Together

Context and Community for Indigenous Student Success in Public Education

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“We know what we know from where we stand. We need to be honest about that.” (Kovach, 2009, p. 7)
Research Question

How do Indigenous educators describe “success” for Indigenous students in a large urban public school board?
Theoretical Framework

* Drawing on Indigenous methodologies (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008)
  * Relational
  * Narrative
  * Reciprocity, trust

* Drawing on qualitative research paradigm
  * Advocacy approach
  * Elements of grounded theory
    * Participant voice first, literature connections next
Methods

* Circle of advisors

* Semi-structured interviews with 7 Indigenous educators
  * Preexisting relationships or mutual contacts

* Search for themes, building of model
  * Invitations for participant feedback throughout
Findings and Interpretations

“Success... it all depends on a person’s perspective”

Connected Beads Model
(educators’ own views of success)
Connected Beads Model
Embedded in a tapestry
“We”

- Community
- Context
“If [Aboriginal education] becomes part of who we are instead of something we do, it’s a very different perspective, right? And Aboriginal education will move from being the checkmark to, ‘This is who we are, this is what we do.’ And that’s what inclusion, for me, is about. That’s what a teacher-training program would be about, is allowing teachers to feel confident enough to say, ‘This is just who we are. We as Canadians are Treaty people. We as Canadians are survivors of the Residential School.’ ‘Cuz you know – we are. People think, ‘Oh, it’s just the Aboriginal people.’ Well no, it impacts all of us in Canada, and we all need to heal from it, right? So, I mean, how can you give teachers that perspective instead of the us-and-them game?”
“So how do we change that perception of that single story? Well we listen to the other stories. We listen to the stories of the survivors from Residential Schools. We listen to the stories of these parents who work their butts off to get their kid into a public school somewhere, ok? Who left their communities to come here because they believe this is where the opportunity is for their child to be successful. We listen to the story of the single mom who has three jobs and that’s why she can’t come to parent-teacher interviews. It’s not because she doesn’t care.”
“I think that’s one of the key characteristics for success of any Aboriginal student is looking at that creating a sense of belonging. An environment of trust where families are comfortable in sharing and in asking questions and where students are feeling the same.”
“I think that when we look at Aboriginal student success, one of the things that comes to mind for me is looking at a holistic perspective. Typically, our public school systems, our Western ideologies, are very specific and success is about grades... Standardized testing... Graduating in this certain amount of time, whereas, from a traditional [specific Indigenous group] perspective, success is about uncovering the gifts that Creator gave you and then it’s about nurturing those gifts, developing those gifts. And as you develop those gifts, you’re growing and developing mentally, emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually.”
Beads
Practical applications
5 examples from the 23 beads:

- Accurate knowledge of educators
- Hope
- Welcoming student voice
- “Owning” our students
- Learning from families
- Openness to possibility on a system level
Connecting to the Literature

**Storytelling**
- Adichie, C. N. (2009)
- Archibald (2008)
- Dion (2009)

**Relationship**
- Goulet (2001)
- RCAP (1996)
- Oskineegish (2013)

**Holism**
- Canadian Council on Learning (2009)
- Toulouse (2013)
Contributions

“We” Stance
* Community
* Context

Practical applications
* school based educators
* policymakers
* academia, teacher training
References


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