

# Re•Storying Autism and the Indigenous Approaches to Autism Partnership



**Re•storying**  
Autism

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# Land Acknowledgement

We would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathering virtually and in person from many different territories across northern Turtle Island and beyond. The Brandon Friendship Centre and Brandon University where we work are located on the traditional shared land between the Dakota, Anishanabek, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dene and Metis peoples. We wish to pay our respects to the Indigenous legacies and vibrant Indigenous presences on these lands and work toward reconciliation and decolonizing practice and research. Thank you for welcoming us!



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# Some of the Programs Offered by the Brandon Friendship Centre

Bingo

Adult Upgrading

Aboriginal Headstart – Little Teaching Lodge

Aboriginal Healing and Wellness

Aboriginal Youth Activity Centre

Brandon Access/Exchange Service

Brandon Friendship Housing Authority

Community Liaison Worker

Cultural Worker

Four Directions Employment Services

GAP Youth Outreach

In a Good Way Resource Centre

Kokum's Early Enrichment Program 1 & 2

Portage Aboriginal Headstart

Project Hope

Stepping Out Saturdays

Indigenous Eats Food Truck

60s Scoop



## The Re•Storying Autism Project and the Indigenous Approaches to Autism Partnership

An arts-based, multimedia storytelling and interviewing project with Brandon Friendship Centre and Manitoba Metis Federation Southwest bringing together Indigenous Autistic people, family and kin, practitioners and educators to:

- 1) generate new knowledge about autism and educational inclusion grounded in lived experience,
- 2) decolonize research and understandings of autism, and
- 3) reimagine practice in culturally affirming ways.

# What We Did: Indigenous Approaches to Autism

- A scoping review of literature on Indigenous approaches to autism
- 17 interviews with Indigenous autistic people, family and kin (grandparents, parents), educators and Elders about their experiences of autism and school
- For participants who desired to explore their story further, we held an online multimedia story making workshop to more deeply understand people's experiences and how to work together for change

## Research Questions:

- Tell us a little about your experiences of autism and inclusion at school
- Is there one story that stands out for you in particular?
- Are there Indigenous understandings of autism you would like to share?
- What do you think needs to change?



# A Scoping Review of Educational Research on Autism and Indigeneity

**Search Terms:** autism, Indigeneity, education, developmental disability

## **Research Questions:**

- What are the experiences of Indigenous autistic individuals and their families at school?
  - How do educational approaches impact Indigenous autistic students and their families and kin?
  - What are Indigenous and decolonizing understandings of and approaches to autism?
- Located 32 articles meeting our inclusion criteria from Canada, New Zealand and Australia
  - Key themes: a gap between western and Indigenous understandings; over-representation in special education; mis- and under-diagnosis; lack of culturally relevant education and autism supports; the meaning of autism cannot be separated from culture
  - A scoping review “allows assessment of emerging evidence, as well as a first step in research development”

# Some Preliminary Interview Findings

- violence/bullying at school
- the exhaustion of having to 'mask'
- feeling misunderstood
- difficulty accessing diagnoses and supports (including misdiagnosis, transportation difficulties, having to leave your community)
- lack of culturally affirming/safe supports in schools such as smudging or presence of Elders or grandparents
- Indigenous understandings of autism/all children as gifts absent in schools
- Experiencing surveillance by CFS

*"There were teachers that were encouraging, they were helpful, they took the extra time to make me feel like I was ok. That's why I'm here to do this [interview], because we need more teachers like that. And, if they can hear about this, maybe it will help."*

~Manitoba participant

The digital stories

How does the film touch and move us?

What is the storyteller asking us to see, hear, feel or sense that might be new?



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# Thank you to our funders!



**SOUTHWEST REGION**



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