

Now, imagine this community in fifty years' time, when community-based research (similar to that led by Emmanuelle and Eva) has made significant progress in decolonialising systemic injustices. Write 1-2 pages of creative writing describing this future and how it is benefitting this fictional community. Think about including themes such as:

- Services (e.g., mental healthcare, police, legal systems) based on the community's theory of reality
- Increased power and self-governance for the community
- How the community interacts with national and local governments
- Different approaches to wellness and well-being
- The importance of traditional practices

When completed, share your work with a classmate, read their story and discuss the following:

- What barriers need to be overcome before your visions of the future can be realised?
- To what extent do you think these visions are realistic goals for society?

More resources

- Emmanuelle and Eva are involved with The Canadian Research Chair in Mental Health and Access to Justice, a groundbreaking research programme focused on a rights-based approach to justice: www.sante-mentale-acces-justice.ca/en/chair/home
- This TEDx talk from Diane Hill, a First Nations woman, describes how she is advocating for her community through studying healthcare: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOAYbxJGgDQ