

# Summary Report

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network Kausattumi Grants Program, 2020-2021

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 society<sup>1</sup>. 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 epistemologies<sup>2</sup>. 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 in the workplace 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 committed to social justice, processes of social exclusion may still be operative.

This research project is community-based and driven by Indigenous occupational therapists. Participants will be 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 will be guided by Indigenous epistemologies and employ various Indigenous methodologies which will include storytelling sessions and talking circles. Given the geographic scope of the study, storytelling sessions will take place either in person or virtually, whereas a talking circle, bringing together Indigenous occupational therapists from across Canada, is currently being planned as an in-person event. The methodology for this research will be further solidified upon consultation with Indigenous occupational therapists across Canada.

My thesis will explore the following objectives:

1. *How an Indigenous worldview shapes the experiences of Indigenous occupational therapists and their practice;*
2. *How the colonial context of the occupational therapy profession shapes the experiences and practices and Indigenous occupational therapists; and*
3. *How power imbalances within colonial systems continue to steer efforts for decolonization and sovereignty towards inclusion at best; and*
4. *Recommendations from Indigenous occupational therapists to improve social inclusion in the workplace.*

### ***Research Outcomes***

I am currently in the process of writing my PhD research proposal, with an anticipated completion date of January/February 2022. The outcomes described here are just a starting point and will likely change as my project moves forward.

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 care<sup>3</sup>. 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 offer concrete recommendations 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***

- **White, T.,** Favel, K., Phenix, A., Smith, H., Starr, D., & Valavaara, K. (2021). "Beyond diversity: The need for an Indigenous occupational therapy community." Presented as an extended discussion to the Virtual Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 16-19, 2021.

- Beagan, B., Sibbald, K. & **White, T.**, & Bizzeth, S. (2021). “Equity and inclusion among occupational therapists: The toll of marginalization”. Presented as a poster presentation to the Virtual Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 16-19, 2021.

### ***Completed Project Deliverables***

- Successful completion of my PhD comprehensive examinations in the Summer of 2021

### ***Forthcoming Project Deliverables***

- Completion of my PhD research proposal (January/February 2022)
- Submit my ethics application to Dalhousie University and the Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch in the Winter/Spring of 2022

### ***Activities Outside of Your Research***

#### Peer-reviewed publications

- Beagan, B. L, Sibbald, K. R, **Pride, T.**, & Bizzeth, S. R. (in press). Professional misfits: “You’re having to perform... all week long.” Accepted to *the Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*.
- Lauckner, H., Gallant, K., Akbari, M., Tomas, G., **Pride, T.**, & Hutchinson, S. (in press). Picturing recreation: Newcomers perspectives on recreation. Accepted to the *Journal of International Migration and Integration*.
- **Pride, T.**, Lam, A., Swansburg, J., Seno, M., Lowe, M. B., Bomfim, E., Toombs, E., Marsan, S., LoRusso, J., Roy, J., Gurr, E., LaFontaine, J., Paul, J., Burack, J. A., Mushquash, C., Stewart, S., & Wendt, D. C. (2021). Trauma-informed approaches to substance use interventions with Indigenous Peoples: A scoping review. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02791072.2021.1992047>
- Hunter, C., & **Pride, T.** (2021). Critiquing the Canadian Model of Client-Centered Enablement (CMCE) for Indigenous contexts. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000841742111042960>
- Murphy, K., Branje, K., **White, T.**, McKibson, S., Cunsolo, A., Latimer, M., McMillan, L. J., Sylliboy, J., & Martin, D. (2021). Are we walking the talk of participatory Indigenous health research? A scoping review of the literature in Atlantic Canada. *PLOS One*, 16(7), e0255265. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0255265>
- **White, T.**, Murphy, K., Branje, K., McKibson, S., Cunsolo, A., Latimer, M., McMillan, L. J., Sylliboy, J., & Martin, D. (2021). How has Indigenous health research changed in Atlantic Canada over two decades? A scoping review from 2001-2020. *Social Science & Medicine*, 279, 113947. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.113947>

#### Books and book chapters

- Turner, J., **Pride, T.**, MacLachlan, J., & Lizon, M. (in press). Reconciliation and occupational therapy in Canada; experiences and perspectives from practitioners. In *International Handbook of Occupational Therapy*.

#### Presentations

- **White, T.,** Favel, K., Phenix, A., Smith, H., Starr, D., & Valavaara, K. (2021). “Beyond diversity: The need for an Indigenous occupational therapy community.” Accepted as an extended discussion to the Virtual Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 16-19, 2021.
- Hunter, C., & **White, T.** (2021). “The Canadian Model of Client Centered Enablement in Indigenous contexts”. Accepted as a poster presentation to the Virtual Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 16-19, 2021.
- Beagan, B., Sibbald, K. & **White, T.,** & Bizzeth, S. (2021). “Equity and inclusion among occupational therapists: The toll of marginalization”. Accepted as a poster presentation to the Virtual Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 16-19, 2021.
- Lauckner, H., **White, T.,** Gallant, K., Hutchinson, H., Tomas, G., & Akbari, M. (2021). “Picturing recreation: Perspectives on experiences with recreation.” Accepted as a discussion to the Canadian Congress on Leisure Research (CCLR), May 30-June 1, 2021.
- Lauckner, H., **White, T.,** Gallant, K., Hutchinson, S., & Akbari, M. (2021). “Finding meaning and belonging: Exploring newcomers’ recreation experiences through photos.” Accepted as a discussion to the Virtual Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 16-19, 2021.

#### Guest lectures

- Invited Co-Lecturer, OCCU 6140: Neuroscience for Occupational Therapy. School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University, October 2021
- Invited Panelist, OCCU 5011: Enabling Occupation 1: Mental Health. School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University, October 2021
- Invited Speaker, COMM 6511: Health Communication; Theory and Practice. School of Communication Studies, Mount Saint Vincent University, October 2021
- Invited Speaker, OCCU 6510: Occupational Science Theory: Doing, Being, Belonging, Becoming. School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University, October 2021
- Invited Speaker, OCCU 6006 – Applied Research for OTs. School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University, October 2021
- Invited Speaker, OCCU 6002: Social Influences on Occupation. School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University, June 2021
- Invited Speaker, OCCU 2000: Occupation and Daily Life. School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University, June 2021
- Invited Speaker, NURS 5140: Community Based Research Methodologies for Addressing Health Disparities. Department of Nursing, Dalhousie University, March 2021
- Invited Speaker, SOCI 217: Race and Identities. Department of Sociology, St. Francis Xavier University, February 2021
- Invited Speaker, OCCU 5011: Enabling Occupation 1, Mental Health. School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University, January 2021

#### *Future Plans*

In order to prepare and move my PhD thesis work forward, I am in the early stages of discussing my PhD plans and potential avenues with the Indigenous occupational therapists whom I've had the pleasure of working with over the past few years. Further, I plan to revisit my comprehensive exam papers to potentially transform a few of them into publications that can be submitted to peer-reviewed journals.

### 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>