Conceptualising Global Indigenous and Indigenist models of Inclusive and Equitable Education

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Abstract

The role of colonial education systems in the cultural genocide of Indigenous children in many countries is an urgent matter to be meticulously scrutinised in order to address structural inequities. It is time to envision and construct context-based authentically inclusive education. In this article, we critically examine and address structural inequities in education with examples from our own research in Sámi and First Nations contexts, and discuss possible implications for the inclusive education of all Indigenous children, with emphasis on the early years of education. Dominant models of special education are displayed followed by conceptualising Indigenous and Indigenist models as ways to reimagine, restructure and inspire the positive change towards inclusive equitable education from early years education and onward for diverse Indigenous children, and enhance the development of teacher education programmes.

Keywords: Indigenous children, Indigenous and Indigenist models of Inclusive Education, theory development, teacher education

Introduction

In the context of the United Nations *Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples* (2007), this article critically examines and addresses structural inequities in education, focusing on Sámi children in Sweden, and First Nations children in British Columbia, Canada, in need of

special support. Such inequities are held in tension with opportunities for positive systemic change to conceptualise Indigenous and Indigenist models for inclusive equitable educational theory and practice development. In light of the Church of Sweden and the white paper project in which the Church of Sweden reports the violations and injustices it has committed and examines its guilt and responsibility towards the Sámi (Lindmark & Sundström, 2016), and the horrific findings of unmarked graves of children at the sites of several former residential schools in Canada in 2022, where numbers are still in counting, it is painfully apparent that intergenerational historic trauma due to colonialism needs to be addressed in education and teacher education to benefit Indigenous children around the globe. This conceptual article offers culturally aligned options to disability models that are the foundation of special education practices within dominant school systems. In this article, we specifically focus on the early years of education, and the importance of inter-cultural competence as a component in high-quality teacher education. We propose that Indigenous and Indigenist models of inclusive education could introduce opportunities and offer options for educators and students alike. Drawing on knowledge from Indigenous researchers, we explore our ideas with examples from our own early years research in Sámi and First Nations contexts, elaborate on Indigenous and Indigenist models, and discuss possible implications for the inclusive education of all Indigenous children. Implementing these new models in teacher education is essential in order to influence practice in educational settings.

Background

Globally, dominant education systems were designed to assimilate Indigenous children (Kahakalau, 2018; Kuokkanen, 2000, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), and although legislation and policy dictates that all people shall be equal and have equal rights, dominant education systems still fail to provide relevant services that resonate with Indigenous paradigms (e.g., Ford, 2005; Kahakalau, 2018). Education is one of the focal points of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations, 2007), and it is stressed that families and communities must be involved in the education of Indigenous children. Article 14 particularly addresses education:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.

3. States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language. (United Nations, 2007, p 13-14).

The focal points towards education place high demands on educational systems. The key words here are *without discrimination*. In this section we will give a presentation of Sámi education in Sweden and First Nations education in Canada, concluding with other Indigenous education examples.

Sámi education in Sweden

The Sámi are Indigenous peoples in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and on the Kola Peninsula in Russia, or in Sápmi as the homeland is called by the Sámi. The schooling for Sámi children differs between the countries and in this article, we will focus on teaching for Sámi children in the Swedish part of Sápmi. Already in the 17th century and forward, there were some attempts to educate Sámi children, but it was not until around 1880 when a more systematic approach came into place with the goal to transform the Sámi into "good Swedish citizens" (Sjögren, 2010; Svonni, 2007). From early 1900, Sámi education included boarding schools for the children of nomadic reindeer-herding Sámi, but the majority of Sámi children attended municipal schools. Although these schools were supposed to protect the Sámi culture, the children only learned to read and write Swedish, resulting in cultural genocide. In 1962 Sámi education was made equivalent to the compulsory Swedish school system (Sjögren, 2010; Svonni, 2007).

Today in Sweden, there are Sámi schools in five locations in which children can be enrolled for Sámi education from early childhood education to school year 6. The Swedish National Agency for Education (2017) states that the Sámi schools shall convey Sámi norms, values, traditions, heritage to the pupils, and is responsible for ensuring that each pupil can, on completing compulsory school, speak, read, and write Sámi. In their report on a directed inspection of the Sámi schools, The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2013) concludes that it is difficult to find staff who are educated in Sámi and have Sámi knowledge in the subjects they teach. This could make it difficult for children coming from the Sámi early childhood education settings in their further language and cultural development and is a critical issue for teacher education to address. In an action research study conducted by Jannok Nutti (2010), Sámi schoolteachers highlighted the lack of teaching materials, both in Sámi and with Sámi content, forcing them to make their

own materials, adding substantially to their preparation time. Furthermore, they also felt they lacked knowledge on how to transform the teaching on the basis of Sámi culture. Hirvonen (2004) highlighted the challenge teachers in Sámi Schools face, as often they have not been given the possibility to acquire competence in how to transform the teaching. It is difficult for the Sámi schools to find staff with special (inclusive) education competencies who also are proficient in a Sámi language (The Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2013). However, in Sweden, registration of special educational provision categorised by ethnicity is not allowed. At the Sámi University of Applied Sciences in Kautokeino, Norway, Sámi teacher education is provided from early childhood to secondary school. The programs are taught in Sámi and are based on Sámi cultural practices (Jannok Nutti, 2018a). Sámi teacher education and professional development is important to address the barriers still present in Sámi education, and to ensure the advancement of cultural competence in these settings.

Key factors identified for Sámi teaching are freedom, independence, storytelling traditions, local connections to land and local communities (Hirvonen, 2004). Such teaching makes the knowledge of the local community visible. According to Jannok Nutti (2018b), "Indigenous culture-based curriculum development can be seen as an attempt to reduce the dominance of the national curricula and increase the sustainability of Indigenous cultures" (p. 83). The knowledge in the local community can be understood as the cultural traditions and sustainable living found in Sámi livelihoods in local Sámi communities and most Sámi communities are multicultural and represent a diversity of opportunities and challenges (Jannok Nutti, 2018a). The schedules, classroom environment, physical design, and the role of teachers should be redefined in order to reduce the distance between the majority culture and Sámi culture (Keskitalo, Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013).

Sámi education needs to become more autonomous, as historical colonialism and power relations still pose obstacles for the development of a Sámi centered school that is not based on assumptions of assimilation according to Keskitalo, Määttä and Uusiautti (2013). The ideal school needs to promote understanding of Sámi values, language, and culture, and strengthen the cultural identity of its members (Keskitalo, Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013; Jannok Nutti, 2018a). Jannok Nutti (2018a) highlighted that knowledge of sustainable living will be valuable for children from a global context perspective. Sustainable knowledge in which children become acquainted with the various local practices that emphasises insight in the interaction between human and local environment and highlight the ethical responsibility in the management of nature (Jannok Nutti & Joks, 2018).

First Nations education in Canada

There are three Indigenous peoples recognised by the Canadian government. First Nations, who still are referred to as Indians in many official documents, Inuit, and Métis (Government of Canada, 2021). Indian residential schools were operated from 1867 and children were separated from their families with the goal of breaking their connection with their culture and identity (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). This cultural genocide is not only something of the past as the historical trauma is apparent in the everyday life of Indigenous individuals and peoples in Canada. The last Canadian residential school for Indigenous children was not closed until 1996 (Bradley, 2015).

According to Morcom (2014), First Nations education is underfunded and does not provide sufficient education for First Nations children. Although the dominant system is not as forcefully imposed as the residential school system, Morcom (2014) points out that language and culture immersion would be more beneficial to Indigenous children and that this would require culturally knowledgeable Indigenous teachers. In Canada, the education of First Nations children who reside on reserves is the responsibility of the federal government according to the constitution. In a review, Phillips (2010) concludes that education provided by the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is not included in national reviews of education and special education in Canada, nor do First Nations schools have special education programs and services equivalent to those in the provincial systems. Furthermore, the report states "There is no special education law respecting First Nations students with special needs" (Phillips, 2010, p.8). The author stresses that there is a need for universities to teach on First Nations education and special education.

The Assembly of First Nations (2021) envisions First Nations education as being "in accordance with their culture, values, traditions, and languages –free from prejudice and discrimination". Key concepts are quality, cultural appropriateness and equity, which requires equitable funding. Battiste (2005) discusses how to respectfully include Indigenous and what she refers to as Eurocentric ways of knowing into contemporary education in order to reverse the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge. Landry (2018) found similarities between Native American Indigenous philosophy and John Dewey's pedagogical views as Dewey's ideas about the teacher as an encouraging guide is a common characteristic in Native American teaching. Children are thought of holistically from infancy, in a philosophy grounded in connectedness. So instead of Americanisation of Indigenous children to educate them, what is needed is an "indigenisation" of American education for the

benefit of all pupil's education (Landry, 2018). Early childhood teacher education could actively prepare pre-service teachers to widen their perspectives and perceptions of holistic and inclusive pedagogy through indigenising and internationalising their programmes.

Global Indigenous experiences of education

Similar issues of the dominant education system disadvantaging Indigenous children are reported globally. Kahakalau (2018) says that being Hawaiian was viewed from Western assumptions of weakness and deficit, which has resulted in disproportionate numbers of Indigenous children in special education. Over one third of the children in schools with more than 50% native Hawaiian children receive special educational support, and furthermore, "special motivation programs are made up often exclusively of Native Hawaiian students" (Kahakalau, 2018, p 172). Kahakalau (2018, p 171) refers to this overrepresentation of Indigenous children in special educational settings as "institutionalized racism". Ford (2005) states that the dominant Western educational systems are dangerous for Indigenous peoples in Australia, and refers to "bureaucratic educational systems that have been up to this point so dangerous for us" (p 2). This makes it necessary for educators to tread carefully and consult Elders and knowledgeable family members in order for Indigenous children to thrive within such systems. "Similarly, when moving into Western education places we must have our senses alert and we need protection from the powerful narratives within our own cultural representations" (Ford, 2005, p. 2). In New South Wales, Australia, Graham (2012) concludes that Indigenous children under the categories of emotional disturbance, behaviour disorders and juvenile detention are disproportionately overrepresented in special school enrolment. Moreover, it was found that "The findings discussed here show that Indigenous students not only face a higher risk of enrolment in a behaviour school than non-Indigenous students, but a higher risk of enrolment in a behaviour school than in special schools requiring confirmation of disability" (Graham, 2012, p. 171).

In the Australian context, Woodroffe (2019) points out the importance of including Indigenous knowledge in pre-service teacher education, as dominant Western school systems have a "deficit view of Indigenous achievement" (p 43) and advantage non-Indigenous people. It is apparent in the above examples that a child's difficulties could be a manifestation of a gap between the individuals' culture and the education provision. Moreover, it can be concluded that Indigenous voices, ways of knowing, being and doing are still subject to control and assimilation, which substantiates the need for alternative ways of viewing and interpreting diversity in educational settings.

Examples of strength-based initiatives

Across the globe, Indigenous peoples are revitalising their languages, cultures, practices and protocols, and initiatives for culturally responsive education are growing. Culturally relevant teaching is considered to be effective in the everyday classroom (Byrd, 2016). However, many such initiatives and projects are never spread or found in academic publications since the majority of peer-review journals are written in dominant languages. Some journals, for example, the Alter-Native (http://www.alternative.ac.nz/) from New Zealand's Māori Centre of Research Excellence, Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, and the New Zealand Journal of Educational Research (NZJES) do publish in Indigenous languages.

Māori pedagogical principles offer an alternative to cultural deficit ways of viewing Māori students, and concentrate instead on empowerment, and addressing power imbalance (Bishop, 2003). According to Bishop (2003, p 223), these principles are referred to as "Kaupapa Māori theory". This theory and the works of Smith (1999; 2005) have influenced education and research in Indigenous contexts across the globe. Similarly, in the 1990s a group of experts (Kahakalau, 2018) developed the pedagogy of Aloha by running summer camps on Hawaiian language and culture immersion. This pedagogy is "based on the concept of *kūkulu kumuhana,* the pooling of strengths – physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual"(Kahakalau, 2018, p. 174). Schools from Kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) have been developed based on the pedagogy of Aloha and there is also a teacher education program.

Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing
Positionality

Lindblom, is a non-Indigenous Swedish researcher who grew up in Canada, where she has her stepmother and three paternal sisters who are Carrier. This Indigenous family connection has given her insights and access to conduct research with Indigenous peoples, which led to a paradigmatic twist to an Indigenist paradigm. Lindblom is a professor in special education and teacher educator and has extensive experience in the field of special education and inclusion practice and research. Jannok Nutti is Sámi and a bearer of Sámi culture. She is an associate professor in education, Sámi teacher educator and has extensive experience in Sámi education practice and research.

Holistic and relational worldviews

Indigenous peoples are diverse, however, there are similarities found in their holistic and relational worldviews, and a strong relation to place and nature is central within Indigenous paradigms (Jannok

Nutti, 2018b; Kuokkonen, 2007; Wilson, 2008). "Indigeneity is related to space but being in or living in a space does not alone yield indigeneity." (Landry, 2018, p. 29), as different ways of understanding human relationships and our relationship to the natural environment reflect our ways of being and living (Landry, 2018). Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing also embrace aspects such as reciprocity and relationality between all in creation (see for instance Wilson, 2008), which may clash with the medical deficit-model that is dominant in Western contexts (Lindblom, 2017a). American Indian and Alaska Native populations may not have terminology for the dominant Western concept of disability and view individuals from sameness rather than difference, something that Harley (2018) refers to as the Native model of difference. Indigenous ontologies are inseparable from Indigenous epistemologies, axiologies and methodologies (Wilson, 2008), which together compose Indigenous paradigms. Due to centuries of colonialism, Indigenous peoples have been bereaved of their ways of knowing, being and living.

Racism and colonisation are still much a part of daily life (Jannok Nutti, 2020). Colonising processes are in motion in every aspect of Indigenous peoples lives globally, nationally, in communities and on the family and individual levels, to various extents. Indigenous children are often viewed through a dominant culture lens, which can pose challenges due to tensions between the Indigenous and dominant paradigms. Indigenous children's individual abilities to navigate in, and between, different contexts and worldviews, will affect their sense of belonging and inclusion in school. Moreover, how these contexts are flexible towards, and adapt to the children and their diverse ways of knowing, being, and doing, will affect their possibilities of inclusion by offering opportunities, challenges, or obstacles. The child's own way of knowing, being and doing are also diverse, which means we must avoid stereotypical notions and views of their indigeneity. Further, as the author and speaker Gyasi Ross stressed "if you cannot teach your children the values of the local community, those children are not going to be able to help or fit in with the local community. You build a community of strangers" (cited in Landry, 2018, p. 30). There must be ways for Indigenous peoples to create new Indigenous ways of being and knowing drawing on Indigenous and dominant knowledge systems (see Ford, 2005). This is a great challenge, but also an opportunity for us to step up and make changes.

Tuhiwai Smith (2005) called for a change in the educational research agenda. This means that researchers and educators, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, must work together to indigenise education and edu-

cational practices (in this article specifically special education), to address institutionalised racism (see Kahakalau, 2018), and cease the marginalisation and stigmatisation of Indigenous children in order to develop inclusive practices for them, and ultimately, all children.

Dominant models of special education

Usually, distinctions are made between a medical and a social model of disability. The medical model is sometimes referred to as a deficit, traditional, or individual model, where the disability is a problem to be found within the individual. Medical experts are needed to define and find solutions to these problems (e.g., Beaudry, 2016). As a reaction, a social model arose redefining disability as oppression caused by barriers in society (e.g., Oliver, 1983; Shakespeare, 2006), where now there is a family of social approaches. Often the medical and social models are presented as opposing perspectives. According to Shakespeare (2006, p. 18) "The medical model stands for research and practice developed by non-disabled people, without the participation of disabled people", whereas the social model is about placing disabled people in the context of society and "improving the lives of disabled people, by promoting social inclusion and removing the barriers which oppress disabled people" (p. 9).

In the Nordic countries in 1970's, there was a perspective shift from what Emanuelsson, Persson and Rosenqvist (2001) call the categorical perspective (the medical or individual model) to the relational perspective. In the Nordic relational model, disability is a result of the environment not being adapted to fit the diversity of individuals, and is situational and relative (Tøssebro, 2004). This perspective does not emphasise discrimination and oppression as much as for instance the British social model but does emphasise rights. Shakespeare (2006) poses that this could be due to the welfare systems in the Nordic countries. The environment in this context consists of both the physical environment as well as social structures. Another way of conceptualising disability is through an holistic interactional approach where individual factors interact with structural factors. Therefore people can be both 'disabled by society and by their bodies' (Shakespeare, 2006, p. 56). Teacher education programmes can positively impact the educational experiences of diverse children through knowledge, pedagogical tools and encouraging critical thinking, thus influencing the attitudes and perceptions of pre-service teachers.

Indigenous and Indigenist models of special education

Wilson (2008) is one of the Indigenous researchers that emphasises that the philosophical assumptions within Indigenous paradigms can

be shared and states "This emphasises that it's a philosophical issue, not a claiming of ownership by one group of people. You can be a white Indigenist just like you can be a male feminist" (cited in Adams, et al., 2015, p. 20). In contrast to the dominant models of special education, Indigenous and Indigenist models emerge from Indigenous philosophical assumptions. As stated earlier, Indigenous peoples can be both traditional and contemporary, which entails settings in which Indigenous children grow up are diverse. Their indigeneity, exposure to, and participation in their Indigenous traditions and culture in their daily life will obviously vary. Subsequently, their individual needs will be diverse. In their schools and early childhood settings, there will perhaps be Indigenous teachers, but also teachers with other heritage. Therefore, it is of importance that the theoretical foundation for special educational practices encompass all who are involved, both children and professionals. We suggest Indigenous and Indigenist models of special education as this foundation. Basing research and practice on Indigenous paradigms although you are not Indigenous can be defined as Indigenist when it fits the description; "Indigenist research respects and honours Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing through using methods that are informed by, resonate with, and are driven and supported by Indigenous peoples" (Rix, Wilson, Sheehan and Tujague, 2018, p 2).

Ontology and epistemology are two core components of paradigms, or philosophical assumptions. Kovach (2009) describes ontology as concerning the nature of being and reality. Wilson (2008) describes the difference between dominant Western and Indigenous definitions of reality; "The difference is that, rather than the truth being something that is 'out there' or external, reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth" (p. 73). Furthermore, knowledge has agency (Adams, Wilson, Head and Gordon, 2015). Chilisa (2012, p.40) states that Indigenous realities are formed by the relationships between human beings and "the environment, the cosmos, the living and the non-living". Indigenous epistemologies encompass ways that resemble dominant ways of knowing, such as observations and conversations, but have a deeper, relational foundation. Indigenous knowledge is place-based, oral-based and constructed in the use of the specific Indigenous language. Participating in cultural ceremonies and activities, prayer, and dreams are Indigenous ways of knowing (see Battiste, 2008; Kovach, 2009). Within research involving Indigenous peoples, Indigenous paradigms and frameworks are increasingly being utilised. We propose that these guidelines be included in general and special teacher education, applied to special educational practices, and implemented in support provision in regard to Indigenous children in need of such support.

Indigenous and Indigenist special education provision and research

When designing special educational support provision for Indigenous children, no matter which paradigm or model is involved, there are a number of rights that are in place, such as national and international legislation and policy regulations (UNESCO, 1994; Unicef, 1989; United Nations, 1948; 2006; 2007). Figure 1 illustrates these rights with the visual support of a child's handprint. In the examples above of the disproportionality of Indigenous children in special education it is apparent that some of these rights are overlooked. It is of utter importance that teacher education programmes thoroughly educate students on children's rights in the endeavour to address inequities in their education.

The United Nations. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Treaty Series, 1577*, 3.

UNICEF. (1994)The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Paris: UNESCO.

The United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

The United Nations. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Treaty Series, 2515*, 3.

The United Nations. (2011). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Figure 1. Handprint of rights. Adapted from Human Behavior,Silhouette,Monochrome, by Kisscc0, retrieved July 6th 2021 from https://www.kisscc0.com/clipart/computer-icons-printing-download-drawing-world-map-9q0c3k/ Image License: Free for personal and commercial use. Attribution is not required. Giving credit to Kisscc0 is not necessary but is always appreciated by our community.

Figure 1. In addition to national and international legislation, regulations and agreements, Indigenous children in need of special support have rights stated in UN declarations, conventions and statements.

Indigenous and Indigenist models of inclusive education, as discussed earlier in this text, could, in part, resemble the dominant models. An Indigenous child could, for instance, be formally diagnosed with autism, and therefore be entitled to specific services. Indigenous and Indigenist models do not mean ignoring specific needs of a child with a diagnosed disability, on the contrary, they will provide culturally specific/relevant and appropriate services for this individual. However, Indigenous and Indigenist models do not fit well within the constructs of rigid frameworks, as the underlying paradigms consists of inseparable parts that when combined are "greater than the sum of its parts" (Wilson, 2008, p. 70).

Special education service provision within Indigenous and Indigenist models are inclusive and have the Indigenous child in the center (see figure 2) but support interventions cannot be implemented without the involvement of parents or guardians and family. Traditional knowledge holders need to be involved, or at least consulted, to ensure that the support is based on the specific cultural knowledge of the nation/s the child is affiliated with. Depending on the child's indigeneity, and connection with cultural practices, language and protocols, the design will have to be individualised. The child's autonomy and self-empowerment are the ultimate goals along with decolonisation and addressing issues of power relations. The child and professionals must engage in reciprocal relationships with each other, but also with all in the natural and spiritual worlds. If the special educational support is given within an Indigenous model, the child will be in a reciprocal relationship with their place, ancestors, traditional knowledge, generations to come and the creator, as well as with knowledge itself. If non-Indigenous professionals are involved, the approach will be Indigenist. Within an Indigenist paradigm the support will be culturally relevant and sensitive, but not have the same deepened relationality without the specific language or culturally specific knowledge. Relationships are respectful and reflexive. The child, and their needs, are at all times the ultimate focus for the support. This must also be reflected in special educational research done in Indigenous contexts with the goal of influencing the positive change of research, teacher education and practice.

Sámi example of an inclusive Indigenous design

Sámi values, yoik – Sámi singing and storytelling tradition, storytelling and languages contribute to strengthening Sámi identity and Sáminess. Storytelling is strongly linked to place and is an important part of transmitting traditional knowledge from one generation to another. Transmission that is adjusted, like the yoiker does when yoiking, adjusting the style and yoik depending on the listeners (Jannok Nutti, 2018a). The same goes for participation in Sámi livelihood activities such as fishing, berry-picking and reindeer herding in a reciprocal relationship to the land (Jannok Nutti & Kuoljok, 2014). Sámi child rearing aims to strengthen the child's autonomy and in a project in a Sámi preschool, the importance of letting the child develop a positive outlook towards their own competence in relationship to the task at hand was emphasised (Jannok Nutti, 2017; 2018a). The child in the Sámi worldview is autonomous, has self-determination and self-confidence. These research insights offer directions for development of culturally relevant extra adaptations, special support and special educational practices in the Swedish Sámi school setting.
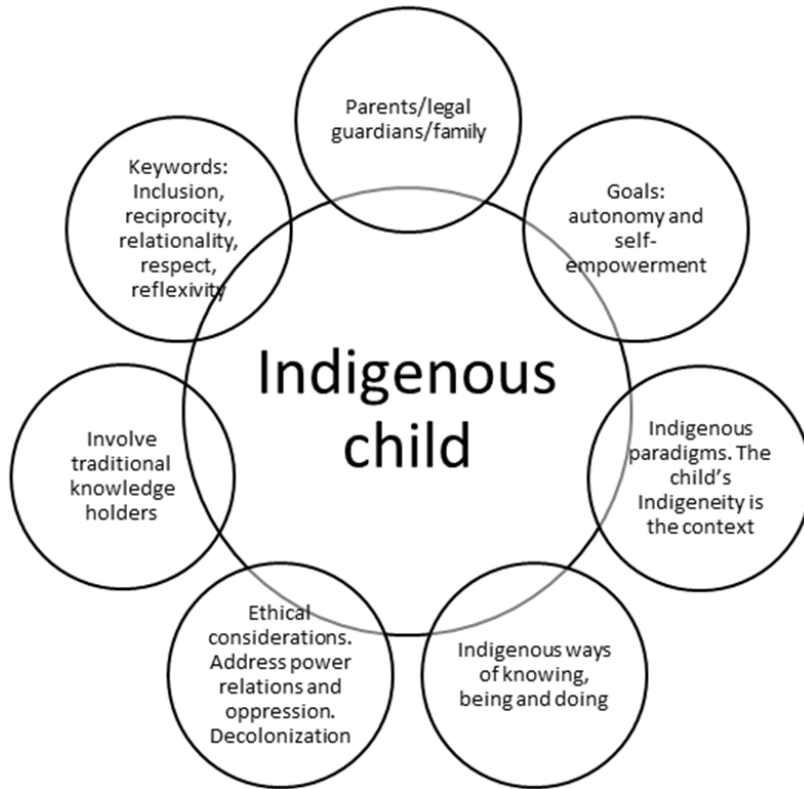
Figure 2. Child-centered Indigenous and Indigenist models of special educational support design, provision and research. Inspired by Lambert's (2014) Spiderweb conceptual model and Lindblom's (2017c) pan-tribal research framework.

In a special education context, the underlying philosophical assumptions will directly affect the choice of action taken. For instance, as in an example including children age 3-5 years from a Sámi Early Childhood Centre on the Norwegian part of Sápmi from Jannok Nutti and Joks (2018) the objective at hand was that every child should catch or rather touch and be close to a reindeer calf during a calf-marking activity out on the land. If the child has difficulties in doing this task, perhaps special support will need to be put in place. Calf-marking of a reindeer is a part of their relationship to their ancestors, traditions, culture and place, therefore it is important that every child would be able to experience being on the land and feeling the warmth of the reindeer calf in its arms, experiencing with all senses. Of course there would be children who are not used to interacting with reindeer, or

that could have difficulties of some sort. The teachers used an Indigenous inclusive approach in their planning so that the goal was that every child would have held a reindeer calf, either on their own, or with support of an adult. As a result of centring the child, all the children succeeded with the task. Being on the land, participating in a traditional activity put the task in context. The result in this perspective is a higher level of motivation to do the task, access to Sámi knowledge and strengthening of the reciprocal relationships between the child and all in creation.

First Nations examples
A medical deficit design

In a study on music and First Nations children with autism (Lindblom, 2017b) one of the participants, called Connor in the study, was perceived to be non-verbal and to have problems with his behavior. Connor was six years old during the first wave of data collection, and due to his difficulties he spent most of his time in a small room with his educational aid. Connor was very interested in music, but also very sensitive to loud noises. The educational aid had tried to bring him to music with his class or in assembly, but the sound had been too overwhelming. During Connor's school days, music was usually a big part of his schedule, mostly by listening to children's music or music from Disney movies on his iPad. Materials, toys and songs used were the kinds used in early childhood education, and visual tools such as picture schedules. Sometimes he had access to a larger room with a piano that he liked to play. No one had thought of trying to use an Indigenous hand drum. Connor used humming as a means of communication. The arrangement of Connor's education and special education support can be perceived as based on a medical deficit model, where based on his diagnosis, basically all his time in school is spent in a one-on-one situation with his educational aid.

An Indigenist design

During the researcher's fieldwork (Lindblom, 2017b), there came the opportunity to do an Indigenist musical interaction with Connor. Using a hand drum and a song given to her by a traditional knowledge holder, (Lindblom, 2017b) the researcher sang the Travelling song, which resembled the traditional singing and drumming of Connor's nation. During the interaction, Connor had access to skills he seldom, or never, used in his daily education, such as taking turns (playing the drum), taking eye contact, along with drumming and singing. The non-Indigenous researcher used an Indigenous song that she had been given, and a hand drum. This culturally sensitive and relevant intervention gave Connor the possibility to access his competence (Dindar, et al., 2017). The inter-

vention was child-centred and based on Indigenous philosophical assumptions within and Indigenist model of inclusive special education, which means that the drumming and singing was culturally relevant for Connor because the style of drumming and singing was similar to his tribal practices and gave meaning and motivation to Connor. For the intervention to be culturally specific, an elder or traditional knowledge holder would have carried out the drumming and singing of a song from their nation, in their language. Then Connor would have been in contact with all in creation, his ancestors, and traditional knowledge. The inclusion of other children from his nation could have been a goal for future design of such activities. Teacher education could make a great difference through preparing pre-service teachers for diverse cultural experiences and provide them with tools or at least the confidence and knowledge of where they can find support and information.

Conclusion

In this conceptual article, we have argued that the educational experiences of Sámi children in Sweden and First Nations children in Canada depicted in our examples show the need for Indigenous and Indigenist models of inclusive special education theory and practice. The current ongoing assimilation and marginalisation through the inadequate schooling and support systems of the Sámi and First Nations are a highly relevant topic, and in the light of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007) and other international policy documents, there is still much work to be done around the globe to provide high quality equitable education and inclusive special education. Indigenous viewpoints are needed in the established early childhood education and other teacher programmes to address inequities. There is a dearth of research in the field of special education and disability in Indigenous contexts, and we are convinced that Indigenous and Indigenist models of inclusive special education can be a good foundation for community based, decolonising research.

We propose that Indigenous and Indigenist models of (special) inclusive education have the potential to create what Ford (2005) calls culturally safe places for Indigenous teaching and learning, and is not based on assumptions of assimilation (Keskitalo, Määttä and Uusiautti, 2013). The child, and their well-being is in the center, and the main goal is to approach and meet the child for who they are, with respect and integrity. Indigenous children's lives are multifaceted. Early childhood services and schools are part of that context, and the child's wellbeing and best interest must be encompassed in all aspects of the child's life.

It is the responsibility of all adults to respect the child's right to self-determination, and design special education support that self-empowers them with the strength to raise their voice in matters that regard them. Family members, Elders, traditional knowledge holders, Indigenous communities and other Indigenous stakeholders must be involved in this work, alongside non-Indigenous professionals and policy-makers for systemic change. This robust foundation can make it possible to resist and counteract loneliness, alienation and the cementation of positions and categorisations. In conclusion, special education is a construct alien to Indigenous traditional education, and a part of the dominant education system. Therefore, we believe that Indigenous and Indigenist models could be useful in reimagining, restructuring and inspiring the positive change of inclusive special education for diverse Indigenous children, and enhance the development and internationalisation of teacher education programs. Exchanging experiences and knowledges through internationalisation efforts in teacher education could encompass Indigenous and Indigenist models, deliver culturally competent and confident teachers, and lead to the equitable education of all children.

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