Author’s response to reviews

Title: A Community-Driven and Evidence-Based Approach to Developing Mental Wellness Strategies in First Nations: A Program Protocol

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A sincere thank you to all three reviewers and the co-Editor for thoughtful and constructive feedback on our manuscript entitled “A Community-Driven and Evidence-Based Approach to Developing Mental Wellness Strategies in First Nations: A Program Protocol” (RIAE-D-19-00030R1).
Reviewer #1

1. COMMENT: This is a very good research project with full details of the research necessary and the complexities of research into indigenous populations especially in Canada. Anyone contemplating similar research will find this very useful and informative. As will anyone with a deep interest in research methods I initially expected an interesting article perhaps with some findings of the research but was disappointed. Being a lay person with a good knowledge and interest in research I still did find it difficult to maintain an interest. However, I am sure many will do better.

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for this comment/reflection.

Reviewer #2

2. COMMENT: Many of the issues surrounding mental wellness, as discussed in this article, are common to all and it may be worthwhile mentioning the degree of comparison with non-Indigenous communities in Canada. For example, men’s health, crisis response time.

RESPONSE: Thank you for this suggestion. We did not include comparative data between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people/populations for a few reasons: a) in the Canadian context, we did not want to conflate different Indigenous groups (e.g. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) in presenting data on Indigenous Peoples; b) data that compare Indigenous to non-Indigenous populations are frequently challenged as being flawed by design (e.g. data are not collected with good representation or accuracy of Indigenous populations); c) several references cited in our paper do provide comparative statistics for readers who may want to read further; and d) we did not want to paint a picture that was disparaging of Indigenous Peoples in Canada except to provide readers with some historical context – linking colonialism to MSV. We have however, provided an example in the second paragraph of the “Rooted in colonization: mental health…” sub-section that highlights a large disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations with regards to suicide.
3. COMMENT: Although explained further into the document, I feel there is a lack of clarity in the abstract. For a subject that may be unfamiliar to the wider audience, it is vital that the reader is clear about the subject matter from the beginning. It may benefit from a Plain English Summary, and/or an excerpt from Article 18 of UNDRIP referring to issues surrounding cultural differences and self-determination.

RESPONSE: We have revised the abstract to include self-determination, early in the abstract and have made revisions to incorporate more plain language. Thank you for this observation.

4. COMMENT: I did feel a little confused with regards to 'the wider community', in that it wasn't always clear whether this meant the wider Indigenous community, or the Canadian community as a whole.

RESPONSE: Thank you for pointing this out. Wherever possible, we revised the text to be clear about which community(ies) we are referring to. We have replaced “broader community” with more specific language such as “local First Nation community members” and “interested community members.”

5. COMMENT: I would like to know a little more about the degree of cooperation between CAC and 'outside' sectors and organisations. Any collaboration with outside agencies should be clearly defined. These are only minor issues and, on the whole, the article is well-written and relevant.

RESPONSE: Thank you for pointing this out. We have added a sentence at the end of the sub-section entitled “Collaboration research agreements” to be transparent about the difference in roles and responsibilities of CAMH and each community’s CAC.
1. COMMENT: Although the authors have clarified that this submission has lay authors amongst their company, we found the manuscript overwhelmingly academic in its language and writing. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that but it is a shame that the authentic lay voice was not able to shine from the submission in view of the premise of the article. Can the authors allow the First Nation voice more prominence?

RESPONSE: Thank you for this comment. First Nations members involved in this manuscript (also from communities involved in this study) have pursued post-secondary/graduate level education and are comfortable with the language used in the original manuscript. We have, however, edited the manuscript to make it more accessible and easier to read.

2. COMMENT: Although the acronyms were explained, there are so many acronyms that slows down the reading flow. Would the authors reduce the number of acronyms?

RESPONSE: We have removed several of the acronyms (i.e. KSPFN, AFN, CAC, PAR). There are only four acronyms left.

3. COMMENT: It would make it easier to read for an international audience if you clarify your use of ‘First Nation’ and ‘First Nations’. For instance, p6 line 97, “One First Nation identified… among their top 5 community challenges…” This sentence, and others (e.g. line 108) would be easier to understand if they wrote ‘First Nation community’ or similar. A further example from P8 line 146 “This framework was developed in partnership with First Nations and provides important principles…” Does this mean First Nation communities, individuals from one First Nation community, or something else?

RESPONSE: Thank you for pointing out the inconsistencies with the use of the term First Nation and First Nations. “First Nations” or “First Nation communities” is now used only when referring to more than one First Nation community and when referring to a specific First Nation community, we used the singular form “First Nation” or “First Nation community”. “First Nations people/person” is used to refer to individuals. There is inconsistency in how this term is used in public documents however we have made our use of the terms consistent within our document.
4. COMMENT: The paper is over-long in places, particularly where you are talking through the detail of your planned methodology, as identified by Reviewer 1.

RESPONSE: We have shortened parts of the methodology section and used more plain language.