

Summary Report

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network Kausattumi Grants Program, 2021-2022

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 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 and was completed in 2 phases. Phase 1 of this work explored the experiences of Indigenous occupational therapists through individual storytelling sessions lasting 1-2 hours (June-October 2022). Phase 2 included a gathering of Indigenous occupational therapists in Kijipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki to discuss preliminary findings from Phase 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 is 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 recommendations from Indigenous OTs range from Indigenous inclusion towards actual decolonization (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018)

Research Outcomes

I have just completed all data collection for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of my doctoral work and will continue to write my dissertation over the next year, with an anticipated completion date of Spring 2024.

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 in the profession. Further, this work 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

- **Pride, T.** et al. (submitted). The education experiences of Indigenous occupational therapists in Canadian occupational therapy programs. Submitted as a paper presentation for consideration to the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 10-13, 2023.
- **Pride, T.** et al. (submitted). Indigenization, reconciliation, decolonization? An exploration and critique of the occupational therapy profession in addressing the needs of Indigenous Peoples and communities. Submitted as an extended discussion for consideration to the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 10-13, 2023.
- **Pride, T.** (2022). “Exploring the experiences of Indigenous occupational therapists in Canada”. Presented at the National Gathering of Graduate Students (NGGS), June 13-16, 2022.

Completed Project Deliverables

- Wrote and defended my PhD proposal in April 2022
- Submitted to both Dalhousie University and Mi’kmaq Ethics watch in Spring 2022, with approval in June 2022
- Completed data collection for both phases of my PhD project from June-October 2022

Forthcoming Project Deliverables

- Completion of my written dissertation over the next year (draft anticipated late Summer 2023)

Activities Outside of Your Research

Peer-reviewed publications

- Price, T., & **Pride, T.** (in press). The Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM): Critiquing its applicability with Indigenous Peoples. Accepted to *OJOT: The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* September 2022.
- Beagan, B. L., Sibbald, K. R., **Pride, T.**, Bizzeth, S. R. (2022). Client-centered practice when professional and social power are uncoupled: The experiences of therapists from marginalized groups. *OJOT: The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 10(4). <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/ojot/vol10/iss4/2/>
- Beagan, B. L., Sibbald, K. R., **Pride, T.**, & Bizzeth, S. R. (2022). Professional misfits: “You’re having to perform... all week long.” *OJOT: The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 10(4). <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/ojot/vol10/iss4/3/>
- Beagan, B. L., MacLeod, A., Owen, M., **Pride, T.**, & Sibbald, K. (2022). Working-class origin professionals in Canadian health and social service professions: “A different level of understanding”. *Social Science & Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.115233>
- Beagan, B. L., Bizzeth, S., **Pride, T.**, Sibbald, K. (2022). LGBTQ+ identity concealment and disclosure within the (heteronormative) health professions: “Do I? Do I not? And what are the potential consequences?” Early online. *Social Science & Medicine – Qualitative Research in Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmqr.2022.100114>

- Beagan, B. L, Sibbald, K. R, **Pride, T.** & Bizzeth, S. R. (2022). Experiences of epistemic racism among Canadian occupational therapists. *Brazilian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 30, e3211. Doi: 10.1590/2526-8910.ctoAO24533211
- Beagan, B. L, Sibbald, K. R, Bizzeth, S. R, **Pride, T.** (2022). Systemic racism in Canadian occupational therapy: A qualitative study with therapists. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000841742111066676>

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

- **Pride, T.**, Sibbald, K., Bizzeth, S., & Beagan, B. (2022). Client-centered practice challenges for therapists from marginalized groups. Knowledge Sharing ‘Coffee House’, School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University, May 24, 2022.
- Wendt, D. C., Marsan, S., Charlong, P., O’Connor, R., Swansburg, J., & **Pride, T.** (2022). Indigenous ways of knowing and doing: Québec & Atlantic nodes of the Canadian Research Initiative of Substance Misuse (CRISM). Presented virtually to the First Nations of Québec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission, May 17, 2022.
- Beagan, B., Sibbald, K., **Pride, T.**, & Bizzeth, S. (2022). “Client-centered practice challenges for therapists from marginalized groups”. Presented as a paper presentation to the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Conference (CAOT), May 4-7, 2022.

Guest lectures

Course number, title, & instructor(s)	School & University	Program	Topic	Date
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
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 6511: Research Methods & Literacy	School of Occupational Therapy,	MSc Post-Professional	Decolonizing methodologies and	March 2022

Instructor: Shanon Phelan	Dalhousie University		Indigenous health research	
HLTH 6100: Fundamental, Applied, and Translational Aspects of Health Research Instructor: Lori Weeks	Faculty of Health, Dalhousie University	PhD in Health Program	Panelist – PhD experience, Indigenous health research	March 2022
Cultural Journal Club, Occupational Therapy Student Society/Council	Oxford Brookes University, Brunel University, and London Southbank University (United Kingdom)	N/A	Occupational therapy roles in an Indigenous context	January 2022

Future Plans

My future plans include taking time to write my dissertation over the next year, along with continuing conversations with Indigenous occupational therapists from across the country to begin working towards a self-governed Indigenous CoP to better support Indigenous occupational therapy students and clinicians.

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>