

Title:

Indigenous Wood Carving as a Behavioural Observation and Intervention Platform

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Background: Behavioural interventions often lack cultural relevance and historical validity when applied in Indigenous community settings. Indigenous wood carving is a land-and art-based practice that has historical and contemporary structure for observing behaviour, reinforcing relational accountability, and supporting learning. This Indigenous behavioural platform remains absent from behavioural intervention and trial-based research.

Objective: To present Indigenous wood carving as a platform for simultaneous behavioural observation and change intervention.

Methods: Drawing on over ten years of applied practice in Canadian schools and a CIHR-funded Indigenous research project (KIJKATIG; n=20 Indigenous youth), this work uses narrative inquiry and the KIJKATIG (Cedar Tree) Education Model. Structured carving sessions provided naturalistic conditions for observing behavioural indicators including attention, emotional regulation, and relational engagement. Behavioural change processes were supported through land-based carving activities guided by Indigenous teachings and the Four “C” strategies: Connection, Caring, Community, and Comfort.

Results: Carving sessions demonstrated sustained engagement, improved self-regulations, and strengthened relational accountability. Behavioural change emerged through embodied, relational learning rather than prescriptive colonial methods. The carving environment enabled real-time behavioural observation while functioning as an intervention that reinforced meaning, belonging, purpose, and hope.

Conclusion: Indigenous wood carving offers a culturally grounded platform for behavioural observation and intervention. This approach has strong potential for adaptation into culturally responsive behavioural trials and implementation research within Indigenous community-based contexts.