

Occupational Therapy Program Indigenous-focused curriculum thread 2023–2024



(Left to right) Shawn Stacey – Kanien'kehá:ka educator, Marie-Lyne Grenier, Karen Falcicchio, Hiba Zafran, Mohawk Elders Joe McGregor and Calvin Jacobs, Heather Lambert, Jessica Barudin–Indigenous Health Professions Program, and Mohawk Faith keeper Loretta Leborgne (in front).

Members of the Mohawk Trail Longhouse in Kahnawá:ke with OT Faculty ~ 2019

McGill University is located in Tiohtià:ke – the Kanien'kéha name for Montréal.

Indigenous–focus curriculum thread coordinators

Hiba Zafran – University based courses
Caroline Storr – Fieldwork based courses

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Description

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada outlines Calls to Actions for health care professionals and educational programs to engage in efforts to redress the inequities faced by Indigenous communities due to colonization. Two calls necessary in the education of OTs are: 1) the inclusion of Indigenous histories and healing practices within the curriculum, and 2) the development of a critical understanding of cultural safety as a foundational relational and political skill. Required content is integrated across academic courses, through all years of our program, alongside fieldwork options, that foster foundational competencies and/or focus on Indigenous topics. Content includes:

- Theoretical knowledge about anti–oppressive and intersectional approaches
- Colonial history and ongoing systemic racism in healthcare in Quebec and Canada
- Cree, Mohawk and/or Inuit worldviews of knowing, health, healing and resilience
- Trauma–informed care and cultural safety
- Limitations of Western–based models of practice and White supremacy in rehab
- Socially accountable community development
- Fieldwork collaborations within the Eeyou Istchee and Kanien'kehaka communities.

See: [*Occupational Therapy Field Studies in Northern Quebec*](#)

Learning outcomes

Students graduating from the OT program will be able to:

- Acknowledge and actively interrogate their positionalities and influence in professional encounters
- Identify principles of, and demonstrate strategies for, trauma–informed, culturally safer and power–sharing relationships
- Value, respect and facilitate engagement in Indigenous modes of healing (Two–eyed seeing)
- Learn from the lived experiences and resiliencies of Indigenous individuals, families, communities and service providers in Quebec
- Critically locate and analyse the social, political and historical roots of occupational, social and health injustices and inequities, and resulting rights violations, with and for a particular group/community
- Apply complex (ethical/political/narrative) reasoning to:
 - o Engage in partnerships and participate in multi–level changes, and,
 - o Address occupational rights violations through collaboratively designing occupation–based community and capacity–building with Indigenous communities, and other groups that are made vulnerable by systems of oppression

Partnerships and pedagogy

The curricular content and learning activities were developed based on [a consultative process](#) that fostered partnering for what and how to teach Indigenous topics. [The Indigenous-specific topics are developed in partnership with, and led by, Indigenous educators and community facilitators](#) and in consultation with the [Indigenous Health Professions Program](#) and [Office for Indigenous Initiatives](#). The university-based content is intentionally threaded and integrated throughout the whole curriculum to provide a holistic understanding and engagement with Indigenous topics in multiple ways for transformative learning. Attention to Elder protocols, reciprocity and respect is valued and modelled. This threaded curriculum, and fieldwork collaborations, are constantly evolving and expanding with our growing reflections, capacities and partnerships.

Overview of threaded university-based content

Course	Topics	Contact
POTH-250	Intro to systems of oppression and Indigenous healthcare concerns	Marie-lyne.grenier@mcgill.ca
OCC-443	Trauma-informed approaches to mental health	Zachary.boychuck@mcgill.ca
POTH-563	Colonization, inequity and systemic racism in healthcare	Susanne.mak@mcgill.ca
OCC-500	Clinical seminars: Anti-racism and workshop partnership with the Cree Health Board	Caroline.storr@mcgill.ca
OCC-550	Indigenous ways of knowing	Alikithomas@mcgill.ca
OCC-551	Narratives in the assessment process	Melissa.park@mcgill.ca
OCC-548	Relationship-based care and Indigenous approaches to healing	Susanne.mak@mcgill.ca
OCC-618	Indigenous approaches to resilience and trauma-informed care	Keven.lee@mcgill.ca
OCC-620	Non-insured health benefits and work disability	Sara.saunders@mcgill.ca
OCC-622	Occupation-based community development to address occupational rights violations	Laurence.roy@mcgill.ca
POTH-624	Research projects with Indigenous focus – opportunities vary by year	Barbara.mazer@mcgill.ca

Fieldwork courses

For those interested in fieldwork experiences in Indigenous territories, please review the “*International and global health*” section of the Clinical Policies document or contact Caroline Storr to inquire about the application process. Further details are offered during clinical seminars.

Evaluation of learning

Evaluation of learning occurs within each course and can include in-class reflective essays, formative interviewing at the simulation centre, argument building in online dialogues, story/scenario-based assessments, grant writing projects, or oral exams. Evaluations of fieldwork on Indigenous territory follow the same guidelines as utilized by our other fieldwork teaching partners.

Relevant Policies

- 1996 [Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#)
- 2007 [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
[Jordan's Principle](#)
- 2014 [WHO Traditional Medicine strategy: 2014–2023](#)
- 2015 [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#)
- 2016 [WFOT Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists](#) (p.10)
- 2017 [McGill University's Taskforce on Indigenous Studies and Education](#)
- 2018 CAOT Position Statement: [Occupational therapy and Indigenous peoples](#)
- 2019 [Report: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#)
- 2020 CAOT Statement: [No silence in the face of inequality and injustice](#)
[Joyce's Principle](#)
- 2021 [Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada](#) (Section C)
- 2023 [Non-Insured Health Benefits for First Nations and Inuit](#)

Resources for an Anti-Oppressive Occupational Therapy

Students can join the [Occupational Therapy Indigenous Health Network](#)

For core documents, position statements, policies, scientific and news articles on Indigenous health, explore the “curriculum” section of the [Indigenous Health Professions Program](#)

Occupational Therapy Now – Open access special issue: [Time for action: Occupational therapy responses to the TRC](#). July 2019

Occupied Podcast – [Ep 063: Unpacking colonized thinking in OT](#)

[Overview of core Indigenous topics](#) – University of British Columbia

[Indigenous Studies Portal Research Tool](#) – University of Saskatchewan

[Introduction to Indigenous Health](#) [Indigenous Health Professions Program webinar]

[National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health](#)

Additional theories, empirical articles and viewings are assigned as required preparation across the thread.