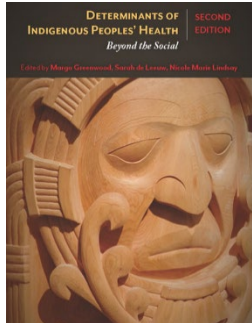




Beyond the Social: Author Interviews



Welcome to [Beyond the Social: Author Interviews](#), a video series produced by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health. The NCCIH focuses on innovative research and community-based initiatives promoting the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada. All of the contributors interviewed in this video series, from the highly-acclaimed book [Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada: Beyond the Social](#), share a common concern with improving the health of Indigenous peoples in Canada and beyond. In sharing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit traditional knowledge alongside Western academic and medical knowledge, the authors demonstrate the potential gains of walking in two worlds, integrating the best of both Indigenous and Western knowledge, and honouring and respecting the diverse healing and medical practices available to us today.

Video - Chapter 15: Reshaping the Politics of Health: A Personal Perspective, with Warner Adam



Warner Adam, a member of the Lake Babine First Nation and Chief Executive Officer of the Carrier Sekani Family Services, talks about how his experiences of living next to a white settlement provided him with the opportunity to walk in both white and Indigenous worlds. This shaped who he is today and his strong conviction that First Nations need to manage, control, and design their own health programs and services if there is to be any improvement in the health of their citizens.

Transcript

My name is Warner Adam. I am a member of Lake Babine Nation in northwest British Columbia. I come from the Bear Clan and I am currently the Chief Executive Officer of Carrier Sekani Family Services. My other job includes being on the National Collaborating Center for Aboriginal Health as an advisory committee member as well as the Deputy Chair of the BC First Nations Health Council.

Since I was a young lad, my grandmother's brother pulled me aside and basically explained to me that as I grow older, my job will be to walk into cultures. At that time, I thought, "I wonder what he's talking about?" As I grew older into the positions that I've assumed, it became clear to me that by walking into cultures, it means you have to embrace the teachings of my elders in my community and make sure that I use those as a foundation to move forward to walk with other cultures – to first, advance the plight of my people, but also to educate not only my people but also non-First Nations about who we are and what we stand for in society.

While Canada is reconciling with Indigenous Peoples, much more needs to be done. I find that in working in this field for 30 years, we move 10 steps ahead and then comes elections, there's a new order in government, and we move 10 steps back. I call that a kind of jagged health care, particularly in child and family services where many of our children still remain in care. It's at an ultimate high. We have structures and places in our community to ensure that we can take care of our children better; however, we do not get proper resources – financial resources or the infrastructure – to build safe homes in our communities and also to bring back the traditions of taking care of children, making sure that children are the centre of our communities.

So much more work needs to be done and I think government really needs to open their minds in terms of who it is that we are and how we sustain ourselves as a community and really take advantage of the resilience we've had, that we demonstrated – and continue to demonstrate – to move forward. An example for British Columbia, we've worked for 10 years – working with Chiefs and our Health Leads – to assist the Government of Canada to vacate the field of health, transfer all of the resources – financial resources, human resources, and the infrastructure that Health Canada maintains – to deliver health services to First Nations. That is now transferred to a First Nations Health Authority. It's the first of its kind in Canada. Hopefully it becomes a model for the rest of Canada and abroad.

The reason why I say that is that many Indigenous people face the same challenges that we do here in Canada – issues related to poverty, issues related to disintegration of cultures through policy. Right now there is a resurgence of people reconstructing and rebuilding their own institutions based on their traditions, their culture and their history. I believe there's a wave of excitement, a wave of comradery among Indigenous people to share stories and to share best practices to move forward for the best outcomes for children. I think it is our responsibility to ensure that a child remains a child for all generations and for any culture, whether your black, white, yellow, or brown.

My mother was a traditional medicine woman. She talked a lot to me about the importance of the plants and how to use the plants to heal oneself of whatever illnesses you might have. She was a herbologist, dealing with herbs, and she was able to mix the herbs and provide some remedies, like for the common cold or rashes, etc. She learned that from my grandmother. To me, I think it's really important to go back to the simple things that come from the Earth, and teaching the younger generation the importance of that because it not only provides us with medicine, it provides us with the opportunity to transfer the culture from one generation to the

next generation. I think we need to pay more attention to our Indigenous ways of knowing and legitimize our ways and practices of healing. Sometimes I think we put too much energy into the western methods and based on statistics. Many of our people are using too many prescription drugs that sometimes they don't even know if it is effective. I think it's also important that a balanced diet based on our plants and animals is the best medicine to move forward. Sometimes we lose that perspective and moving forward is this fast-growing technological age; we need to live basic and live off the land and respecting that.

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