



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF REHABILITATION MEDICINE

THE INDIGENOUS FOCUS: Co-creating curriculum to cultivate culturally safe practice with entry level occupational therapists

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Department of
Occupational
Therapy

TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada published the Calls to Action as part of redressing historical abuse and moving with respect and intention towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada (TRC, 2015).

As a faculty, we embarked on a path to address racism and colonialism in our curriculum through consultation with students, Indigenous knowledge keepers and stakeholders.



INTERNAL CURRICULUM EVALUATION

Through 2016-2017 our department undertook a comprehensive curriculum evaluation to assess how human diversity & culture were being taught and addressed in our entry-level MScOT program.

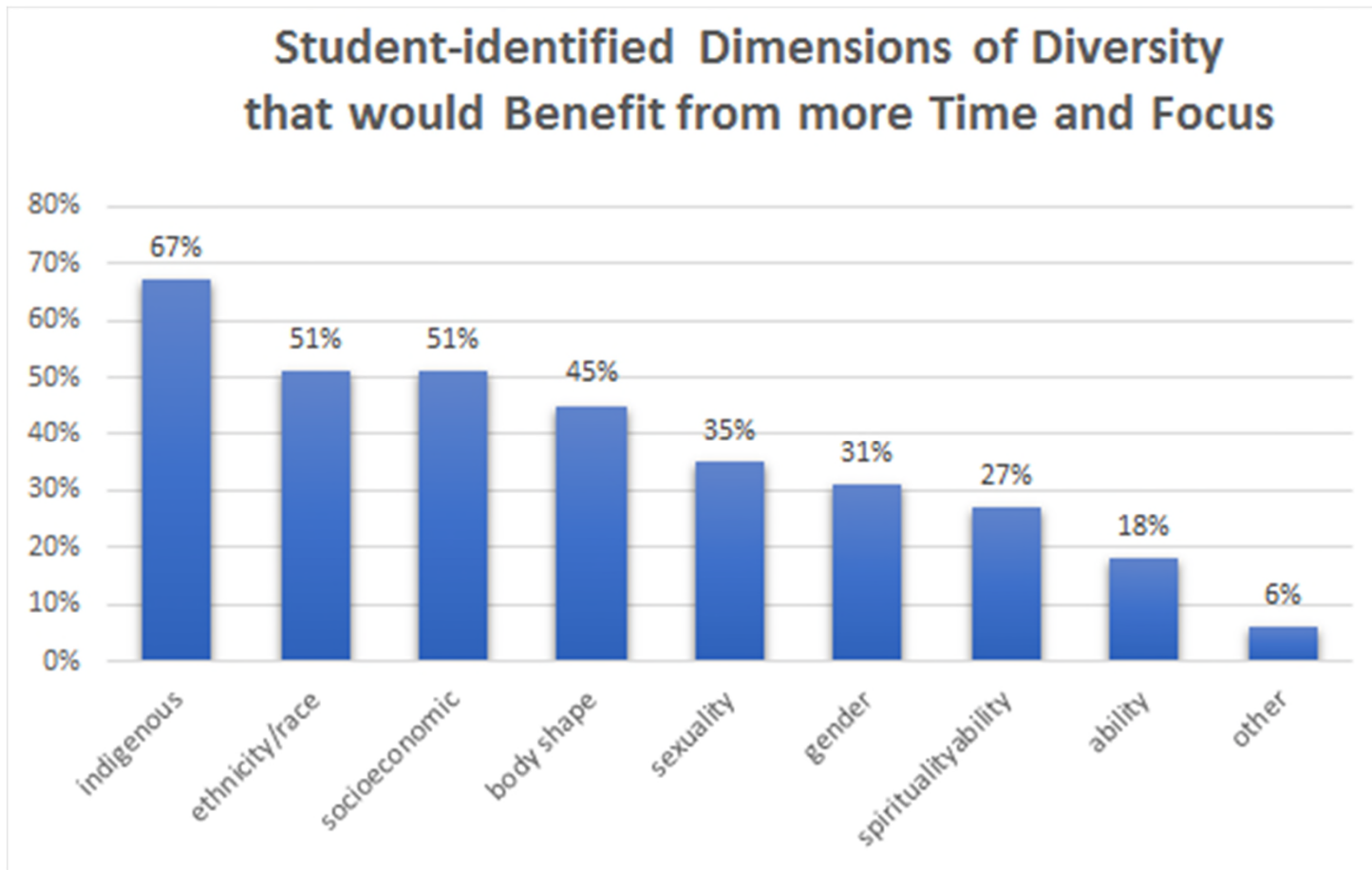
Our aim was to enhance curriculum content by:

- Further supporting students' awareness of and response to diversity
- Continuing to build a learning environment that fosters cultural safety, humility and reflexivity
- Deliberately incorporating a greater breadth of cultural 'lived experience' and Indigenous 'ways of knowing' into our curriculum

CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

- Curriculum Subcommittee
- Curriculum retreat and work sessions
- Student, Staff & Graduated Surveys
- Consultation with Indigenous knowledge keepers, stakeholders and advisors
- Provost's Office

SELECTED SURVEY RESPONSES



SELECTED SURVEY RESPONSES

"I don't even know what [the TRC] is"
-MScOT student.

*"It would be good to also have more
positive examples of Indigenous culture
and how it can be used in OT."*
-MScOT Student

*"Re: call to action #24
- Implement a mandatory 1 credit [course]
on Aboriginal health issues, legacy of
residential schools, & anti-racism for OT
students"*
-MScOT student

*"We should incorporate diversity
and culture in an intentional
manner throughout our curriculum
and be provided with instructional
resources and support to do so"*
-MScOT Instructor

*"'cultural competence' is an outdated and
dangerous approach....let us acknowledge that
we do not know and will never be 'competent' in
someone else's culture ... aiming for cultural
safety and humility"*
-MScOT Instructor

INDIGENOUS FOCUS: DEVELOPMENT

Setting Priorities

Provide increased opportunities for students to:

- critically examine the worldview reflected in our theories of practice
- focus parts of their program on Indigenous peoples and ways of knowing



Pilot Program Launch

- September 2017
- Advertisement to all prospective MScOT students
- Expression of Interest & Orientation Session
- First Cohort: 12 Indigenous and non Indigenous Students
- Co-Facilitators in Calgary and Edmonton



INDIGENOUS FOCUS: GOALS

- Foster culturally reflexive practice in entry level occupational therapists
- Explore and integrate Indigenous ways of knowing with occupational therapy
- Equip entry level therapists to act as allies with Indigenous Peoples in healthcare, educational, justice and other systems

INDIGENOUS FOCUS: LEARNING PATHWAYS

| Flexible, Co-Created Learning | Evidence of Learning |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly seminars• Volunteer opportunities with Indigenous events and organizations• Individual study project of relevance to Indigenous peoples• Capping project of research relevant to Indigenous peoples• Adapted course assignments focused on Indigenous peoples• Opportunities for Indigenous focused fieldwork placement(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A reflective journal• A portfolio with samples of work (from learning opportunities) presented to Indigenous curriculum advisors.• Completion of the University of Alberta Massive Online Course “Indigenous Canada”• Completion of a one credit module -”Indigenous ways of knowing and occupational therapy” |

INDIGENOUS FOCUS: FIELDWORK

Examples of established partnerships:

Placements (with occupational therapists employed within the Indigenous agency/program):

- Meadow Lake Tribal Council – First Nations Education – Flying Dust Reserve (Meadow Lake SK)
- Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority – Beaufort Delta Region (Inuvik NWT)

Placements (with occupational therapists contracted by the Indigenous agency/program):

- Maskwacis First Nation Health Services (near Wetaskawin AB)
 - In conjunction with First Nations & Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB)
 - With support from Alberta Health Services - Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital

INDIGENOUS FOCUS: FIELDWORK

Examples of established partnerships:

'Role-emerging' placements (with agencies that do not currently employ an OT but value/need occupation-centred programming/services):

- NiGiNan Housing Ventures - Ambrose Place (Edmonton AB)
- Boyle Street Community Services
 - In partnership with Group Living Program 'Stepping Stones' (Edmonton AB)

Examples of partnerships being explored and forged:

- Amiskwaciy Cultural Society - Aboriginal Head Start (Edmonton AB)
- Alberta Health Services - Indigenous Health Program
 - Elbow River Healing Lodge (Calgary AB)
 - Indigenous Wellness Program (Edmonton AB)

A word cloud was also developed to represent the dominant responses



STUDENT SURVEY: FINDINGS

- Students stated the Focus increased their knowledge of historical events and ongoing impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples' health.
- They felt it was relevant to their future clinical practice with Indigenous clients and communities.
- Students reported value in scheduled protected time to reflect on and discuss their learnings with others.
- They also reported value in the Indigenous Focus project of collating and sharing resources regarding Indigenous People's health to utilize during fieldwork and later as clinicians.
- Several students recommended balancing more project and experiential based learning opportunities with reflective, discussion-based seminars.

All would recommend the Indigenous Focus to others and thought it should continue as part of the occupational therapy program.

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT & CONCLUSIONS

- The Indigenous Focus has been an important step in implementing the TRC Calls to Action throughout entry level occupational therapy curriculum
- The model is flexible to meet both the individual learning needs of students in their personal and professional reconciliation.
- Through providing additional classroom, experiential and clinical opportunities throughout an entry level occupational therapy education, the Indigenous Focus is a potential route to cultivating culturally safe occupational therapists
- Student and stakeholder surveys and engagement has been critical in the evolvement of the Indigenous Focus curriculum to best meet the needs of student and Indigenous community stakeholders

INDIGENOUS FOCUS: NEXT STEPS

- The Focus will continue relationship building with local Indigenous organizations to provide mutually beneficial community- based learning opportunities.
- Continue collection of feedback at key intervals in program of key stakeholders to ensure ongoing sustainability and relevance to student and community needs.
- Student recommendations inform further program development, which include providing more experiential learning opportunities to balance the reflective, discussion-based classroom content.
- Creation and delivery of a 1 credit interdisciplinary (PT, OT, SLP) course within the Faculty of Rehab Med to integrate interdisciplinary competencies into an Indigenous health context in which all MScOT students will participate.
- Continue relationship building with Indigenous communities and agencies to provide Indigenous Focused fieldwork opportunities.

OT is about not starting with assumptions. OT serves, respects and celebrates the breadth of human experience. We are all [faculty, staff and students] engaged in this ... together and as a greater community.



REFERENCES & THANK YOU

Brown et al. (2019). *Numbers, measures, and metrics: Part of our ongoing decolonization journey*, Occupational Therapy Now. Open Access Special Issue:

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