



## **An evidence-based formative evaluation of a cross cultural Aboriginal mental health program in Canada**

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### **Abstract**

This article reports on a formative evaluation of a Canadian cross cultural Aboriginal mental health program that combined the healing properties of the Aboriginal healing circle and the self-awareness and empowerment practices of the psychotherapy technique known as 'focusing'. The study was formative in nature and grounded in qualitative inquiry. Out of the data analysis, five salient themes surfaced that captured the breadth of the participants' first-hand experiences of the piloted program: experience, relationships, spirituality and connectedness, empowerment, and self-awareness. The findings were interpreted using the therapeutic criteria for both the focusing and healing circle components of the program. Implications of the research include the need for further research to be conducted with, for and by Aboriginal people to ensure that their worldview is acknowledged and put into practice, and the need to acknowledge existing frameworks of healing and knowledge within Aboriginal communities.

### **Keywords**

*Aboriginal mental health, cross cultural, evidence-based, focusing, healing circle*

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