Assess, Sort, Classify: “Othering” of Indigenous Students in Manitoba’s Schools

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Abstract

In the province of Manitoba, Canada, there is a gap between the rhetoric of inclusive education and its practical implementation. In the absence of inclusive educational policies and guidelines, deficit-based approaches such as categorical labels for students who are deemed to have a severe emotional and behavioural disorder, segregated classrooms, and self-contained programs are prevalent and change is needed. This paper provides a critical perspective on how the paradigm of special education contributes to the social construction of disability; how, for Indigenous students, it too often positions behavioural difference as disability; and further, why this practice is systemically discriminatory. In our examination, we seek to expose the exclusion (Slee & Allen, 2001) that exists in nominally inclusive schools as a way to promote social change and redirect education toward truly inclusive practices. To that end, we suggest the following strategies that may reduce educational inequity for Indigenous students: (a) developing clearly articulated inclusive educational policies along with indicators of inclusivity; (b) reporting the number of Indigenous students who are identified as emotionally and behaviourally disordered, and segregated in self-contained settings; (c) establishing needs-based models of support at all levels (e.g., province, division, and school); (d) creating new narratives of assessment and pedagogy; and (e) reconceptualizing teachers’ training. We hope that by critically examining the structures and processes of special education that, in fact, disable Indigenous students from educational success, inclusion might encompass more than a provincial philosophy and include transformative educational change.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) called all Canadians to reconceptualize, redefine, and reconsider virtually all aspects of society in order to move forward in the process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). In partnership with Indigenous peoples, this article is our attempt to contribute to this process. In this article, we argue that some Indigenous children and youth may display behavioural differences related to cultural, linguistic, and/or developmental diversity, and that these differences may be misconstrued as disability. We explore how disabilities continue to be socially constructed in purportedly inclusive schools through special education practices that position behavioural difference as disability. Unfortunately, systemically discriminatory practice occurs even more often for Indigenous students than for those of other subgroups of the population (Battiste, 2013).

This examination will focus on the province of Manitoba, which has the largest percentage of Indigenous peoples of all of the Canadian provinces (Statistics Canada, 2016). Specifically, we explore how special education practices construct disability (e.g., categorical labels and segregated classrooms) under the guise of inclusion. We further explore how cultural discontinuity is perpetuated through the special education paradigm and contributes to the misunderstanding, mislabelling, and misdiagnosing of the behaviour of Indigenous students, and to the social construction of disability in ways that are unfair or disadvantageous. In our examination, we seek to expose the exclusion (Slee & Allan, 2001, p. 180) that exists in inclusive schools as a way to promote social change and redirect education toward truly inclusive practices. According to Slee and Allan (2001), stakeholders must first deconstruct the systems and structures that promulgate exclusion. As part of such a process, it is important to disrupt the systemic and structural special education practices in Manitoba's schools that marginalize and exclude Indigenous students based on perceived behavioural difference. We conclude by proposing inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies that may reduce educational inequity and enable an "education for all" (UNESCO, 2017).

The Social Construction of Disability

The notion of the social construction of behavioural disorders can be traced back to the earlier works of McDermott and Varenne (1995). According to McDermott and Varenne, disability is socially constructed when a culture devalues those who differ from social expectations and the definition of "normal." Through the social construction of disability, variations from social expectations are devalued. Conversely, for the non-disabled, positive social expectations are defined and reinforced. In relation to behavioural difference, McDermott and Varenne (1995) aptly stated,

It is one kind of problem to have a behavioural range different from social expectations; it is another kind of problem to be in a culture in which that difference is used by others for degradation. The second problem is by far the worse. (p. 330)

Unfortunately, there are many examples from history in which misinterpretations and falsifications have led to the poor treatment of subgroups of the population, and with that, denied their access to education and other opportunities. In education, methods designed to assess, sort, classify, and rank students are still being used today. The results

of the methods often lead to some students being removed from the classroom or placed into special self-contained programs.

Within an educational context, “mainstreaming” is a practice in which students who require more focused special education services are present within the regular classroom (Salend, 2011). However, even this attempt to include students who were previously excluded raises some philosophical questions. Battiste (2013) challenged educators to ponder the following questions: “When we are thinking about mainstreaming, whose is the ‘main’ that is streamed? Whose experiences are normalized as centre?” (p. 107). In order to decolonize education Battiste (2013) suggests “nurtur[ing] Indigenous knowledge, its dignity, identity, and integrity by making a direct change in school philosophy, policy, pedagogy, and practice” (p. 99). In other words, in order to reconstruct education in such a way that it works for all students, including Indigenous students, we must first deconstruct, examine, and expose the problems within our current philosophies, policies, pedagogies, and practices (Slee, 2011).

Manitoba’s Story

In this section, we establish a context for understanding how marginalizing attitudes and practices continue to exist for Indigenous students in contemporary Canadian schools through an examination of the history of residential schools. We then provide information regarding Indigenous identity and representation in Manitoba, and the academic outcomes of Indigenous students, in order to demonstrate the scale and urgency of the issues presented.

The Legacy of Residential Schools

In the 1870s, residential schools, under the authority of the federal government, were operated by churches and involved the forced assimilation of more than 150,000 Indigenous children. The requirement of Indigenous children to attend residential schools meant the separation of families and the loss of Indigenous cultures, identities, and languages. While attending residential schools, Indigenous children experienced much harm including malnutrition, disease, neglect, as well as emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (Gilbert, Patron, & Skivenes, 2011; Miller, 1996; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). While the last residential school closed in 1996, the Children’s Aid Society of Canada continued the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their homes. The continued removal of Indigenous children from their families has been referred to as the *millennium scoop* as Indigenous children and youth in Canada are disproportionately placed in the care of child welfare agencies (Sinclair, 2007; 2016). In Manitoba, the most recent data indicates of the 10,328 children and youth in the care of child welfare agencies, 87% are Indigenous (Manitoba Families, 2018). This statistic is unprecedented, and reveals nothing short of a crisis in the child welfare system in this province. In 2008, a formal apology for the abuse, cultural dislocation, and intergenerational harms suffered by all affected by the residential school system was issued by the Canadian federal government (Harper, 2008). However, given the lasting impact of residential schools and the ongoing harms of the child welfare system, there is much work to be done in the journey toward reconciliation.

Indigenous Identity and Representation

Data from the 2016 National Household Survey indicates that Indigenous peoples make up 18% of the total population in Manitoba. This is the highest percentage of Indigenous peoples in all of the Canadian provinces. In Manitoba, the Indigenous population is young and increasing rapidly. Indigenous children and youth age 14 and under make up 31.2% of the Indigenous population, while non-Indigenous children and youth age 14 and under account for only 16.7% of the non-Indigenous population (Statistics Canada, 2016). Given this demographic profile, Indigenous children and youth comprise a significant portion of the population in schools. While the school-age population of Indigenous children and youth continues to grow, regrettably so do the disparities in educational outcomes. This is especially concerning given that for indigenous peoples lower academic achievement is associated with poverty, higher rates of unemployment, underemployment, and a reduced likelihood of pursuing post-secondary education (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Academic Outcomes for Indigenous Students

In Manitoba, literacy and numeracy data are collected in early years, middle years, and in Grade 12 in order to determine the number of students who are meeting grade-level expectations. In 2013/2014 the achievement gap between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students in both literacy and numeracy ranged from 13% to as high as 18% (Office of the Auditor General of Manitoba, 2016). While Cherubini and Hodson (2009) cautioned that such assessments are based on Eurocentric traditions of teaching and learning, and therefore may neither reflect nor capture Indigenous student learning needs, the data do provide evidence of the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous students by the educational system. High school graduation rates also show significant disparities between Indigenous students and their non-Indigenous peers. Manitoba has the lowest rate of high school completion for Indigenous youth of all of the Canadian provinces. Another worrisome finding reveals that the gap between the graduation rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in this province has increased from 34.8% in 2010 to 41.7% in 2014 (Office of the Auditor General of Manitoba, 2016). While significantly lower levels of academic achievement and school completion for Indigenous students may be attributed in part to colonialism, poverty, addiction, and family challenges (Gordon & White, 2014), the paradigm of special education and associated practices in the province of Manitoba also must be critically examined to determine the role they play in creating a culture that disables Indigenous children and youth from educational success.

Inclusion in Manitoba

The province of Manitoba has articulated an educational philosophy of inclusion that states, “Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe” (Manitoba Education & Training, 2019). While a philosophy of inclusion exists, there are no provincial policies that outline what constitutes inclusive practice in schools (Manitoba Education & Training, 2019). This means that inclusive education has been broadly interpreted and inconsistently implemented. The gap between

philosophical descriptions of inclusion and its practical implementation are not unique to Manitoba. In other Canadian provinces and internationally there have been similar difficulties operationalizing inclusion (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011; Bešić, Paleczek, Krammer, & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2017; Stegemann & Jaciw, 2018). The gap between the theory and practice of inclusion in Manitoba's schools is quite significant. In fact, many of the educational structures and practices in Manitoba are more akin to what Slee (2011) described as *neo-special education*, as opposed to inclusion. Neo-special education uses the rhetoric of inclusion to describe educational practices that are firmly rooted within the deficit-based paradigm of special education. In a deficit-based approach "difference is castigated, resulting in a swing away from respect for diversity to a focus upon students as lacking" (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015, p. 161). Lupart as cited in Philpott (2007), aptly stated, "Paradoxically, these trends are in direct contradiction to the prevailing societal, and for the most part, educationally, accepted ideological stance of inclusion" (p. 6). This contradiction highlights how educational jurisdictions may adopt a philosophy of inclusion while maintaining structures that incentivize the stigmatization and the marginalization of difference. To illustrate, we draw attention to the continued use of categorical labels to identify students who are perceived to have a severe emotional and behavioural disorder, and to the prevalence of segregated classrooms and self-contained programs, as they are striking indicators that the implementation of inclusive education remains elusive in this province to the detriment of all students, and especially Indigenous students.

Categorical labels. In Canada, education is a provincial responsibility; and therefore, there is no federal government definition describing what constitutes a behaviour disorder for children and youth in schools. In the absence of a shared definition, some provincial and territorial educational jurisdictions have developed their own subjective definitions of what constitutes a behaviour disorder (Towle, 2015). In 2017, the educational system in the province of Manitoba announced a move away from categorical labelling and funding of some students with disabilities in schools (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017). The non-categorical model is formulaic and allocates resources to school divisions in a block grant based on factors such as enrolment, socio-economics and geography, as opposed to using the identification of students with specific disabilities. This change was regarded as progressive and inclusive given that categorical approaches to funding or input models have been found to have many negative effects including incentivizing the diagnosis of disability, encouraging the exaggeration of students' impairments (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011), and contributing to a greater number of segregated settings (Anderson & Boyle, 2015).

However, students who are identified as having a severe emotional and behavioural disorder have remained categorically labelled and funded by the educational system in Manitoba (Manitoba Education & Training, 2017). In their early conceptions of disability, MacMillan and Reschly (1998) referred to subjective disability labels like behaviour disorders as "judgement categories" (p. 15). The authors continued to describe these categories as fraught with imprecision and bias. The maintenance of a categorical label for students who are perceived to have a behaviour disorder is particularly concerning, given the evidence that minority groups are often disproportionality

represented in such subjective disability categories (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Donovan & Cross, 2002).

The province of Manitoba does not publicly disseminate any demographic information about the students who are represented in disability categories. The lack of transparency in Manitoba is highlighted in a report from the Office of the Auditor General of Manitoba (2016) entitled, *Improving Educational Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students*. According to this report:

The Department has not publicly reported its progress toward the goals, objectives and intended outcomes stated in its 2008–2011 Action Plan (for Aboriginal Education). It publicly released highlight reports.... It considers this information too sensitive. (p. 30)

However, in the absence of publicly available data, it is reasonable to surmise that a significant percentage of the students who are categorically labelled as having a severe emotional and behavioural disorder in the province of Manitoba are Indigenous. This presumption aligns with data that is publicly disseminated in the province of British Columbia, which indicates that Indigenous students are disproportionately over-represented in behaviour disorder categories (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018). It is also consistent with findings in Australia, which indicate that Indigenous students have a five times greater risk than non-Indigenous students of being placed in special behaviour schools (Graham, 2012). Perhaps revealing the number of Indigenous students identified as having a behaviour disorder in the province of Manitoba might lead to what McDermott and Varenne (1995) suggested as a shift from looking at “them” to looking at “us.” The implications of such a shift are more than political rhetoric and may create a sense of urgency to address the systemic practices that disable Indigenous students from educational success. As long as categorical labels continue to be used, students who differ from social expectations may be more vulnerable to classification and the construction of disability.

Segregated special education programs. The change to a predominantly non-categorical funding structure in the province of Manitoba was intended to underscore the provincial educational philosophy of inclusion and provide school divisions with increased flexibility to use resources to support inclusion (Manitoba Education & Training, 2017). However, the revised funding model did not include provincial policies regarding the internal processes that should be used within school divisions to allocate resources in more inclusive ways (Manitoba Education & Training, 2017). This means that school divisions may continue to allocate the resources they receive categorically, which may include the provision and expansion of segregated classrooms, self-contained programs, and segregated schools. To illustrate, a review of the website of the largest school division in the province of Manitoba reveals the existence of more than 20 different segregated classrooms and self-contained programs offered under the umbrella of “special education,” with the segregated programs for students with “behaviour disorders” most often referred to as Learning Assistance Centres (Winnipeg School Division, 2019). Furthermore, after quoting the provincial philosophy of inclusion, this school division adds the following caveat, “Inclusion is not a place” (Winnipeg School Division, 2019). This discourse appears to be an attempt to rationalize the existence of a plethora of segregated classrooms and self-contained programs, and directly contradicts

the definition of inclusive education articulated by Porter and Towell (2013), which describes inclusive education as

the creation of learning environments that maximize the potential for every young person in our diverse societies to receive a high-quality education alongside their peers in local schools that serve the whole community. (p. 2)

The aforementioned school division is certainly not the only school division in the province of Manitoba that operates segregated classrooms and self-contained programs. However, it is provided as an exemplar because it encompasses the inner city of Winnipeg, which has the highest percentage of Indigenous peoples of any census metropolitan area in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016), and thus serves the highest percentage of Indigenous students of any urban school division in the province. We argue that in addition to being disproportionately labelled as having a severe emotional and behavioural disorder at the provincial level, Indigenous students may be disproportionately segregated in self-contained programs and classrooms at the discretion of the school division in which they reside. This observation is not unique, as other jurisdictions with Indigenous populations and philosophies of inclusive education have a significant number of segregated educational settings with a disproportionately high number of Indigenous students (Anderson & Boyle, 2015; Sweller, Graham, & Van Bergen, 2012). Regrettably, these deficit-based practices support the “otherizing of people” (Collins, 2013, p. 284), and thus the construction of disability for some groups.

Cultural Discontinuity: Attitudes, Practices, and Pedagogies

In addition to the special education procedures of categorical labelling and segregation, there are deeply entrenched attitudes and reified practices within the special education paradigm that contribute to cultural discontinuity and the social construction of disability in Indigenous students. In the process of exposing exclusion, these practices also must be deconstructed (Slee, 2011).

Teachers' Attitudes

Only 9% of the teachers in Manitoba self-identified as Indigenous (Office of the Auditor General of Manitoba, 2016). When the culture of the teacher differs from the culture of the student, a lack of intercultural understanding may influence the teachers' interactions and perceptions of students' behaviour (Causey, Thomas & Armento, 2000; Skiba et al., 2011). According to Ross (1992),

the first step with coming to terms with people of another culture then, is to acknowledge that we constantly interpret the words and acts of others, and that we do so subconsciously but always in conformity with the way which our culture has taught us is the proper way. (p. 4)

As an example, Riley and Ungerleider (2012) explored the judgements of Canadian pre-service teachers regarding the academic performance of Indigenous students compared to non-Indigenous students. In this study, 50 pre-service teachers were asked to assess the academic records of 24 fictitious students, and suggest an appropriate academic placement. In spite of identical academic performance, the pre-service teachers consistently devalued the performance of the students whom they believed were of

Indigenous ancestry. In related research, when observing the behaviour of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, non-Indigenous teachers identified a greater number of behaviours consistent with the profile of a conduct disorder in the Indigenous children they observed (Dion, Gotowiec, & Beiser, 1998). According to Piquemal and Nickels (2005), the behaviour of Indigenous students also may be interpreted as resistant, passive-aggressive, oppositional, depressed, or withdrawn; but these diagnostic terms may fail to recognize the impact the child's culture has on his or her behaviour in a school setting. Since teachers play a significant role in the referral of students to special education, it is quite possible that teachers' unquestioning acceptance of and compliance with the categorization of students' behaviours based on Eurocentric standards may lead to improper referrals, diagnosis, and the construction of disability.

Diagnostic Assessments

Unlike Western epistemologies that involve diagnosing and remediating differences, there tends to be a greater acceptance of diversity across Indigenous cultures (Minerva Rivas, 2018). Disabilities within Indigenous cultures have been referred to as "special gifts" that allow for a connection to the spiritual world (Johnson, 1998). In contrast, special education structures rely on psychometrics to quantify students' behaviour and measure potential; and according to Tomlinson (2017), clinicians and those with special education training are regarded as experts in such practices. In spite of the fact that measures of personality and psychopathology have low levels of reliability and often lead to the misapplication of diagnostic labels to children, they continue to be used to rationalize the placement of students in disability categories (Coutinho & Oswald, 2000; Mushquash & Bova, 2007). In their earlier works, McDermott and Varenne (1995) have described the use of diagnostic assessments as an example of culture as deprivation. The culture-as-deprivation approach, grounded in psychometrics, regards the individual as responsible for his or her personal failure to meet social expectations. According to Gilham and Tompkins (2016),

An over-emphasis on students as the singular sources of their deficits (as being "less than" most others in ways that are only explicable at the level of the student's being, typically as a medical problem to be ameliorated, modified or adapted to) is deeply problematic. (p. 7)

Another significant concern is that most diagnostic assessments are based on standardized systems such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)*; American Psychiatric Association, 2013), in which the diagnostic criteria of behavioural disorders are assumed to be standard for all, in spite of the fact that there is fervent debate about their applicability to minority groups (Ecks, 2016; Harwood, 2006). Baydala, Sherman, Rasmussen, Wikman, and Janzen (2006) found that 23% of Indigenous children in a northern Alberta community displayed symptoms consistent with the diagnostic criteria for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). While ADHD is typically found in 7–10% of the general population, this study leads one to question the reliability of the behavioural assessment tools that label high levels of activity in Indigenous children as pathological. It is important to draw attention to "the racialized assumptions that appear implicit in practices of diagnosing disorderly children" (Harwood, 2006, p. 25), and the role such practices play in the construction of disability.

“Appropriate” Behaviour

In a discussion of the cultural politics of special education, Armstrong (2005) described how “special education operates as a mechanism suppressing alternative cultural representations of disempowered identities” (p. 146). In the case of Indigenous students, the expectation of compliance has been discussed by early Indigenous thinkers like Brant (1990), who posited that the expectation of conformity in schools may contradict the values of Indigenous cultures, which focus on achieving consensus through voluntary co-operation. Furthermore, Indigenous peoples have their own cultural definitions of self-discipline and self-control that may not be a part of, or conducive to, a mainstream, Eurocentric education system. External control over students’ behaviour may further contradict the Indigenous behavioural norm of non-interference, which encourages “positive interpersonal relations by discouraging coercion of any kind be it physical, verbal or psychological” (Brandt, 1990, p. 535). The notion that “we have culture, and you have a different one” may pervade the school experience for Indigenous students and exacerbate the student’s behaviour as they protest being “monitored and controlled” (McDermott and Varenne, 1995, p. 335). This kind of cultural discontinuity between home and school may cause much distress for Indigenous students and ultimately lead to school failure (Hornet, 1990; Kanu, 2002). As a result, early on in their education, students from minority cultures may be identified as disabled because their interaction patterns may not conform to social expectations (Cartledge, Tillman, & Johnson, 2001). This leads to the social construction of what is considered abnormal, defiant, and deviant behaviour (Levi-Strauss, 1950/1987; Roos, Gelfand, Nau, & Lun, 2015). This reveals the dimensions to which disability (constructed as a behavioural disorder) is in fact constructed as an ideology that justifies the unequal power relationships between Canadian nation-states and Indigenous peoples.

Codes of Conduct

In Canada, behavioural codes of conduct in schools are established by provincial government legislation, which is largely rooted in Eurocentric epistemologies. Inappropriate behaviours are identified using social expectations developed by those in positions of power, and the responses to behaviours are primarily focussed on building compliance (Janzen & Schwartz, 2018). There is much research to suggest that the codes of conduct in schools are most detrimental to minority groups. Studies in the United States are numerous and indicate that African American students are: (a) more often referred to the office for minor, more subjective behaviours; (b) suspended at a rate of two to three times that of non-minority students; and (c) more likely to receive severe punishments like expulsion (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Skiba et al., 2011). While research in Canada is comparatively limited, a study conducted by Ruck and Wortley (2002) in Toronto, Ontario, examining the perceptions of 1,870 high school students (49% white or European descent, 18% Asian descent, 14% Black or African descent, 8% South Asian descent, and 11% “other” which included students from Hispanic, Indigenous, and mixed racial backgrounds) about school discipline, found that racial and ethnic minority students were much more likely than non-minority students to perceive discrimination with respect to the following areas: (a) teacher treatment, (b) school suspension, (c) involvement of police by school authorities, and (d) treatment

by police at school. Students who resist this kind of overt control over their behaviour may receive consequences like suspension, placement in a segregated program, or even expulsion. According to Skiba as cited in Graham (2012), “Racial and ethnic disparities in discipline and special education referral may be further evidence of a general inability on the part of schools to accommodate cultural differences in behaviour” (p. 172).

Addressing the Challenges

Exposing the exclusion of Indigenous students under the current special educational paradigm in Manitoba provides the opportunity to identify and implement more equitable and inclusive educational practices. Since our goal is to not only expose exclusion, but also to support the reconstruction of a more inclusive educational system (Slee, 2011; Slee & Allan, 2001) we propose the following: (a) developing clearly articulated inclusive educational policies along with indicators of inclusivity; (b) reporting the number of Indigenous students who are identified as having an emotional and behavioural disorder and are segregated in self-contained settings; (c) establishing needs-based models of support at all levels (e.g., province, division, and school); (d) creating new narratives of assessment and pedagogy; and (e) reconceptualizing teachers’ training.

Inclusive Education Policies and Indicators

In order to support the actualization of inclusive education it is important to develop clearly articulated inclusive education policies, and indicators of inclusivity. In an international study of more than 150 countries about the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the province of New Brunswick was identified as having one of the top five innovative inclusive education policies (Fembek, Heindorf, Kainz, & Saupe, 2016). In reviewing Policy 322, Inclusive Education (New Brunswick Department of Education, 2013), all references to dual systems of special education and mainstream education have been eliminated, and some of the mandated inclusive education practices include, but are not limited to:

- Professional learning and support to educational staff to support inclusion;
- A process for varying the “common learning environment” which outlines that if the school’s capacity to meet the needs of a student are insufficient, a plan to return to the “common learning environment” must be developed;
- Prohibiting segregation in special schools or segregation based on disability;
- Prohibiting segregated, self-contained programs or classes for students with learning or behavioural challenges, and alternative education programs for students enrolled in kindergarten to Grade 8; and
- An expectation for the superintendent to monitor and measure the performance of schools using indicators of inclusivity.

The groundbreaking legislation in the province of New Brunswick may serve as a model to support the development of inclusive educational policies in the province of Manitoba. In particular, the focus on monitoring and measuring inclusivity would build in accountability structures to ensure that school divisions take measures to enact inclusive

practices. In the European community, a framework to measure inclusive education has been developed that involves evaluating inputs, processes, and outcomes at the individual, organization, and system levels (Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009; Loreman, 2014). In the Canadian context, the use of a similar logic model to measure inclusive education also has been proposed (Stegemann & Jaciw, 2018). While a logic model may provide a framework in which to measure inclusive education, the indicators of inclusion are highly context specific, and therefore must reflect the unique circumstances of the local community (Loreman, 2014; Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2010). In Manitoba, this means that the development of indicators of inclusion should involve a diverse stakeholder group, including Indigenous leadership so that Indigenous knowledges and perspectives may be incorporated into the reconstruction of inclusive education.

Transparency in Reporting

Acknowledging the contemporary malpractice of special education in the province of Manitoba would mean officially reporting the number of Indigenous students who are identified as having an emotional and behavioural disorder, as well as the number assigned to segregated settings. It is difficult to engage in a critical dialogue and enact progressive change when those in positions of power act as gatekeepers to the information that would reveal the degree of inequity and exclusion experienced by Indigenous students in the educational system. Recognizing the need for transparency, the province of British Columbia publishes comprehensive data on the disproportionality experienced by Indigenous students. As a part of a progressive, multi-year strategy to address inequity in the educational system, the data collected and disseminated includes: (a) academic achievement, (b) graduation rates, (c) placement in disability categories, and (d) placement in alternative programs (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018; Auditor General of British Columbia, 2015). While the disproportionality of Indigenous students is concerning, public reporting has created a climate of shared accountability in which issues of institutionalized racism may be openly discussed and addressed (Auditor General of British Columbia, 2015). Establishing baseline measures of inclusivity in the province of Manitoba would assist in setting aspirational targets and considerations for increasing inclusivity.

Needs-Based Models

There is much research to suggest that in order to foster inclusion for all, non-categorical approaches are required (Meijer, 1999; Pijl, 2014; Sailor & Burrello, 2013). In the Manitoba context, the adoption of a needs-based model should not be limited to some disabilities, and only implemented at the provincial level. The province of Manitoba should mandate the adoption of need-based models of support as a part of its inclusive educational policy, so that school divisions cannot continue to assess, sort, and classify students based on perceived differences. A needs-based approach means that students' needs, as opposed to a student's eligibility (pre-determined by a socially constructed label), are used to determine the resources they receive. The benefits of needs-based approaches include, but are not limited to: (a) less bureaucracy, (b) greater flexibility in resource allocation, (c) less incentive to over-identify students as disabled, and (d) an

increase in inclusive practices (Pijl, 2014). The province of Saskatchewan has developed a support document called “Actualizing a Needs-Based Model” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015). This document describes a flexible service delivery model in which the needs of students of all abilities, as opposed to categorical labels, are used to determine the support provided. Using this kind of needs-based model, a student requiring greater support would be able to receive it without having to be assessed and labelled as having a behaviour disorder. When the needs of the child, as opposed to the needs of the system, guide the provision of support, “it sends the message that students are individual human beings and not categories” (Calder Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018, p. 196).

A New Narrative of Assessment and Pedagogy

According to Dudley-Marling and Gurn (2010), attempts to rank human diversity stem from an unconscious or conscious desire to dominate, oppress, and control those who differ. A new narrative of assessment and pedagogy would question how current assessment and instructional practices perpetuate and maintain unequal power relationships. In teacher practice, it would mean rather than immediately referring a student for specialized assessment, assuming that the “problem” resides within the student, it would empower classroom teachers to analyze curriculum, pedagogy, and the environment to identify how these factors may be interfering with students’ success. Pedagogical approaches such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) developed by the Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST; Rose & Meyer, 2002), and the Three-Block Model of UDL (Katz, 2013) may support such a narrative by delineating inclusive pedagogical approaches that foster both social and academic inclusion for all students.

Moreover, the implementation of restorative practices may be one way to honour Indigenous worldviews in contemporary schooling and to reduce the cultural discontinuity experienced by Indigenous students. Restorative practices promote culturally sensitive responses to students’ behaviour. Rather than regarding students’ *misbehaviour* as a challenge to adult authority that requires punishment, restorative practices promote the examination of behaviour through the lens of a strained or fractured relationship that requires repair (Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005). In this regard, restorative approaches focus on reconciliation, healing, consensus, and community building, which are rooted in Indigenous cultural practices (Cameron, 2005). When implemented as part of a school-wide multi-tiered system of supports, universal restorative practices create a positive relational environment and ethos of care to support conflict resolution. Targeted restorative practices involve more informal approaches such as classroom circles and peer mediation, while intensive restorative practices involve the use of formal community circles (Morrison & Vaandering, 2011). Restorative approaches focus on building harmonious school communities instead of implementing what Shaw (2007) referred to as “high control, low support” (p. 131) punitive practices. Restorative approaches are diametrically opposed to zero-tolerance policies and the exclusionary practices that exist within the codes of conduct of many schools, and as such provide an inclusive model that builds positive relationships and strengthens communities.

Moreover, if the use of standardized assessments is not eliminated, the assessments must at a minimum become more culturally sensitive. The professional involved in the

behavioural assessment of a child or youth has an ethical obligation to become familiar with the cultural and linguistic realities of the individual. For example, if a second language is involved, the professional needs to know or understand the linguistic context of the language of the child or adolescent being assessed (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005; Vasquez-Nuttall, Li, Sanchez, Nuttall, & Mathiesen, 2003). These experiences may lead to greater awareness, which may in turn help to reduce assessor bias. In spite of the fact that cultural familiarity may heighten the sensitivity of the examiner, it cannot eliminate cultural bias if the culture of the examiner differs from that of the individual being assessed. Therefore, an additional recommendation made by Ball (2006) has called for the standardization of assessment tools with Indigenous populations if they are to be used. While these measures will not completely eliminate bias and the misinterpretation of behaviour, they may begin the process of reducing cultural discontinuity and make the process of assessment less disabling.

Reconceptualizing Teacher Training

Pre-service and in-service teacher training should include a critical examination of the unequal power relations that exist within the special education paradigm, and the role of teachers as social agents in either reinforcing and/or disrupting these dynamics. Teachers must problematize special education practices and their role perpetuating the marginalization of students who display behavioural differences. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) affirmed this point and suggested that teachers reflexively question both their professional practice and the socio-cultural context of schooling. In describing a pre-service teacher education program at a Canadian university, Gilham and Tompkins (2016) explained how their program was grounded in social justice and included explicit instruction in critical thinking skills and the issues of oppression and marginalization. While this education occurred in a pre-service teacher program, the same kind of professional learning must be required for in-service teachers. A recent support document for teachers entitled “Creating Racism Free Schools Through Critical Conversations on Race/Racism” (Manitoba Education and Training and the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate, 2017) in the province of Manitoba may indicate an acknowledgement of the need to move beyond merely the inclusion of cultural information in teacher training and curricula, to a “racial analysis to understand the implications of racialization processes on Indigenous cultures and identities” (Waldorf, 2014, p. 82). According to Gay (2013) such critical perspectives are precursors to the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy, or “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for [students]” (p. 31).

Conclusion

According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2013), “The right to an education is in fact the right to an inclusive education” (p. 3). However, historically and in contemporary schooling this has not been the experience of many Indigenous peoples. By critically examining the special education structures and processes in Manitoba that marginalize Indigenous students, we hope to promote

progressive social change. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015b) "Calls to Action" remind all Canadians of the need to redress the harms to Indigenous peoples, and education must play a significant role in this process. Specifically, Call 63 advocates building capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect and identifying teacher-training needs related to Indigenous education issues. Some Canadians may think that with the TRC, a chapter has closed; but we feel that a new chapter has just been opened, and there is a great deal of work to be done to achieve equity in education for Indigenous students. Some of the inclusive practices proposed require system-wide policy change, while other recommendations, such as changes in teachers' practice, may be more readily implemented in the short term. While these incremental changes toward greater inclusivity are not ideal, they demonstrate meaningful progress toward a more inclusive and just society (Lutfiyya & Bartlett, in press).

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