

Rethinking Social Work Education for Indigenous Students

Nicole G. Ives, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, McGill School of Social Work

Oonagh Aitken, M.A. M.Ed.

Coordinator, Indigenous Access McGill

Michael Loft, M.S.W.

Professional Associate, Indigenous Access McGill

Morgan Phillips, B.A.

Research Associate

Introduction

- Development of Indigenous social work education in Canada
- Study terminology
 - Social work education
 - First Nations, Indigenous, and Native
 - Allies
- Background of Indigenous social work at McGill

MELSQ study

- Purpose of study
- Locations
 - Kahnawake/Kanehsatake
 - Nunavik (3 communities)
- Need for study

Methods

- Qualitative approach
- Community collaboration
 - Kahnawake Research Council
- Sample
 - 36 participants in Kahnawake/Kanehsatake
 - 24 participants from Nunavik
- Data source
 - In-depth, one-on-one interviews using semi-structured, open-ended interview schedule
- Analysis strategy
 - Content analysis
 - Team debriefing

Role of McGill in the provision of social work education

- Teaching and delivery
 - Importance of providing culturally relevant education
 - Elder involvement
 - Participants' voices

Participant from Kahnawake/Kanehsatake

- “If it is somebody who is going to be teaching us and training us, it would have to be a Native person. A Native person knows the community, knows what approaches would have to be given to the community, know our manners of practice in dealing with the outside system, such as the court system. It would almost have to be, if there was specific training that the McGill School of Social Work would like to give, it would have to be something that would be community and culturally oriented and it would have to be given by a person who was a Native person.”

Participants from Nunavik

- “What really is advantageous in our programme is to be able to study in Inuktitut and having Inuit teachers....”
- “It was very good to be able pursue our studies, not just in Montreal but also in Salluit, Kuujjuaq Inukjuaq and Kangirsuk...in those communities on a rotating basis, sometimes in Ungava, then going to Hudson Strait...continuing to study in the North.
- “...she (the instructor) always encouraged and supported us to adapt the course contents to Inuit culture and social values...”
- “...the topics and information and knowledge was coming more from the realities of the North”

Role of McGill in the provision of social work education

- Course content
 - Historical trauma
 - Implications of colonialism
 - Context-specific social problems
 - Traditional healing
- Program delivery
 - “Blended” option

Supporting research capacity in Indigenous communities

- Integrating Indigenous researchers
- Insider/Outsider challenges
- Research in partnership
 - Kahnawake/Kanehsatake
 - Nunavik

Implications for working with Indigenous children and families

- Increasing number of Indigenous professionally qualified social workers
- Impact of these workers in their own communities
- Impact on child welfare system

Next Steps

- Dissemination of research findings
- Evaluating the impact of Indigenous Access McGill
- Future social work programs for Indigenous communities
- Partnership with Nunatsiavut and Nunavik