



# Indigenous wellness

with Shelley Cardinal and Debra Pepler

## Talking points

### Knowledge

1. What is meant by the term 'All My Relations'?
2. Give one example from each of the four aspects of the relational determinants of health model that could help Indigenous communities move towards the circle of wellness.

### Comprehension

3. Why are Shelley and Debra focusing on relational determinants of health?
4. How does Shelley and Debra's research differ from historical research projects that involved Indigenous communities?

### Application

5. How do you think that the cycle of violence leads to individuals being more likely to suffer from violence, addiction or emotional distress?
6. "It's not just that historical trauma holds communities back, it's that our trauma is still embedded and becomes activated by things happening around us," says Shelley. How do you think current events, such as climate change and geopolitical tensions, re-activate past traumas in Indigenous communities?

### Analysis

7. Why do you think that York University and the Canadian Red Cross have formed this research partnership? What expertise does each organisation bring to the table?
8. "As I understand it, Indigenous world-views tend to be strength-based," says Debra. What does it mean to have a strength-based worldview?

### Evaluation

9. To what extent do you think volunteering in your local community could help you build and maintain emotional connections with others? What effect do you think this would have on your health and well-being?
10. "You're not going to change anything if you don't change systems," says Debra. To what extent do you think current political, economic and social systems support or impede Indigenous communities in their journeys to wellness?

## Activity

Take another look at the 'Community Journey to Wellness' graphic in the article, focusing on the circle showing the relational determinants of health. Choose one determinant within each of the four aspects (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual) that resonates with you – perhaps it is something you feel you or your community particularly values, or particularly lacks.

For each determinant, answer the following questions:

- Why is this determinant important for health and wellness?
- Why might this determinant be lacking for an individual or a community?
- What actions would you suggest that individuals or communities take to work on this determinant?
- How might relationships between different communities or sections of society improve or degrade this determinant?
- How might this determinant interact with others within the circle?

Form groups of four and take turns to introduce one of your chosen determinants based on the notes you have made. Explain to your group why your chosen determinant is important, why it might have been disrupted and how it can be rebuilt. Open a discussion to hear your classmates' thoughts and answer any questions that they might have.

After all determinants have been discussed, reflect about what you have learnt during the exercise. To what extent do you feel your perspective or worldview has changed, and why? Are you inspired to learn more or take action? What will you remember about the exercise?

## More resources

- In this article on the York University website, Debra talks more about her and Shelley's paper, Community Journey of Change Through Relational Determinants of Health: [yorku.ca/lamarsh/2022/05/19/article-of-the-month-from-dr-debra-pepler-may-2022-selection](https://yorku.ca/lamarsh/2022/05/19/article-of-the-month-from-dr-debra-pepler-may-2022-selection)
- This short article from GLOW Red explores why Shelley began working for and with Indigenous communities: [glowred.org/100-voices/shelley-cardinal](https://glowred.org/100-voices/shelley-cardinal)
- The 'All My Relations' podcast explores the relationships, philosophies and issues relevant to Indigenous people in North America: [allmyrelationspodcast.com](https://allmyrelationspodcast.com)