

T'áncháy and Lindsay

Creative ways to access help

T'ÁNCHÁY: ?edlanet'e-a. [How are you?] My name is T'áncháy.

LINDSAY: Taanishi. [Hello] My name is Lindsay.

T'ÁNCHÁY: We've been supporting Indigenous youth and Indigenous youth mental health for many, many years, and we met out of a conference that was focused on Indigenous youth organizing and mental health. We are constantly hearing about the deaths of young people in communities that we are connected to, and so it's almost like you're constantly dealing with that cycle of grief. It takes a toll on all of us.

LINDSAY: In a lot of Indigenous communities there isn't the same access to services or to mental health supports that may be present within urban communities or in other locations.

T'ÁNCHÁY: And sometimes it might not feel like you have anybody to talk to or like you have anybody that you can trust. But there also are other ways to reach out for help. For me that looks like going out to the river, out to the lake, sitting by my favourite tree. And that's a really integral part of our Indigenous identity is our connection to land. There are different creative ways that you can access help that isn't necessarily going to see a counsellor.

LINDSAY: I think that's what is different about Indigenous young people taking on leadership in life promotion and healing work is we have these other options or these other priorities of relationships that can guide us and support us.

T'ÁNCHÁY: A source of help that is often overlooked I think is laughter. In Indigenous teachings and Indigenous communities we consider laughter

medicine. And when I hear of events or something that happens that triggers my own mental health and I'm really struggling, often we'll come together as friends and we just laugh or we find things to laugh about, we find those elements of light and love and humour.

LINDSAY: For people experiencing isolation, you know, there's digital options for hearing words of support like in the We Matter videos.

T'ÁNCHÁY: Maybe like reading books or stories of people who you really resonate with like reading comic books and superheroes you resonate with. For me, my dog has been like a big saving grace in my life and being able to build a connection with my pet is a big part of my own mental wellness. So there are definitely so many different avenues of help that you can access, that you maybe wouldn't think of.

LINDSAY: I think we need to diversify. We can't place all of our reliance on one person or one resource. Depending on circumstances you may need different things, so that's why we try and encourage youth to take a look, see what they have, and diversify who they lean on and how they access support.