

Culture as Healing

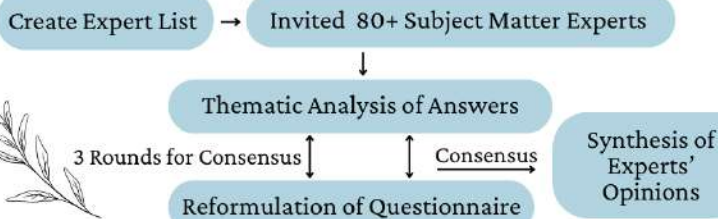
Addressing Indigenous Over-Incarceration through Access to Culture

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Background

This study aimed to gather and synthesize expert knowledge on the relationship between access to culture and justice involvement for Indigenous persons to make this knowledge more readily available to key decision-makers in Canada's criminal legal system. In particular, we sought to determine if consensus exists among leading experts, whether academics or front-line workers.

Delphi Study Method



Results

R1

Participants were asked their understanding of how access to culture relates to: justice involvement, substance use, and mental health for Indigenous persons; factors shaping culture's effectiveness in reducing risk factors; gender-based barriers; and key intervention priorities. They rated importance of culture in reducing justice involvement for Indigenous persons at an average of 8.82/10.

R2

36 propositions from R1 were presented back to participants. 34 achieved consensus ($\geq 75\%$ agreement). For example, there was consensus that access to culture can: strengthen an Indigenous person's (1) support network and (2) ties to an Indigenous value system; help them build (3) a positive self-identity and (4) pro-social skills and behaviours; (5) support the development of a positive, pro-social environment beyond the individual participant; (6) help them gain greater insight into the impacts of colonialism; and (7) protect them from anti-social influences.

R3

Consensus was not reached on two propositions as prison and awareness of anti-Indigenous discrimination affect individuals differently. Some gain cultural access in prison, while others lose it. Learning about injustices can lead to hopelessness for some but empower others to better navigate systemic barriers. Accessing culture can be prioritized based on what is practically available.

Implications

Front-line and academic experts reached consensus on many key aspects of the relationship between cultural access and justice involvement. This provides a clearer starting point for decision-makers across the criminal legal system.