

Vincent Wong^{1,2,3}, Kimberly Fairman MPH^{2,3}

¹Faculty of Science, McGill University, Montréal, Canada; ²Institute for Circumpolar Health Research, Yellowknife, Canada; ³Feast Centre for Indigenous STBBI Research, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada.

Introduction

- Colonial research practices have been implicated in deficit theorizing, knowledge extraction, and exoticism of Indigenous cultures¹. Harmful research practices perpetuate epistemic injustices.
- Indigenous scholars and community members have formalized approaches that uphold Indigenous research methodologies in academia; however, Inuit have a unique history that informs epistemology which is distinct from other Indigenous peoples².
- This project is an **initial exploratory study** intended to establish positive research partnerships with Inuit.
- Community-based participatory research (CBPR) principles offer a non-prescriptive and iterative paradigm that promotes equitable research-community collaboration and democratization of knowledge creation³.
- CBPR methodology is grounded in community ways of knowing to ensure that the findings are applicable to local understandings of health⁴.



Objectives

The **main objective** is to formulate a Strategic Research Agenda to describe:

- Health research priorities of Inuit living in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
- Inuit research methodologies

We aim to empower Inuit community members to become active contributors in the management of health research and policies.

By co-creating a research agenda, we encourage more nuanced discussions to advocate for Inuit health, apply for funding, and engage other researchers as allies and partners.

Methods

Recruitment:

- Posters were distributed through the Yellowknifemuit Inuit Kattujiqatigiit.

Workshops:

- 3 community workshops from May to August 2022.
- Six Inuit participants** of diverse ages.
- Discussion topics were guided by the participants.
- Workshop facilitation involved open-end questions of lived experiences and collective group reflections.
- After each workshop, the community fellow debriefed with an Inuk elder and mentors to discern key themes, which informed the planning of subsequent sessions.
- In accordance with CBPR principles, community members were involved in all elements of the project design, analysis, and knowledge-making.

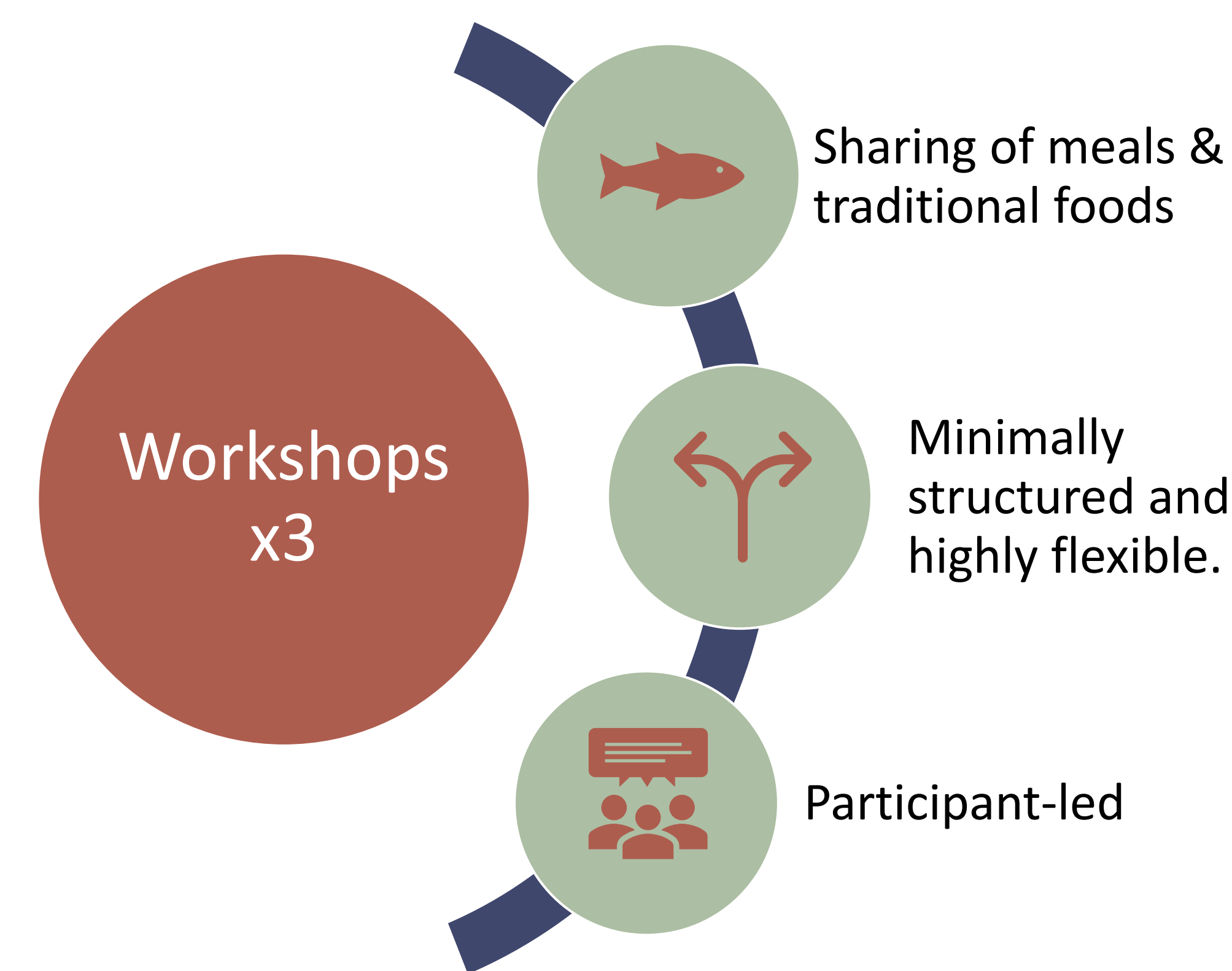


Fig. 1 Schematic that illustrates three key concepts behind the workshops' design.

Results



Fig. 2 shows a map of Canada, indicating the location of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/38/Canada_blank_map.svg

| Workshop 1 | Workshop 2 | Workshop 3 |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Why is Inuit health research important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inform culturally safe practices in the healthcare system To acknowledge the effects of medical colonialism To integrate Inuit methodologies and knowledge with Western thinking <p>What contributes to Inuit well-being?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of belonging to Inuit identity Access to traditional foods and healthy diets Instilling hope in younger generations | <p><i>This session was facilitated by researchers and Inuk elders from the Feast Centre.</i></p> <p>Decolonizing research language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight Inuit resiliency Avoid deficit framing <p>Sexual and reproductive health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important to support and educate younger generations Increase supports for teenage pregnancies Mental wellness ties into sexual health Challenge stigmas Acknowledge that contemporary gender roles are evolving | <p>Community-based health research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study: Rigolet Whiteboard Project Creative and art-based approaches to health promotion <p>Inuit values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust in community relationships Sharing Family Art and culture Embracing the urban Inuit identity <p>Learning needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to formulate research questions Fostering equitable research relationships Ensuring community ethics in research |

Conclusion

Three key goals:

- Increase a sense of togetherness among urban Inuit in Yellowknife.
- Acknowledge the diversity of Inuit culture and the need for an Inuit specific space for research.
- Support Inuit autonomy in research through local educational workshops or discussions, enabling community members to gain foundational skills in health research.

Values:

- Connecting with one's personal and cultural identity in an urban setting.
- Access to traditional foods and community gatherings.
- Creativity—embracing Inuit art/culture and passing this knowledge to future generations.



Fig. 3 Picture of Feast Centre elders and staff with ICHR researchers in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Photo taken on July 22, 2022.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the great mentorship of Kimberly Fairman and elder Rassi Nashalik. Thank you to the Feast Centre for Indigenous STBBI Research and the Institute for Circumpolar Health Research for their funding and support. Thank you to Randy Jackson, Doris Jactier, elder Anaoyok Alookey, elder Naulaq LeDrew, and Ellen Ittunga from the Feast Centre for their visit and facilitation of the second workshop. Thank you to all of the community members who contributed to this project.

References

- Kovach M. Indigenous methodologies: characteristics, conversations, and contexts. Second edition ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; 2021.
- Wilson S. Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods. Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing; 2008.
- Masuda JR, Creighton G, Nixon S, Frankish J. Building capacity for community-based participatory research for health disparities in Canada: the case of "Partnerships in Community Health Research". Health Promot Pract. 2011;12(2):280-92.
- Chambers LA, Jackson R, Worthington C, Wilson CL, Tharao W, Greenspan NR, et al. Decolonizing Scoping Review Methodologies for Literature With, for, and by Indigenous Peoples and the African Diaspora: Dialoguing With the Tensions. Qual Health Res. 2018;28(2):175-88.