

Wellness in Two Worlds: A Holistic Approach to Supporting Indigenous Students

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Background

At the UofG we had an awareness of the need for a greater understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students' experiences with mainstream and culture based counselling and support.



Scenario - Duncan

Duncan is an out of province Métis student and is actively engaged in his culture and community.

He has a diagnosis of generalized anxiety disorder with major depressive episodes that is impacting his ability to be academically and personally successful.

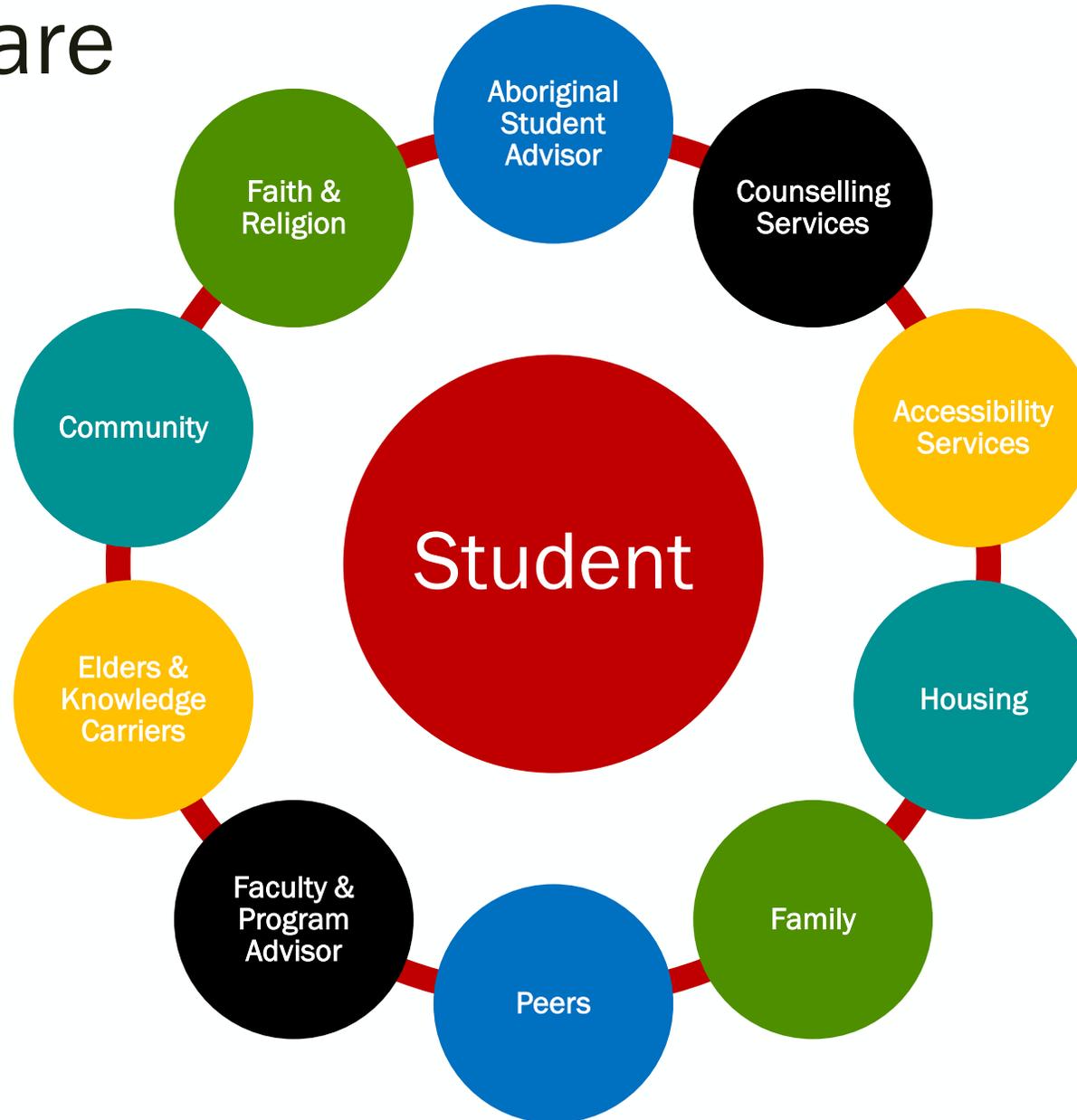
Considering your knowledge and services on your campus, how might you respond in supporting Duncan?

Indigenous Students at University of Guelph

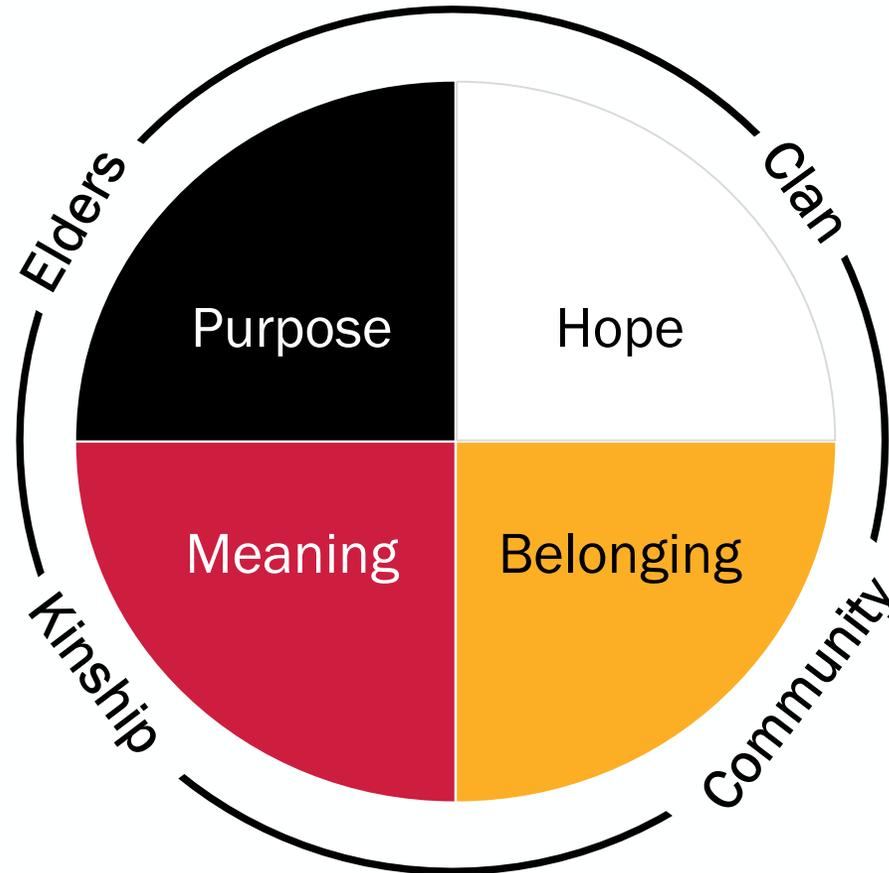
- Majority First Nations and Métis learners
- Many from urban environments
- Largely straight from high school
- Many live in residence during their first year



Circle of Care



Kinship Model of Support



Adapted from: *First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework*
(Health Canada and Assembly of First Nations, 2015)

The Project

Through a comprehensive strategic approach, the initiative was designed to address gaps in mental health supports for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners in postsecondary education in Ontario.

We anticipated that utilizing a multiple institution approach would allow for more inclusive, robust and flexible interventions, programming, resources and supports that can be adopted by other institutions.



Themes

The results indicated that we can improve culturally relevant and responsive mental health and wellness supports for First Nations, Métis and Inuit postsecondary students through paying attention to **holistic wellness interventions that are dynamic rather than static.**

Holistic Wellness



The Importance of Indigenous Knowledge

“For people who don’t have the culture, the university and the college become a place where they may have their first experience of culture [...] they begin to have a grounding in who they actually are. They begin to understand their lives from their identity [...]”

– Knowledge Carrier



Working Through Challenging Times

““[...] when I think of mental wellness I think there is no such thing as perfect but there is being able to operate in balance. All of our emotions are good, given by Creator, and to recognize when that becomes out of balance [...] and to know what throws that healthy balance off [...]” – Knowledge Carrier



Finding The Support You Need

“I think often times I like to relate to upper year students or even graduate students that are kind of on the course of where I’m aiming myself or aligning myself [...] I think sometimes it’s less intimidating to approach someone who is only a few years older than you as opposed to going to a counsellor.”

– Student



Learning From One Another

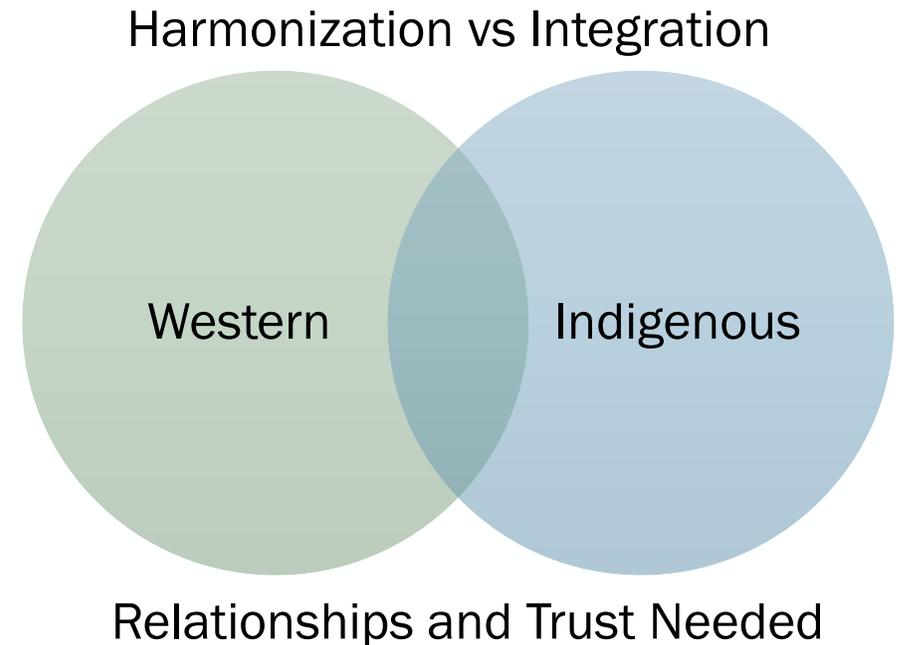
“[...] The service providers can be well-informed, that would be very, very helpful. [...] So I think more education would be very, very helpful and I’m hoping after everything is said and done that could be part of the process – to educate people.”

– Support staff



Programming and Services

- Men's and Women's Sharing Circles
- Aboriginal Wellness Support Peers
- Wellness & Nutrition Circles
- Development of Support Resources for Students
- Front Line Staff Learning, Training and Collaborating



Scenario - Anna

Anna is a bi-racial student who identifies as both a status First Nations person and a person of colour. She was raised in a large city and has never been to her reserve community, but her mother taught her about her First Nations heritage, cultural values and some language.

She is struggling to find her place and connect on campus.

Anna's roommate has brought her to you because they are concerned that she never leaves her room and has been missing classes.

What are some ways the supports on your campus could support Anna from a more holistic lens?

Questions

We wish to acknowledge all of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, Knowledge Carriers and Elders who honoured us with their understanding of holistic wellness so that it could be shared in support of the journeys of others.

Miigwetch • Niá:wen • Nakurmiik • Marsee



Contact

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