

ABINOOJIINH IZHI-NITAAWIGI A CHILD GROWING IN THEIR OWN WAY

Indigenous Understandings of Childhood Disability

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Introduction

Waciye!

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Contextualizing Disabled Indigenous Childhoods



Settler-Colonialism as a social determinant of health

Settler-colonialism is the broader context of Disabled Indigenous childhoods and is a primary risk factor in determining access to the social determinants of health



Disablement and dehumanization

Disabling aspects of difference are premised on the dehumanization of particular bodies in favor of others - based on eugenics and white supremacy which disproportionately impact BIPOC and disabled communities



History of Intervention & Assimiation

Colonial interventions such as residential schooling, institutionalization, child apprehension, and ongoing assimilation tactics in mainstream institutions create problematic contexts for Indigenous children to obtain support



Lack of Resources & Infrastructure

Chronic lack of funding creates barriers to optimal support



Diverse Perspectives

Differences in opinion regarding the nature of difference, child-rearing, and treatment can create conflicts in obtaining optimal supports when needed



Cultural Protective Factors

Indigenous communities have continued to resist colonial assimilation. Indigenous families and communities continue to ensure that children are safe and raised in culturally informed ways.

Indigenous Experiences of Disability Systems

- Indigenous children have higher incident rates of disability and special education needs than non-Indigenous children; two to three times the rate of non-Indigenous children
- Disability services highlight geographic racism
- Cultural dissonance and embedded racism lead to poor treatment in disability services
- Disability services are high risk for Indigenous families with experience in the child welfare system - there are inherent ties between disability services and child welfare
- Services treat one area of development rather than a wholistic model commonly found in Indigenous treatment models
- Time spent in services means less time in community and cultural contexts



Ineese-Nash, Bomberly, Underwood, & Hache (2018); Underwood, Ineese-Nash, & Haché (2019).



CULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF CHILDHOOD

- Childhood is contextually and culturally constructed
- Childhood as a sacred life space
- Children as fully developed spiritual entities
- Children as gifts and holding gifts
- Children as teachers
- Children as unique, holding position and purpose
- Raising children as a communal responsibility
- Path of life teachings

INDIGENOUS THEORIES OF DISABILITY

*Abinoojiinh izhi-nitaawigi
A Child Growing in their own way*

Indigenous cultural teachings provide theories of disability that differ from the dominant narratives of disability in mainstream institutions

- Individual differences as collective strength
- Community inclusion as an embedded cultural practice
- Ethic of non-interference
- Guiding through gifts
- Wholistic understandings of self

Disability is not an Indigenous cultural concept; however, disablement is experienced by Indigenous children in the context of settler-colonialism



SUPPORTING DISABLED INDIGENOUS CHILDREN: A CALL FOR JUSTICE-BASED PRACTICES



**Designing for Difference
from the Outset**



**Intervention through
Ethical Relationships**



Cultural Safety



**Family and Community
Based Models of Care**



Wholistic Support



Justice Based Advocacy

**SUPPORTING DISABLED INDIGENOUS CHILDREN IS NOT A RETURN TO
A NORMATIVE BASE-LINE BUT A PRACTICE IN SUPPORTING AN
INDIVIDUAL TO THRIVE IN ALL ASPECTS OF WHO THEY ARE**

MIIGWETCH

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