The Canadian Community's Knowledge on the History and Matters of Indigenous Peoples of Canada

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Abstract

Objective: To gather informal evidence on the Canadian community's knowledge of the history and matters of Indigenous Peoples of Canada and identify gaps in education and awareness.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was performed through a structured and anonymous questionnaire that was completed on a voluntary basis. Knowledge gained from partnering with Indigenous members of the community and participating in a blanket exercise was used to produce questions surrounding current and historical matters of Indigenous peoples of Canada. The blanket exercise is an Indigenous-led educational program that tells the story of Canadian history from an Indigenous lens. The inclusion criteria for the study was individuals enrolled in a primary and/or secondary Canadian educational institution and non-Indigenous self-identification. The survey sample most closely represents individuals between 18 to 24 years old in the population.

Results: The target demographic scored an average of 54.4% on knowledge-based survey questions. Most individuals answered questions more accurately on topics relating to historical facts, such as the content of the Indian Act, than they did on topics relating to current Indigenous issues, like percent of land mass occupied by Indigenous peoples. Despite indicating primary and secondary schooling as the main source of education on Indigenous history, 86% of participants found their education "limited" and "inadequate". Results of the survey do not definitively represent the Canadian population, as this was an informal study completed on a voluntary basis.

Conclusion: Survey results highlighted gaps in the Canadian population's knowledge on challenges faced by Indigenous members of Canada. Many respondents recognized an inadequate primary and/or secondary education on Indigenous issues, suggesting a need for educational reform. Increasing awareness on Indigenous matters can potentially reduce discrimination and systemic racism, which can improve social determinants of health. This data can serve as an informal basis of knowledge until further research is conducted.