



Transforming the Field  
Education Landscape

# Social Work Field Education during COVID-19: Learnings for Social Development Agenda

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July 13, 2021

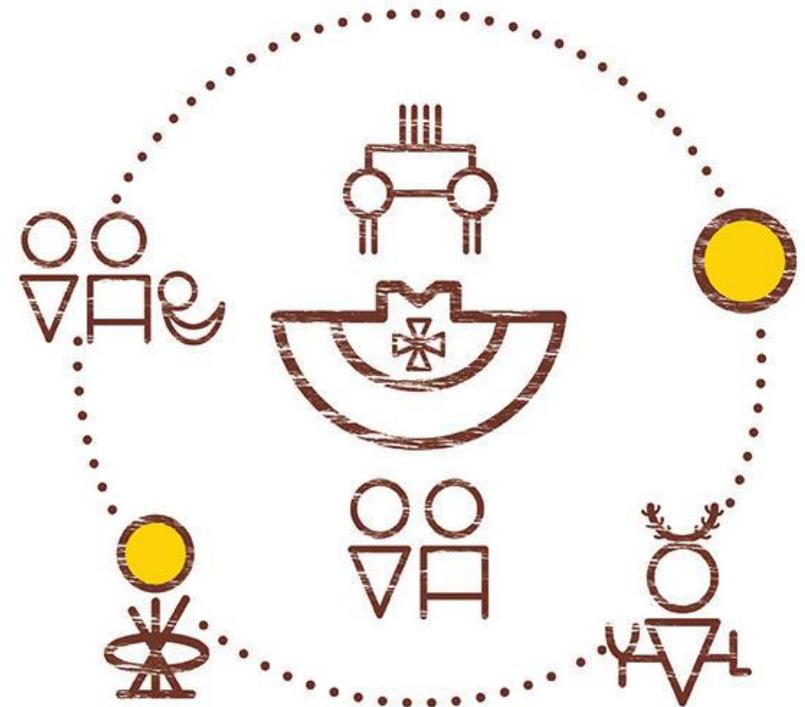
**22<sup>nd</sup> ICSD Biennial Conference**

# OUTLINE

- Territorial acknowledgement
- TFEL partnership project and funding acknowledgement
- Background and context
- TFEL research initiatives to understand the impact of COVID-19 on social work field education
- Study details
- Findings
- Implications and recommendations
- Questions and answers

# TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Calgary respectfully acknowledges the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), as well as the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.



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University of Calgary Office of Indigenous Engagement



## Transforming the Field Education Landscape

Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL) is a partnership project that aims to better prepare the next generation of social workers in Canada by creating training and mentoring opportunities for students, developing and mobilizing innovative and promising field education practices, and improving the integration of research and practice in field education.

The TFEL project is funded in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Partnership Grant: Talent (2019-2024)

CRSH  SSHRC

# BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Social development and social work (SW)
  - Shared commitments
- SW field education
  - Essential component of SW education
  - Opportunity to apply social development theory in professional settings and contexts
  - Prepares students for social developmentally oriented SW practice
- Field education during COVID-19
  - Disruptions and cancellations

# TFEL RESEARCH INITIATIVES

## Surveys

- Impact of COVID-19 on SW Field Education: Perspective of Field Instructors
- Impact of COVID-19 on SW Field Education: Perspective of Students
- State of SW Field Education
- Challenges in Field Education

## Interviews

- Promising and Wise Practices in SW Field Education

## Dialogue circles

- Student Perspectives on Canadian SW Field Education

# STUDY DETAILS - SURVEYS

## Impact of COVID-19 on SW Field Education: Perspective of Field Instructors

- Field instructors – from accredited programs – supervised BSW and MSW students during COVID-19 (n=73)

## Impact of COVID-19 on SW Field Education: Perspective of Students

- BSW and MSW students – enrolled in accredited program – completed practica during COVID-19 (n=367)

## State of SW Field Education

- Accredited field education programs (n=39)

## Challenges in Field Education

- BSW and MSW students – field education coordinators/directors, and field instructors – from accredited program (n=155)

# STUDY DETAILS

## Interviews

- Promising and Wise Practices in SW Field Education
- Field instructors – from accredited programs – supervised BSW and MSW students from accredited programs (n=89)

## Dialogue circles

- Student Perspectives on Canadian SW Field Education
- Eight virtual dialogue circles – BSW and MSW students – enrolled in accredited program (n=28)



# FINDINGS

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Reduction in practicum hours resulting in fewer learning opportunities

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Increase in self-directed, faculty-led, or research-based practica due to the hesitation of community partnerships to take social work placement students

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Challenges associated with the use of technology in field education.

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Shift to field education in virtual environments corresponded with shifts in learning and supervision

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Negative impacts – mental health, workload, hands-on direct practice, isolation,

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Unanticipated benefits – innovative and novel ways of engaging in field education

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More paid and workplace practicums

# IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Better collaboration to develop innovative and sustainable models of field education in case of future disasters and emergencies

More innovation to provide students with quality online field education opportunities in the changing learning environment

Increased capacity for meaningful placement to develop and enhance direct practice skills in remote setting

Simulation-based experiential learning and virtual practice opportunities

Focus on alleviating challenges associated with technology for students in rural contexts

Workload and stress management support for field instructors to maintain/enhance the quality of field instruction

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