Rehearsing for the Revolution in Nursing: Engaging in the Indigenous Education Blueprint Through Forum Theatre

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Background: In December 2015, post-secondary institutions across the province of Manitoba signed a historic Manitoba Collaborative Indigenous Education Blueprint (MCIEB). The MCIEB is intended to take action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action and identifies key priorities which include (among others): promoting research and learning that reflects the history and contemporary context of the lives of Indigenous peoples; bringing Indigenous knowledge, languages and intellectual traditions, models and approaches into curriculum and pedagogy; and building school and campus communities that value diversity, foster cultural safety and are free of racism. To meaningfully integrate Indigenous perspectives and knowledges within nursing programs for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students requires a pedagogical approach that supports reflexivity, dialogue and critical thinking. Further yet, the approach must be epistemologically and ontologically compatible with Indigenous knowledge systems. Given that Indigenous people have long lived and learned in holistic and artistic ways, arts-based practices may offer possibilities towards meaningful engagement with the priorities of the MCIEB. In particular, forum theatre, a form of participatory theatre, wherein participants have opportunities to critically dialogue, reflect and act may prove effective as a pedagogical approach to support personal, professional and social change.

Purpose: To engage nursing educators, students and health care providers with the priorities of the MCIEB and to explore possibilities for integrating the priorities of the MCIEB in nursing education through forum theatre. The central objectives are:

- To facilitate a dialogue regarding several of the priorities of the MCIEB with nursing educators, health care providers and nursing students.
- To explore possibilities for integrating the priorities of the MCIEB within nursing education.
- To explore nursing educators’, students’, and health care providers’ experiences of forum theatre as a pedagogical approach.

Design: Using an arts-based participatory methodology, nursing educators and health care providers will participate in a playbuilding workshop in which they will collaboratively create a forum theatre play relating to the priorities of the MCIEB alongside the primary researcher, a trained theatre facilitator, and an Indigenous Nurse-Elder. Nursing educators and health care providers will then perform the play to an audience of nursing students who will watch the play once without interruptions. The second time the play is performed, nursing students will have an opportunity to stop the play and replace a character on stage and attempt to change the outcome of the play.

Sample/Setting: Nursing educators, nurses and health care providers from Manitoba will be recruited via snowball sampling. Current undergraduate or graduate nursing students at the University of Manitoba will be recruited via purposive sampling. Nursing
students must be willing to participate in the forum theatre play. All participants must be willing to be videotaped and photographed during the forum theatre play.

**Methods:** Data collection will include a demographic questionnaire, the script, the performance of the forum theatre play, and a post-play discussion. Data will be analyzed using content and form analysis. Rigour will be ensured through co-reflexive member checking.

**Significance:** This study will contribute to advancing reconciliation within nursing education and to the knowledge of forum theatre as a nursing pedagogy.

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**Keywords:**

Indigenous, forum theatre and nursing education

**References:**


Abstract Summary:
This research explores the priorities of the Manitoba Collaborative Indigenous Education Blueprint with nursing educators, students and health care providers through the medium of forum theatre, a form of participatory theatre. While the focus of this poster is on background and methodology, some initial findings are presented.

Content Outline:
Indigenous people in Canada have been subjected and continue to be subjected to subordinating colonial policies for generations. Colonization systematically disrupted Indigenous ways of being and included: the displacement from traditional lands; disruption of families through the removal of children; residential schooling; restriction of traditional practices such as spiritual ceremonies; and limiting access to traditional foods used for healing (Hill, 2003). This systematic disruption had a profound impact on the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples. Indeed, despite much work in this area, Indigenous Canadians continue to face significantly higher rates of mortality and morbidity compared to non-Indigenous peoples in Canada (Beavis et al., 2015).

The imperative for redressing these health inequities has led to multiple efforts within the arena of nursing education. Given that evidence suggests that improvements in Indigenous health outcomes are linked to greater participation by Indigenous people in health service delivery (Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, 2002), much of this scholarship has focused on educating and retaining Indigenous nurses (Anonson, Desjarlais, Nixon, Whiteman & Bird, 2008; Lane & Petrovic, 2018; Zeran, 2016). However, most of this research has focused on offering minor corrective and pedagogical supports to Indigenous students, all the while leaving the very structure of the discipline unchallenged (Pijl-Zieber & Hagen, 2011).

What is known is that current nursing education discourses are steeped in an ethos of Whiteness, Eurocentrism and racism (McGibbon et al., 2014). By continuing to privilege dominant Eurocentric ways of being and knowing, nursing education may actually reproduce rather than reduce inequities and colonization. The need to integrate Indigenous content and Indigenous knowledge within nursing education has never been greater. In 2015, educational institutions across the province, including the University of Manitoba, signed a historic “Manitoba Collaborative Indigenous Education Blueprint” (MCIEB). The MCIEB is intended to take action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) Calls to Action and identifies key priorities which include (among others): promoting research and learning that reflects the history and contemporary context of the lives of Indigenous peoples; and bringing Indigenous knowledge, languages and intellectual traditions, models and approaches into curriculum and pedagogy.

To meaningfully integrate Indigenous perspectives and knowledges within nursing programs for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students requires a pedagogical approach that supports reflexivity, dialogue and critical thinking. Further yet, the approach must be epistemologically and ontologically compatible with Indigenous knowledge systems. Given that Indigenous people have long lived and learned in holistic and artistic ways (Cajete, 2000), arts-based practices may offer possibilities towards meaningful
engagement with the priorities of the MCIEB. In particular, Forum Theatre (FT), a form of participatory theatre, wherein participants have opportunities to critically dialogue, reflect and act has proven effective as a pedagogical approach to support change with students in several fields including education (McGarry & Aubeeluck, 2013), social work (Giesler, 2017; McKinney, O’Connor & Pruitt, 2018), nursing (Arveklev, Wigert, Berg, Burton & Lepp, 2015; Dingwall, Fenton, Kelly & Lee, 2017; Middlewick, Kettle, Wilson, 2012), and medicine (Gupta, Agrawal, Singh, Singh, 2013; Song, 2017). FT can encourage people to explore choices, and help students and educators rehearse real-life scenarios within a safe space (Boal, 1995; Mitchell & Freitag, 2011). As such, FT may provide a strong foundation to authentically introduce ways to link nursing students and educators to the priorities of the MCIEB, as well as to individual and collective questioning of the status quo.

**Aims and objectives**

The purpose of this research is to facilitate a dialogue and explore possibilities for integrating the priorities of the MCIEB with nursing educators, students and health care providers. A secondary purpose is to contribute to the knowledge regarding pedagogical approaches in nursing.

The objectives are threefold:

1) To facilitate a dialogue regarding several of the priorities of the MCIEB with nursing educators, health care providers and students.
2) To explore possibilities for integrating the priorities of the MCIEB within schools of nursing.
3) To explore nursing educators, health care providers’ and nursing students’ experiences of FT as a pedagogical approach.

**Methods**

This research will be grounded in an arts-based research (ABR) paradigm. ABR is used to explore, understand, represent and even challenge human action and experience. Data will be generated through playbuilding with nursing educators, and through the Forum Theatre workshop with nursing students and educators. Content analysis will be used to analyze the data from the playbuilding transcripts, and content and form analysis will be used to analyze the videotaped recording of the Forum Theatre workshop.

**Significance**

As Indigenous artist and activist Thomas ES Kelly proclaims, “art may indeed hold the key to reconciliation” (2017, para 1). As such, this research builds on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report with regards to education and health. This research will be of interest to institutions signatory to the MCIEB, as well as to educators and administrators to inform program design, policy and practice; and to all citizens of a post-secondary community who may be able to translate this critical knowledge into their personal and professional lives.

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

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Author Summary: Vanessa Van Bewer is a Métis francophone multidisciplinary artist, registered nurse and doctoral candidate. Vanessa is interested in exploring the space where nursing and Indigenous knowledge intersect and how arts-based practices and methodologies might support this exploration. For her doctoral research, Vanessa hopes to engage in conversations with nursing students and educators through the medium of theatre regarding how Indigenous content can be integrated and taught within the nursing curriculum.

Second Author
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Author Summary: Dr. Roberta Woodgate holds a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair Award in Child and Family Engagement in Health Research and Healthcare. Her research program, IN•GAUGE, embraces a dynamic approach to: involve children, youth and families; interact with researchers and knowledge users in the research, intervention and evaluation process; and be innovative in the use and exchange of knowledge with the combined goal of improving health care and access to care for children and youth.

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Author Summary: Dr. Martin works collaboratively with interdisciplinary teams and marginalized groups to conduct community-driven research focusing on health equity and social justice. Dr. Martin is the Past President of Xi Lambda Chapter, Sigma Theta Tau International. Dr. Martin has served as the Associate Dean, Research in the College of Nursing since 2017. She supervises students with interests in health equity and social justice and students passionate about quality nursing education and health services.

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Author Summary: Frank graduated from the University of Saskatchewan in 2008 with a PhD in Educational Administration. Frank also completed an MEd in 2003 and a BEd in 1999 at the University of Manitoba. Frank has served as a classroom teacher in the Frontier School Division, Pembina Trails School Division, and the Winnipeg School Division. Frank has also served as an instructor at the University of Manitoba and the University of Saskatchewan.