

Summary Report

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network Kausattumi Grants Program, 2022-2023

TARA PRIDE, PHD IN HEALTH

The experiences of Indigenous occupational therapists across Canada

Description of Research

My doctoral thesis research aims to answer the following question: *How do Indigenous Peoples experience working as occupational therapists in Canada?*

Due to differing worldviews and cultural ways of being and doing, Indigenous health care professionals may experience a divide between their own belief systems and the systems involved in practicing health care in a Westernized society¹. My doctoral thesis work is part of a larger national qualitative study (*PI Beagan, Co-I Martin – Diversity in the health professions*) exploring the experiences of health professionals who may experience marginalization due to Indigeneity, racialization, ethnicity, social class background, disability and/or LGBTQ identity. The occupational therapy profession in Canada is grounded in Western underpinnings and guided by Western epistemologies². Further, the profession benefits from professional autonomy and high levels of social status, relying on licensure and lengthy accredited formal education programs to establish jurisdictional claims and socialize new members. Despite this, the profession has been actively seeking to reduce inequities experienced by Indigenous Peoples both as clients and practitioners. It is a critical step to explore social processes at play in occupational therapy for Indigenous Peoples, highlighting how even in workplaces professing a commitment to social justice, processes of social exclusion may still be operative.

This research project is community-based and driven by Indigenous occupational therapists and was completed in 2 stages. Stage 1 of this work explored the experiences of Indigenous occupational therapists (n=13) through individual storytelling sessions lasting 1-2 hours (June-October 2022). Stage 2 included a gathering of Indigenous occupational therapists in Kijipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki (n=8) to discuss preliminary findings from Stage 1 as well as begin developing an emerging Indigenous Community of Practice (CoP). This gathering took place in October 2022. Participants were recruited through professional Indigenous associations (e.g., the Occupational Therapy and Indigenous Health Network (OTIHN)), as well as through personal and professional networks. The study methods are guided by Indigenous epistemologies and employ various Indigenous methodologies such as storytelling sessions and talking circles. Given the geographic scope of the study, storytelling sessions took place either in person or virtually, whereas the gathering that brought together Indigenous occupational therapists from across Canada was conducted in person.

My dissertation is exploring the following sub themes:

1. How everyday work experiences of Indigenous OTs were shaped by their Indigeneity in the context of a colonial profession;
2. How Indigenous OTs employ Etuaptmumk [Two-Eyed Seeing] (Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall, 2012) in their everyday practices;
3. How the social processes of inclusion and exclusion influence their practice;
4. How professional context shapes experiences of belonging and marginality; and
5. How Indigenous OTs advise the profession in change efforts, ranging from Indigenous inclusion towards actual decolonization (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018)

Research Outcomes

As of the end of August, I have written my full PhD dissertation and it is now undergoing review by both my supervisors and committee members. I anticipate a defence date of mid-November 2023.

The health care system is a colonizing institution, with a long history of doing harm within Indigenous communities, which has resulted in scepticism and reluctance for Indigenous peoples to seek care³. Indigenous occupational therapists are uniquely positioned due to their lived experience related to their own Indigeneity and their education in and first-hand experience with health systems. They will be able to speak to some of the challenges they face as well as provide suggestions for how to transform health care settings and the occupational therapy profession into spaces that invite, encourage, and value Indigenous perspectives. This research will contribute to the knowledge base on Indigenous occupational therapists experiences in the profession, as well as work towards a self-governed Indigenous CoP. Further, this work will offer advice and guidance emerging directly from Indigenous occupational therapists in the workforce about how their perspectives and experiences can inform a more culturally safe space for Indigenous peoples to work, and ultimately seek care. Not only do I hope to enrich my theoretical understanding of processes of social inclusion and exclusion, as well as professional closure, but I also have the pragmatic long-term aim of increasing the representation of Indigenous Peoples in the occupational therapy profession.

Knowledge Sharing

- **Pride, T.,** Favel, K., Starr, D., Peterson, G., Phenix, A., Smith, H., & Valavaara, K. (2023). "Education experiences of Indigenous occupational therapists in Canadian occupational therapy". Presented as a poster defense at the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 10-12, 2023
- **Pride, T.,** Phenix, A., Starr, D., Peterson, G., Valavaara, K., Favel, K., Reid, H., & Smith, H. (2023). "Indigenization, reconciliation, decolonization? Critiquing the professions' efforts using a framework". Presented as an extended discussion at the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 10-12, 2023
- Reid, H., & **Pride, T.** (2023). "Creating spaces of belonging in OT: Experiences of colliding identities". Presented as a poster defence the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 10-12, 2023

Completed Project Deliverables

- Conducted data analysis January-April 2023
- Wrote my full dissertation draft (completed August 2023)

Forthcoming Project Deliverables

- PhD defense (anticipated mid-November 2023)

Activities Outside of Your Research

Peer-reviewed publications

- Price, T., & **Pride, T.** (2023). The Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM): Critiquing its applicability with Indigenous Peoples and communities. *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 11(3), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.15453/2168-6408.2085>
- Reid, H., & **Pride, T.** (2023). Colliding identities and creating spaces of belonging in the occupational therapy profession". *The Healthy Populations Journal*, 3(1), 19-29. Doi: 10.15273/hpj.v3i1.11476
- Beagan, B.L., Bizzeth, S., **Pride, T.**, Sibbald, K. (2023). Racism in occupational therapy: "It's part of who we are..." (invited editorial). *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Early online. Doi: 10.1177/03080226231153345
- Beagan, B. L., Sibbald, K., Bizzeth, S., & **Pride, T.** (2023). Factors influencing LGBTQ+ disclosure decision-making by Canadian health professionals: A qualitative study. *PLOS One*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0280558>
- **Pride, T.**, Beagan, B. L., Macleod, A., & Sibbald, K. (2022). Educational experiences of health professionals from marginalized groups: "It definitely takes more work". *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*. Early Online. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2022.2149485>

Presentations and Panels

- Panelist, *Indigenous Summer Mentorship Program for Occupational Therapy*. University of Toronto, July 13th, 2023

- **Pride, T., & Valavaara, K. (2023).** The imperative to advance reconciliation, equity and justice within occupational therapy (invited presentation). *The Nova Scotia Occupational Therapy Society (NSSOT) Annual General Meeting*, Halifax, Nova Scotia, June 10th, 2023
- **Pride, T., & Wendt, D. C. (2023).** ‘Keeping it real’: Two-eyed seeing in academic-Indigenous partnerships (invited presentation). *Research is Healing Mawiomi*, Moncton, New Brunswick, June 2nd, 2023
- Moderator (invited). *Informing Substance Use Research and Community Engagement in Indigenous Communities* (panel discussion). *Research is Healing Mawiomi*, Moncton, New Brunswick, June 2nd, 2023
- Panelist, *Responding to Reviewer Feedback*. Healthy Populations Journal (HPJ) Peer Review Workshop (Part 2), Dalhousie University, March 9th, 2023

Guest lectures (September 2022 – August 2023)

Course number, title, & instructor(s)	School & University	Program and # of students	Topic	Date
OCCU 6140: Neuroscience for Occupational Therapy Instructor: Amira Tawashy	School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University	MSc(OT)	Indigenous health, colonialism, and occupational therapy neurorehabilitation	September 2022
OCCU 6510: Occupational Science Theory: Doing, Being, Belonging, Becoming Instructor: Niki Kiepek	School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University	MSc Post-Professional	Power, equity, and oppression – influences on occupation	October 2022
OCCU 6006 – Applied Research for OTs Instructor: Grace Warner	School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University	MSc(OT)	Completing an integrative review: Occupational therapy roles in an Indigenous context	October 2022
SOCI 3263: Sociology of Health and Health care Instructor: Jenny Rand	Sociology, Acadia University	Undergraduate	Colonialism as a social determinant of Indigenous Peoples health	October 2022
PHYT 6118: Health Equity Series Instructor: Chelsey Purdy	School of Physiotherapy, Dalhousie University	MSc(PT)	Decolonizing the rehabilitation professions and working with Indigenous clients	March 2023

HAHP 3100: Introduction to Research Methods Instructor: Daniel Stevens	School of Health and Human Performance, Dalhousie University	Undergraduate	What is Indigenous health research? (and why do we need it?)	March 2023
OCCU 6511: Research Methods & Literacy Instructor: Shanon Phelan	School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University	MSc Post-Professional	Decolonizing methodologies and Indigenous health research	March 2023
OCCU 2000: Occupation and Daily Life Instructor: Carmel O'Keefe	School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University	Undergraduate	Truth and reconciliation, Indigenous health, and occupational engagement	July 2023

Future Plans

I plan to defend my PhD in mid-November and am starting an Assistant Professor position in the School of Occupational Therapy at Western University in January 2024. My proposed research program at Western will continue doing work alongside Indigenous occupational therapists across the country to advance our vision of creating an Indigenous CoP in the occupational therapy profession.

References

1. Martin D. (2012). Two-eyed seeing: A framework for understanding Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to Indigenous health research. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 44, 20-42. Retrieved from: <http://cjr.archive.mcgill.ca/article/viewFile/2348/2342>
2. White, T., & Beagan, B. (2020). Occupational therapy roles in an Indigenous context: An integrative review. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 87(3), 200-210. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/10.1177/0008417420924933>
3. Allan, B. & Smylie, J. (2015). First Peoples, second class treatment: The role of racism in the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples in Canada [PDF]. Wellesley Institute and Well Living House. Retrieved from: <http://caid.ca/FirPeoSecClaTre2015.pdf>