Perceptions of Indigenous Fathers During Pregnancy: Finding From the ENRICH Study
Grant Bruno, Richard T. Oster, Rick Lightning, Matilda Roasting, Margaret Montour, Rhonda C. Bell, Ellen L. Toth, The ENRICH Team

Background

- There are well known gaps in perinatal health between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. [1]
- Very little is known of Indigenous men’s experience during their partner’s pregnancy.
- Study took place in Maskwacîs, Alberta, roughly an hour south of Edmonton.

Objective

- To understand how Indigenous Cree fathers’ from Maskwacis support their partners during pregnancy

Methods

- This study used community-based participatory research in collaboration with Maskwacis.
- We sought out Indigenous fathers who were considered role models and involved fathers.
- We conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with six fathers. Four of the fathers also participated in photovoice. [2]
- All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analyzed using qualitative content analysis.
- An Elders advisory committee was established and Ethical approval by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board was obtained. Written informed consent to participate in the study was obtained.

Table 1. Profile of Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Raised in Maskwacis</th>
<th>Photovoice</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Results

- The fathers felt they had to support their partners in any way possible and embrace the pregnancy as a positive change in their life.
- The fathers were aware of the impacts of colonization has had on Indigenous fatherhood.
- Providing a support system from family, faith, and culture, and a stable upbringing with a positive male role model.
- The participants called for more programs and services to involve and include fathers.
- The fathers also wanted perinatal programming that had traditional culture and Elder support.

“I had my mom in there too, and my sisters, and she had her mom there, and then my brother and his wife were in the waiting room. And that’s one of the things I like is I grew up like that. When someone is going through that phase in their life, they are there”

““It makes me not useless. I feel like I’m doing a good job. Even though I’m unemployed and what not, I feel that I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing right now.”

“I am exposing them to cultural events, I try to expose my children to the language, the Cree language. I try to tell stories about the land and try to get them to see the world through the lens of a Cree person, and as much as I can I make sure they use correct terms…I try to explain the world to them from a Cree perspective. Like my dad did”

Conclusions

- Indigenous fathers know their roles during pregnancy and want to be more supportive, but due to the effects of colonization those roles have been diminished.
- In order for prenatal care providers to administer appropriate care for pregnant First Nations women, Indigenous fathers must be acknowledged throughout the pregnancy journey.
- Maskwacis Nehiyaw (Cree) culture is the foundation from which these fathers operate, this needs to be acknowledged for during pregnancy.

References


Acknowledgements

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ENRICH Program: https://enrich.ales.ualberta.ca/
Corresponding Author: gcbruno@ualberta.ca