|  |
| --- |
| **Title of Innovation in policy and practice presentation** (Sentence case)  Indigenous Youth Mental Wellness: Fostering Relationships in Community-based Public Health Interventions |
| **Maximum 2500 characters (including spaces but excluding title)**  **Setting/problem**  In Canada, suicide is one of the leading causes of death among Indigenous people (Statistics Canada, 2016). In circumpolar regions, Indigenous communities are grappling with mental health distress for youth. An article by Pollock et al. (2016) reported suicide disproportionately affects Innu and Inuit populations in Labrador compared with the general population of Newfoundland, Canada, and suicide rates were high among male youths and Inuit females. In working towards strengthening community development, it is important to help foster relationships with invested stakeholders for community-based public health interventions.  **Intervention**  A series of public engagement events were conducted in a northern Canadian Indigenous community. The purpose of the public engagement activities was to meet with invested stakeholders in various roles throughout the community, in effort to gain a better understanding of the youths’ mental health needs. The events included: visiting a community garden, attending a youth drumming circle, and speaking with Indigenous mental health workers and Elders. Knowledge development was gained about some of the vital issues that the youth are struggling with daily, and ways to help youth feel connected within their communities.  **Outcomes**  Although there are various programs for youth to be involved in throughout their community, it is important for there to be a connection between the resources. Also, there needs to be an opportunity for youth to feel a sense of belonging and identity. Local programming needs to be meaningful, and as well to help the youth be more self-aware of their environments. Knowledge transfer with external partners and collaborators can be used to help communities strengthen their public health interventions for youth with local relevance.  **Implications**  In moving forward with innovative policies and practices, it is important for Indigenous communities to be engaged with discussing the issues and finding opportunities for regional solutions that will have meaningful outcomes to them. Communities not only need to be involved, but they also need to actively participate in helping youth to feel empowered and supported by their communities.  **Preferred presentation format**  Oral |