

# Stories of Resilience: Developing a Collaborative Research Partnership

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## The Project...

*Roots of Resilience* is an international collaborative research program exploring the processes that promote resilience among some of Canada and New Zealand's Indigenous peoples. *Stories of Resilience, Healing and Transformation* is a project that examines resilience from Indigenous perspectives by collecting stories of community and personal experiences of doing well despite challenges.

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## The Stories...

Oral history and storytelling have played significant roles in the worldviews and cosmology of Indigenous peoples. Our goal is to gather stories of what has helped resilience, healing, and healthy living. These stories will be recorded, collected, studied and shared so that others may learn from them. Our goals are:

- to understand resilience, healing, recovery, and transformation from Indigenous perspectives
- to identify ways to promote resilience and healing in each community.

## Communities...

Nations that are involved include:

- **Mi'kmaq of Eskasoni (Nova Scotia)**
- **Kanien'kehá:ka/Mohawks of Kahnawá:ke (Quebec)**
- **Crees of Iiyiyuschii (James Bay, Quebec)**
- **Gwa'Sala-Nakwaxda'xw of Fort Rupert (British Columbia)**



## Building a Partnership in Kahnawá:ke...

This participatory research project involves close collaboration with Indigenous communities and follows the CIHR Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People. This collaboration is based on respect for Indigenous knowledge and the needs of the collaborating communities. Collaborating with the community ensures that responsibility and control of the research and the process of knowledge exchange is shared by the researchers and the communities where data is being collected.

These are the steps we are following in the Kanien'kehá:ka community of Kahnawá:ke, and our plans for all phases of the project...

### Phase 1: Introducing the project

The collaboration with Kahnawá:ke began in summer 2007 by identifying partners in the community interested in the project. A **Community Researcher**, Morgan Kahentonni Phillips, was identified to work with the research team collaborating on the design and adaptation of research methods to local cultural protocols, gathering and analyzing data, interpretation of results, and returning the results to the community. The research was then introduced to the Onkwata'karitáhtshera Health and Social Services Research Council, the community research council that reviews research proposals to conduct health research in Kahnawá:ke. A partnership was formed, a research agreement negotiated, and a **Community Advisory Group** established.

### Phase 2: Focus Groups

After introducing the project to the community, separate focus groups of 6-10 people were planned for different age categories: **elders, adults, and youth or young adults**. The goal of the focus groups was to get community perspectives on resilience. Focus group interviews asked questions about:

- **Community challenges and how the community has responded**
- **Language, words and expressions related to resilience**
- **Examples of resilience in individuals, families, and the community**
- **Traditional stories related to resilience**

Informed consent was obtained from each participant and focus group discussions were audiotaped and transcribed. All personal data will remain confidential. The research team has done a preliminary analysis of the data to identify the main themes. This analysis will be discussed with the Community Advisory Group, which will help guide the interpretation of local concepts of resilience.

### Phase 3: Individual Interviews

The individual interview was developed on the basis of the focus group findings. Individual's stories of resilience will be collected through interviews conducted by the research team. Approximately 10-15 individuals will be identified with the help of the Community Advisory Group and asked to be interviewed. Participants will be asked questions about:

- **Personal stories of resilience**
- **Words and expressions in the local languages related to resilience**
- **Traditional stories of resilience**
- **Experiences sharing one's knowledge and helping others**
- **Their outlook on facing future challenges**

### Phase 4: Knowledge Exchange

The process of research is one of mutual learning and dialogue. Participatory research is a capacity building process that allows the community to develop local expertise. The research collaboration with Kahnawá:ke will lead to knowledge exchange in three main ways:

- 1 With the guidance of the Community Advisory Group, the research team will first present the findings to the community in the form of reports and forums tailored to the community's interests and concerns. By working with several different communities, we will be able to identify aspects of resilience that are specific to each community and aspects that are shared by many communities.
- 2 In collaboration with the community, the research team will prepare reports and presentations that give voice to Indigenous perspectives of resilience. For example, we can make the collected traditional stories available within each community and to a wider audience in appropriate ways.
- 3 Through scientific publications and presentations, the project can contribute to the development of culturally appropriate models of resilience that go beyond current approaches in mental health and social services. Ultimately, through this research we hope to identify interventions and initiatives that can promote resilience and healing in each community.

For more information on the project or to get involved...  
Visit our website or contact someone from the team.

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