

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION



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Culturally safe service delivery for Indigenous children and youth with autism

What you need to know:

The results of a recent national autism survey suggest that Indigenous children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may be under-diagnosed. In response to this finding, the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is committed to identifying existing support and service approaches that are culturally safe for Indigenous children with special needs and their families.

What is this research about?

The BC MCFD's Autism Policy - Inclusion Supports and Services Policy Team is exploring the approaches to service delivery that are being used in Canada that are considered culturally safe for Indigenous children and youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This research will assist to inform future approaches.

What did the researcher do?

The researcher conducted a systematic literature review of academic and grey literature to answer the question, "What service delivery approaches are considered culturally safe for Indigenous individuals with ASD?"

The researcher used Summon 2.0, Google Scholar and Google search engines to find relevant journal articles and grey literature published from 2009 to March 2019. The researcher also reviewed the results from a jurisdictional scan conducted by MCFD.

The researcher reviewed the titles and abstracts of the articles to assess relevance to the research question. They then analyzed the articles for key themes.



UVic researchers reviewed literature on culturally safe service delivery for Indigenous children and youth with ASD (Photo credit: Gerd Altmann from Pixabay).



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What did the researcher find?

The researcher looked at the literature from a general perspective on Indigenous populations with developmental disabilities, and delivery and access to services. The following challenges and barriers for service delivery and access for Indigenous families were identified:

- The need for safe contexts that support self-identification as Indigenous
- Lack of cultural competence and safety in workers and institutions
- Lack of continuity regarding services and funding
- Assessment and identification difficulties
- Foster care as a barrier for service delivery

Recommendations:

- Involve Indigenous people in service design and delivery
- Create liaison worker services
- Develop individual services - “no one size fits all” approach
- Improve communication and cooperation between provincial and federal services
- Bring special education services to Indigenous communities rather than Indigenous children to services
- Adopt strength-based research approaches for ASD and other developmental disabilities

How can you use this research?

This research is relevant to practitioners and service providers working with Indigenous populations with developmental disabilities including ASD, and in health and social services.

This literature review highlights the need to conduct research and develop standardized approaches for working with Indigenous populations, as existing approaches have been designed through a Western cultural lens. It is also crucial to investigate a wide range of neurodevelopmental disabilities, including ASD, in various Indigenous communities, and identify the kind of support the families want.

About the researchers

Ino Stavropoulou-Kampoukou is a University of Victoria (UVic) graduate student. This project was completed as part of the [Graduate Studies \(GS\) 505](#) course and supervised by instructors Dr. Sibylle Artz and Ms. Thais Amorim. Facilitated by UVic [Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization](#), GS 505 is a partnership between MCFD and UVic. This project was prepared on behalf of MCFD.

Keywords

Indigenous; First Nations; Inuit; Métis; cultural safety; culturally safe / responsive / appropriate; autism spectrum disorder; ASD; autism; autistic; developmental disorders; developmental disabilities; service delivery; services

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