

What keeps you strong? A systematic review identifying how primary health-care and aged-care services can support the well-being of older Indigenous peoples

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The life expectancy of Indigenous peoples from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States is improving. In some cases, for the first time, governments in these countries are developing policies to support and provide services to increasing numbers of older Indigenous peoples. Yet, older Indigenous peoples tend not to use mainstream aged care services for a variety of reasons. These include experiences of racism and a failure to understand health and wellbeing from Indigenous perspectives. While a number of primary studies have attempted to understand how services can better support the well-being of older Indigenous peoples, this review identified and summarised interventions and strategies that have or could support the well-being of older Indigenous peoples anywhere in the world.

Five specific interventions were found. The first was an assisted living facility provided specifically for Elders of an American Indian Tribe in the northeast of the United States, the second was the Grandmothers' Community Project for older, urban Canadian Aboriginal women and the third was the Iqaluit home care program for Canadian Indigenous people with chronic disease. The final two interventions had been established within Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytijajara communities in central Australia and aimed to ensure that older Aboriginal peoples remained in contact with their local communities.

There were also a number of strategies that had been considered for, or implemented within primary healthcare or aged-care services to support the wellbeing of older Indigenous peoples. These strategies focused on ***maintaining the older person's Indigenous identity, promoting their independence*** and ***delivering aged-care services in a culturally appropriate way***. The review identifies a number of recommendations which are relevant to the Australian primary healthcare and aged-care contexts including the need to:

- provide opportunities for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to connect with family, community and country;
- support traditional ways of living through the use of local language and when required offering traditional healing practices in addition to biomedical treatments;
- encourage older people to continue to make meaningful contributions to their community including as role models for younger members;
- ensure that community members play a role in designing services intended for their ageing community members;
- assist older peoples and their carers to navigate the complex aged care system; and
- develop culturally safe approaches to care which ensure staff not only understand but are also able to meet the cultural needs of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.