

Title: Indigenous Health Policy and Self-Determination in a "Postcolonial" World of British Columbia, Canada

Indigenous populations globally experience significantly poorer health outcomes compared to non-Indigenous populations, which is a disparity rooted in historical trauma, systemic racism, and social determinants of health shaped by colonial legacies. In Canada, this is reflected in many health indicators, such as life expectancy at birth, which is 8.9 and 9.6 years shorter for First Nations men and women, respectively, than for non-Indigenous people. Such significant disparities represent an urgent need for research into potential solutions to achieve health equity.

The primary aim of this project is to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) in British Columbia, Canada. The FNHA is a province-wide Indigenous-led healthcare organization established in 2013 to address significant health disparities faced by local First Nations. This study seeks to identify culturally specific policy elements, unique solutions and approaches to healthcare delivery implemented by the FNHA. The ultimate goal is to develop policy proposals and guidelines that can be applied to other post-colonial and multicultural societies to improve health outcomes for Indigenous and marginalized populations. By focusing on the FNHA, this project addresses a gap in the literature and provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Indigenous-led healthcare models. This research is timely and relevant as the topic of Indigenous self-determination continues to gain importance in public health and policy discussions.

This research will investigate how Indigenous self-determination in healthcare governance impacts health outcomes and the overall well-being of First Nations populations in British Columbia. The project will be grounded in postcolonial theory and informed by the self-determination theory, integrating insights from political and legal sciences, sociology, and history. The research will utilize thematic content analysis to assess policy documents and conduct expert interviews with Indigenous practitioners and decision-makers. Additionally, quantitative data analysis will be performed on health statistics to evaluate the FNHA's impact, comparing data from before and after its implementation.

The project is expected to:

1. Provide empirical evidence on the positive impact of Indigenous-led healthcare organizations on health outcomes.
2. Identify best practices and unique policy elements that contribute to successful healthcare delivery in Indigenous communities.
3. Offer practical policy recommendations to reduce health disparities in other post-colonial and multicultural societies.
4. Contribute to the academic fields of public health, Indigenous studies, and postcolonial theory by expanding the understanding of how self-determination and decolonization can improve health outcomes.
5. Serve as a model for systemic change in healthcare, applicable to other Canadian provinces and countries facing similar challenges with marginalized populations.

This research will significantly advance knowledge in the field and provide actionable insights for policymakers and health practitioners, promoting more equitable and effective healthcare systems worldwide.