



Indigenous Learners Mental Health Needs – Literature Review

This literature review explores the factors that influence the mental health of Indigenous learners and identifies key needs that must be addressed to develop programs that support their wellbeing.

Impacts on Mental Health

Factors disrupting wellbeing



Individual Influences

- Services inaccessible, inappropriate, or non-existent.
- High rates of unmet needs and underutilization of services.
- Racism and discrimination in care settings reduce trust and help-seeking.
- Mental health stigma: Fear of being judged or dismissed prevents seeking support.
- Rural areas lack access; urban areas have higher rate of exposure to racism and discrimination.



Socio-Cultural Influences

- Racism undermines cultural identity, belonging, and self-esteem.
- Loss of cultural knowledge and connection.

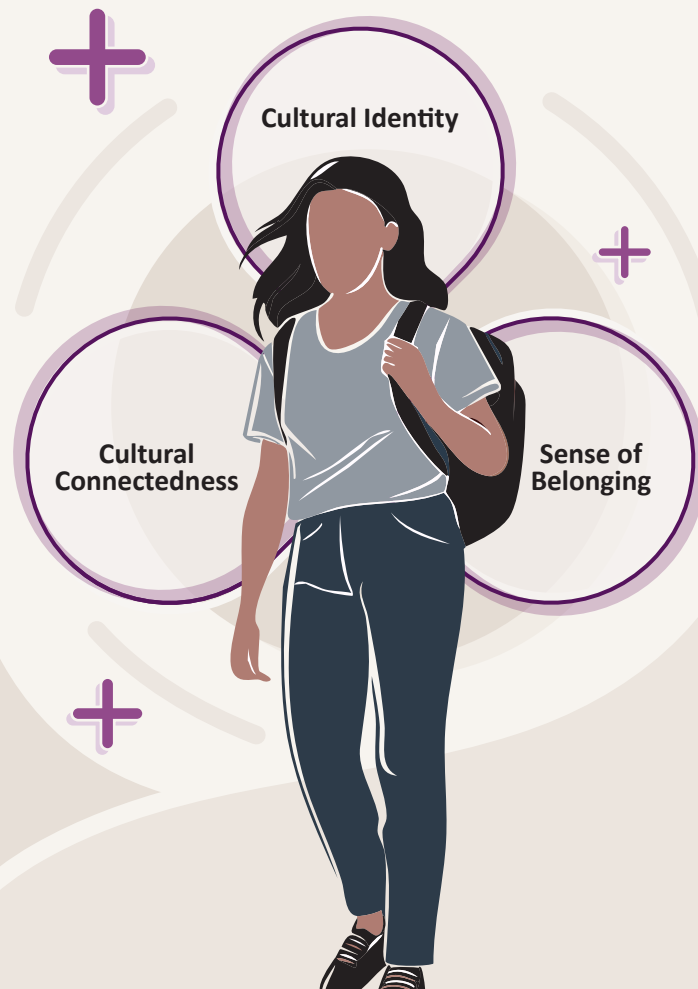


Systemic Influences

- Colonialism influences institutions through policies and structures that marginalize Indigenous perspectives.
- Western education systems ignore Indigenous cultural practice and worldviews.
- Indigenous students forced to conform to colonial educational models that do not reflect or support their identities.

Promotion of Wellbeing

Key contributors to ensuring positive outcomes for Indigenous learners



Meeting Mental Health Needs

Programming needed to strengthen and support wellbeing

Physical Health

Inclusion of land-based and cultural activities that address physical wellbeing while fostering positive self-identity and community belonging.



Cultural

Culturally rooted with involvement from Elders and knowledge holders.



Indigenous-Led

Developed, delivered, and evaluated by Indigenous people and communities. Ownership and leadership by Indigenous organizations ensure cultural relevance and safety.



Social

Positive role modelling, peer programming builds trust, support networks, and relationships within and between communities.



Financial

Address financial stress through education, tools, and access to funding.



via Social Media

Extend reach of cultural connection and support via technology and digital platforms, effective for youth and the continuity of cultural identity.



Mental Health

Using holistic, culturally grounded models that reflect Indigenous understandings of wellness – emphasizing a balance across physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health.



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