

At the Interface: Indigenous Health Practitioners and Evidence Based Practice

Key Findings

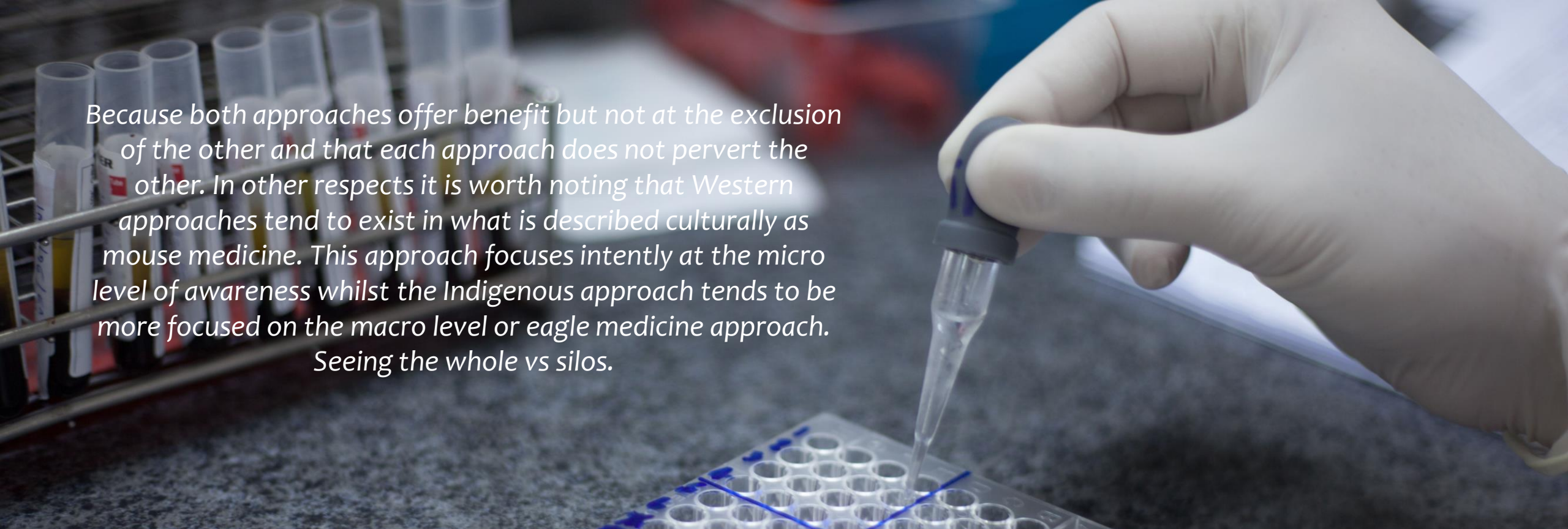


RECIPROCAL
CONSULTING

*Hardest thing to overcome:
we are meant to be doing the
journey together
equally... both are supposed
to be valid. The feeling isn't
that [Indigenous knowledge]
is equal, it's that it's tolerated.
And they say, "Oh that's nice
but Western is the real
medicine." There is still a lot
of attitude to get over.*

A scenic landscape featuring a river flowing through a forested valley. In the background, there are rugged mountains with patches of snow. The foreground shows a rocky riverbank with some snow and autumn-colored vegetation. A large green speech bubble is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text 'About the Project' in white.

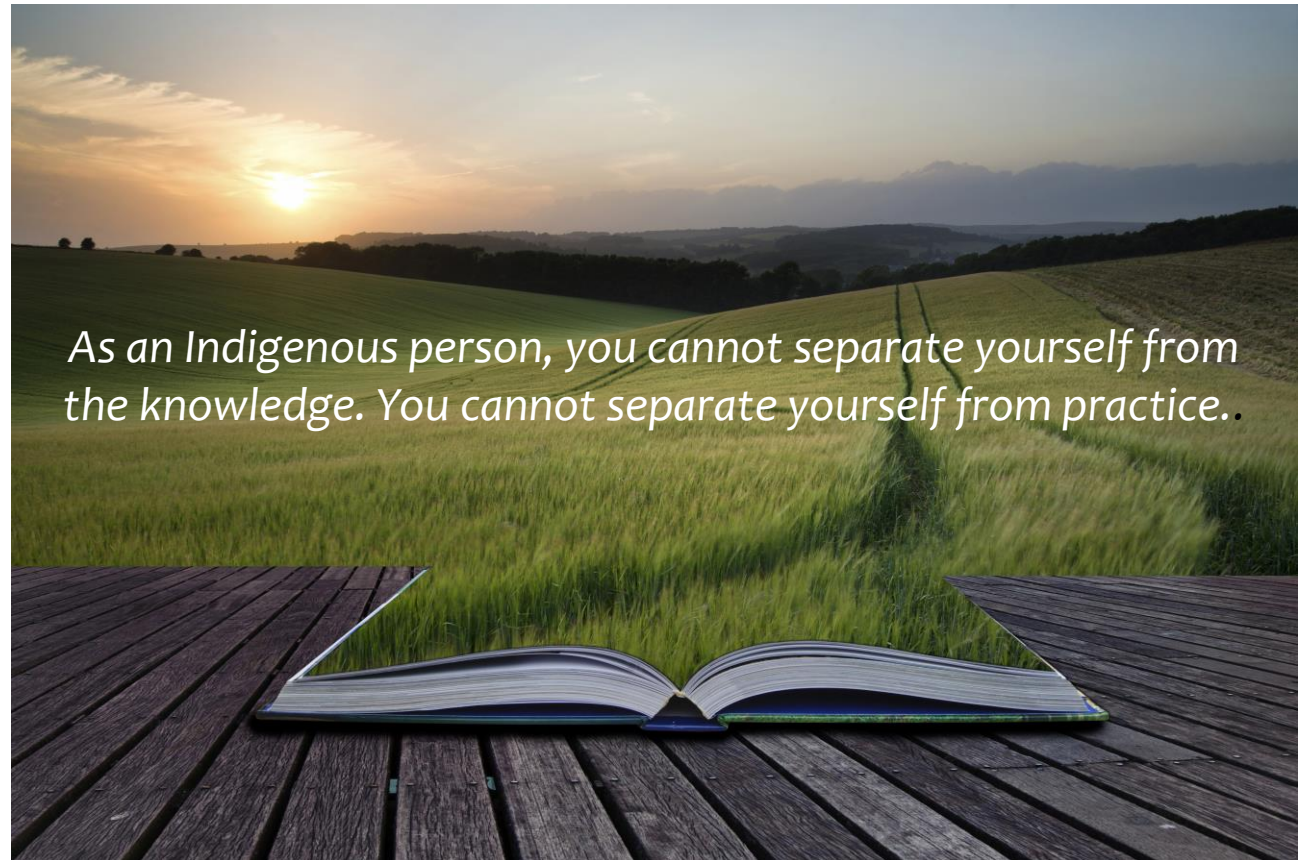
About the Project

A close-up photograph of a hand in a white lab glove using a blue pipette to dispense liquid into a clear multi-well plate. In the background, a rack of test tubes is visible. The scene is set in a laboratory with a dark, speckled countertop.

Because both approaches offer benefit but not at the exclusion of the other and that each approach does not pervert the other. In other respects it is worth noting that Western approaches tend to exist in what is described culturally as mouse medicine. This approach focuses intently at the micro level of awareness whilst the Indigenous approach tends to be more focused on the macro level or eagle medicine approach. Seeing the whole vs silos.

Evidence-Based Practice

Access to Evidence and Gaps in Knowledge



As an Indigenous person, you cannot separate yourself from the knowledge. You cannot separate yourself from practice..

Medicine and science are young fields of study and Indigenous knowledge is much more ancient knowledge systems and deal with the more difficult and intangible things, such as spiritual health and wellness. A lot of that, you have to look at the individual lived experience as well as the Elders and knowledge keepers they're working with.



Traditional Knowledge in Health Care Practice

Barriers to Blending Indigenous and Western Knowledge

I still think they have to get over a lot of healthcare providers' stereotypes about Indigenous people that are engrained in our society. Indigenous health in my family was seen as something unworthy, as bad, as witchcraft and that it shouldn't be passed on. My own grandfather, he knew medicines, he thought it was negative and wanted to be a good Christian family, so he didn't pass it on, and that was the mentality. All of our ceremonies were illegal, [and] lots of things had to be hidden.



Evidence is partly based in the privileging of non-Indigenous evidence. It's an assumption that Western evidence is superior to Indigenous evidence, and Indigenous knowledge is second-class and second rate—second to their actions, recommendations and interventions. Evidence is not a scientific fact; it is a privileged interaction between populations and healthcare workers. Evidence is not a thing, it's a process.

Barriers to Blending Indigenous and Western Knowledge

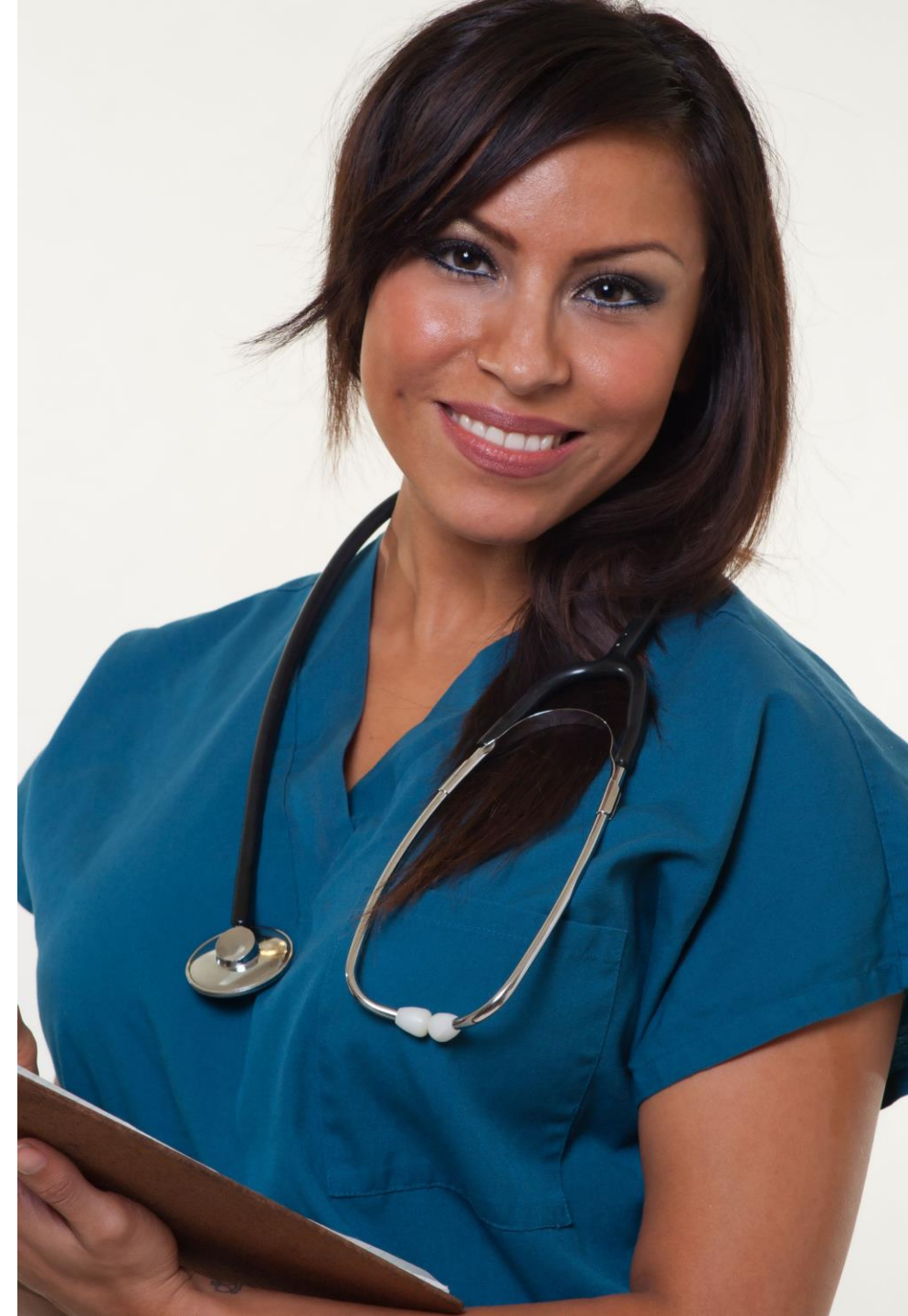
Wise Practices to Blending Indigenous and Western Knowledge



We have to be careful to not subordinate Indigenous knowledge to Western knowledge. We have to look at how we're gathering evidence and whether it's consistent with the underlying philosophies of the people you're working with or the phenomena you're working with.

Wise Practices to Blending Indigenous and Western Knowledge

The folks I work with live a dual life of being Indigenous and living in a Western culture. Many discuss their own struggles with trying to navigate the middle ground between these worlds. Using aspects of both in therapy help folks navigate the process of building bridges between these worlds.





Discussion

It's really helpful to have those that understand that these practices can work alongside one another. To have support for that idea from leadership, so that you don't feel like you're isolated in doing this and advocating for this on your own. It requires more space and time as well. It means building relationships with traditional knowledge keepers, Elders, spiritual advisors, and making sure that they are supported and compensated and that requires support from leadership.