

# Summary Report

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network Kausattumi Grants Program, 2022-2023

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*Increasing the cultural safety of publicly available maternity services to Indigenous women in  
New Brunswick*

***Description of Research***

This research project aimed 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 were 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; and
- 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. Following this, results were shared with Knowledge Holders, participating mothers, and the community advisory committee, whose feedback was incorporated into the final report.

### ***Research Outcomes***

Analysis of participating mothers' experiences with existing prenatal services and definitions of culturally safe care led to the identification of three overarching themes and nine subthemes, which were echoed and enriched by participating Knowledge Holders and members of the community advisory committee. Themes and subthemes included:

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

Recommendations to Increase the Cultural Safety of Maternity Care in New Brunswick were also established. These included:

1. Prioritize kinship in maternal care settings and work it into policies, including emergency preparedness and visitor policies.
2. Create opportunities for and support Indigenous-led maternal health programming.
3. Ensure that care staff are culturally informed and strive to establish genuine, trusting relationships with expectant mothers and their supporters early in pregnancy.
4. Increase the number of doulas and midwives, especially Indigenous ones, in the province.

5. Ensure that healthcare staff are educated on systemic issues affecting Indigenous women in New Brunswick, including issues within local, provincial, federal, and global healthcare/health systems, local historical traumas and social issues, and broader societal barriers.
6. Ensure that pregnant Indigenous women are made aware of all available services, offered all information necessary to make informed decisions, aided in accessing desired services, and provided teaching and guidance in a timely manner.
7. Encourage Indigenous mothers and families to embrace traditional ways of parenting and holistic Indigenous approaches.
8. Re-orient the focus of maternity care to traditional approaches, including plant medicines and home-birthing.
9. Create opportunities for Indigenous women to connect to culture while accessing prenatal care.
10. Implement a system to monitor and address incidents of racism within the New Brunswick healthcare system.

### ***Knowledge Sharing***

- September 1, 2022 – Presentation of Research Project-to-Date at UNB Nursing Research Day in Fredericton, New Brunswick
- November 4, 2022 – Presentation of Research Project-to-Date at International Indigenous Nursing Research Summit in Austin, Texas
- April 14, 2023 – Thesis Defence (open to the nursing faculty at UNB and community partners)
- May 3, 2023 – Presentation of Research Project at 17th Annual World Congress on Public Health in Rome, Italy.

### ***Completed Project Deliverables***

- September 2022 – Data analysis complete.
- October and November 2022 – Preliminary findings shared with participants and community advisory committee.
- January 2023 – Draft thesis submitted to supervisory team.
- March 2023 – Thesis submitted to Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.
- April 2023 – Thesis successfully defended.
- May 2023 – All degree requirements complete.
- October 2023 – Graduation.

### ***Forthcoming Project Deliverables***

- December 2023 – submit findings to an academic journal.

- Winter 2023 – finalize community report and share broadly.

***Activities Outside of Your Research***

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

***Future Research Plans***

I am currently working on a research project related to health program development at Under One Sky Friendship Centre, in collaboration with the University of New Brunswick. The project is currently awaiting ethic's approval and we hope to begin data collection in the new year. I also hope to return to UNB in Fall 2024 to begin my PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies, focusing on end-of-life care.