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Exploring the experiences of indigenous nursing student mentees

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In response to a growing body of knowledge about Indigenous health and the recently released Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, many Canadian health professions education programs have begun to develop programs to enhance the recruitment and retention of Indigenous students. This paper will present the recent findings of a qualitative study that examined the barriers and facilitators to Indigenous nursing student success in a Canadian undergraduate nursing program. Indigenous students and Indigenous nurse mentors were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and focus groups to understand the nature of their experiences using a descriptive qualitative research approach. Thematic analysis method was used to analyze and interpret data, revealing 5 main themes, namely; 1) Adapting to a new environment; 2) Building local social environments; 3) Lack of cultural pedagogy; 4) Racism at multiple levels; and 5) Mobilizing social supports. This paper will present these five major themes including a discussion of the effects of colonialism and the inaccurate depiction of Indigenous communities in education and how the organizational culture of academic institutions continues to undermine positive efforts made to enhance the success of Indigenous students. Participants of this study described a paucity of accessible institutional support for Indigenous nursing students, which fostered personal tenacity and community resourcefulness to succeed. The paper will conclude with the proposal of a way forward for Schools of Nursing in Canada to foster a climate of cultural safety and support for the success of Indigenous nursing students.

Biography

Josephine B Etowa is a Full Professor and Loyer-DaSilva Research Chair in Public Health Nursing in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa. Her program of research which is grounded in over twenty-five years of clinical practice in the areas of maternal-newborn and child health (MNCH) and in public health nursing include studies that examine the work life experiences of nurses from various social locations. She has published studies on mentoring as a resource for Aboriginal nurses and currently leads University of Ottawa, Aboriginal nursing students' recruitment and retention initiative.

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