

Summary Report

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network Kausattumi Grants Program, 2021-2022

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*The Cultural Safety of Publicly Available Maternity Services
to Indigenous Women in New Brunswick*

Description of Research

My research project aims to answer the following question: *How could publicly available maternity services be more culturally safe to Indigenous women in New Brunswick?*

The core objectives of this research are to:

- 1) Explore the experiences of Indigenous women who have accessed publicly available prenatal care in New Brunswick in the last 5 years
- 2) Consult with Elders and other Knowledge Holders about traditional maternity practices and the future of maternity care
- 3) Use findings to create a model (or core recommendations) of culturally safe care

This research topic was established through a combination of personal interest, guidance from my community mentor and supervisor, and exploratory conversations with Indigenous mothers regarding their birth experiences. There is a significant need and desire for accessible, culturally specific prenatal programming in New Brunswick. For this programming to be made possible, exploration into traditional practices, current experiences, and community, mother, and Knowledge Holder perspectives is needed.

Once the topic was established, a literature review was conducted. This review included articles published by CINAHL, Embase, and Medline from 2006-2021, exploring Indigenous women's experiences with prenatal care in Canada, Australia, and the United States. 223 records were identified and assessed for eligibility and 19 articles were retained for review. Core themes drawn from the literature included 1) Colonization; 2) Determinants of health, with sub-themes including a) Culture, b) Access to health services, and c) Sociopolitical factors; 3) Community ownership; and 4) A path forward.

Following internal review and REB approval, data collection commenced in April 2022. There were two sets of inclusion criteria for participants. The first set of participants were Indigenous, aged 19 years and over, who had accessed publicly available prenatal services in New Brunswick within the last five years. The second set of participants were Indigenous, aged 19 years and over, with knowledge pertaining to traditional maternity beliefs, practices, and/or ceremonies, and expressed willingness to share said knowledge.

A combination of volunteer recruitment and purposive sampling were used to recruit participants, and data was collected through community engagement sessions, sharing circles, and individual conversations. Thematic analysis was completed using a collaborative approach among the research team.

Next steps include sharing preliminary findings with participants and the community advisory committee, making necessary revisions, and using findings to develop a model of culturally safe care. The model will be integrated into the final version of my thesis and shared in an “official” community report. This community report will be disseminated amongst other relevant networks, including the National Association of Friendship Centres and Horizon Health Network, in an academic journal, and at research conferences with consent from Under One Sky Friendship Centre, who will act as the community custodian following project completion.

Research Outcomes

Analysis of participating mothers' experiences with existing prenatal services and definitions of culturally safe care led to the identification of the following preliminary overarching and sub-themes:

- 1) Relationality
 - a. Kinship
 - b. 7 Generation thinking
 - c. Who “my” care providers were
 - d. Trusted supporters
- 2) Health systems
 - a. Things “I” wish “I” knew
 - b. Systemic barriers/racism
- 3) Indigenous ways of knowing
 - a. Traditional parenting and family structures
 - b. Connecting to culture and community
 - c. Indigenous-specific care

These preliminary themes were echoed by Knowledge Holders. In addition, preliminary results suggest that Indigenous-specific, community-based prenatal care that is guided by Indigenous nurses, doulas, midwives, Elders, Knowledge Holders, and mothers is needed. It is

hoped that this work will ensure that traditional maternity practices, including singing/drumming babies into the world, placenta burials, naming ceremonies, coming out ceremonies, and the use of moss bags and cradleboards are available to all Indigenous mothers in New Brunswick.

Knowledge Sharing

- January 25, 2022 – Mock Thesis Proposal Presentation (open to all MN students)
- February 7, 2022 – Thesis Proposal Discussion (chairperson, research committee, internal reviewer, community co-researcher, and Elder Opolahsomuwehs attended)
- April 22 & 23, 2022 – Presentation of Research Project-to-Date at the National Gathering of Indigenous Research Chairs in Nursing (Winnipeg)
- May 16, 2022 – Presentation of Research Project-to-Date to Advance Standing Program (ASP) Nursing Class

Completed Project Deliverables

- September 2021 – Literature review completed
- October 2021 – Committee member (Jessica Webster) & co-researcher (Tanisha Sacobie-Gruben) identified
- November 2021 – Methods & methodology sections complete
- December 2021 – Community advisory committee established & reviewed research plan
- January 2022 – Research proposal finalized & submitted for discussion
- February 7, 2022 – Research proposal discussion completed
- March 2, 2022 – Research proposal and ethics application submitted for review
- March 28, 2022 – Ethics approval received
- April 2022 – Recruitment & data collection commenced
- May & June 2022 – Recruitment & data collection continued
- July 2022 - Data analysis commenced
- August 2022 - Data collection continued
- September 2022 - Data analysis complete
- October 2022 - Community engagement

Forthcoming Project Deliverables

- November 4, 2022 – Research project presented at International Indigenous Nursing Research Summit in Austin, Texas
- November 9, 2022 – Preliminary findings shared with participants and community advisory committee
- November 15, 2022 – Revisions made to results section of thesis; thesis submitted to committee for review
- Winter 2023 - Thesis submitted and defense completed

Activities Outside of Your Research

- Sakələməlsowakən Family Success Program Coordinator – Under One Sky Friendship Centre (March 2021-present)

- Hosted two undergraduate nursing students from UNB Moncton campus for community clinical placement – Winter semester 2022

Future Research Plans

After completing the project described above, I hope to assist local community organizations in using research findings to secure funding for and to plan and implement culturally specific, community-led prenatal programming. I currently work at Under One Sky Friendship Centre (UOSFC) as the Sakələməlsowakən Family Success Program Coordinator. UOSFC recently announced plans to build a new cultural centre, equipped with a birthing clinic. I expect research findings will be used to help develop programming for this clinic.

I hope to eventually return to the University of New Brunswick to complete a PhD in Nursing, to continue exploring the perspectives of Indigenous women, men, Elders, Knowledge Holders, care providers, and communities on maternal and infant health service delivery and ways to preserve and revitalize traditional practices.