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Therapeutic landscapes and First Nations peoples: an exploration of culture, health and place

Kathleen Wilson

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Abstract

This paper contributes to an expanding body of research within Health Geography that focuses on the role of therapeutic landscapes in shaping health. Therapeutic landscapes demonstrate the importance of places for maintaining physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. Meanings of place and the relationship between place and health have culturally specific dimensions, yet these tend to be overlooked especially with respect to First Nations peoples. This paper broadens the analysis of therapeutic landscapes by exploring their culturally specific dimensions in the context of the everyday lives of Anishinabek™ and thus contributes to a better understanding of First Nations peoples.

First Nations peoples contend that the relationship they have with the land shapes the

cultural, spiritual, emotional, physical and social lives of individuals and communities. While geographic research has explored First Nations peoples health, few studies have attempted to explore the influence of cultural beliefs and values on health—let alone the intricate link between the land and health. This paper presents the results of 17 in-depth interviews conducted with Anishinabek (Ojibway and Odawa) living in one First Nations community in northern Ontario, Canada.

The findings from the interviews demonstrate that culture is an important component of the link between health and place in everyday life. Incorporating First Nations peoples'™ perspectives of health and place reveals that the current conceptualizations of health and place within the Geography of Health literature are only partial.



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Keywords

Therapeutic landscapes; Culture; First Nations peoples

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