



FACT SHEET

WISE PRACTICES IN FIELD EDUCATION

Synopsis

The Prairie Report on Promising and Wise practices in Field Education study identifies innovative, promising, and wise practices throughout the Prairie Regions of Canada which includes Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with field coordinators, field educators, field instructors and supervisors, and representatives of field agency partners. This report summarizes the key interview findings on wise practices in social work field education in the Prairie region.

INTRODUCTION

Field education is an integral aspect of social work education that provides students with direct practice experience and enhances their ability to integrate social work theory, research, and knowledge into direct practice. In Canada, social work field education is in a state of crisis. Social work programs have been contending with resource scarcity and financial cutbacks that when paired with increasing student enrolment are negatively impacting both social service agencies and educational institutions. Field education provides students with valuable work experience, an avenue for skill-building, and the opportunity to explore multiple areas within the social work profession and as such is an integral part of social work education. Wise practices in social work field education were defined as Indigenous-centered practices that are flexible, locally and culturally relevant, that respect all forms of understanding including lived experience, traditional knowledge, and the use of story. Wise practices are relational in nature and encourage mutual respect, inclusivity, and collectivity.

OBJECTIVE

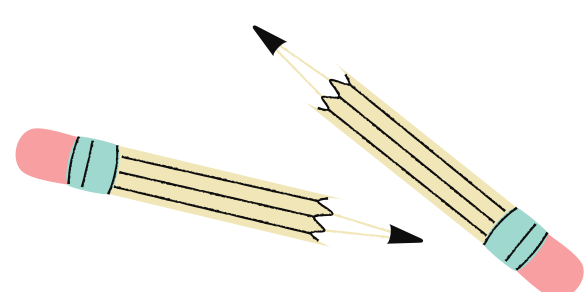
To identify wise practices in social work field education within Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, that can potentially guide the development of sustainable models of field education in the future.

METHODOLOGY

- 35 semi-structured interviews were held and recorded on Zoom or Microsoft Teams between July and December 2020.
- Study information and recruitment notices were published in the TFEL monthly newsletter, posted on the TFEL website, advertised on social media (Twitter/Facebook), and also distributed through emails sent out to members of the TFEL network comprised of co-investigators, partners, and collaborators to further promote the participant recruitment.

ANALYSIS

Twelve wise practice were identified to develop sustainable models of social work field education in the future (figure on the right).



KEY QUOTES

“ We've also looked at being really creative, flexible and open minded about definitions of certain terms, such as like “clinical practice,” when we know [...] that's a very westernized notion, and that it might not be an appropriate one to apply in all contexts. And so, I think our main innovation around that has been trying to work with students who find our traditional way of doing things problematic. I think we would like to be able to do more in this way and to expand these notions and maybe sort of generalize this approach more. ”

“ And we also did kind of perspective taking activities with them in an effort to develop that thinking. ”

“ And when you're talking about your Indigenous clients or Indigenous service users, what is it? As a practicum student, [what] do you want to achieve with this community? So how are you going to do that? How are you working yourself to [...] meet that objective? So, a wise practice? [It] is to develop that learning agreement in a really deep way, in a profound way and make it very, very relevant to your Indigenous community, your Indigenous client. ”

“ ...A training where you are working with a local Indigenous Elder or I know on the site here they have an Indigenous Wellness Clinic and manager and cultural helpers. But really, intentionally meeting with them and learning from them... ”

“ The wise practices and looking at Indigenous ways and other ways of knowing, I think that there's areas that were not currently practicing, areas where we don't currently have placements and those are the areas that I see opportunities for us to look at what a student wants to learn and what their gifts are and their skills are, and how can we match this with what communities need. ”

CONCLUSION

The report presents the findings of 35 interviews conducted in the Prairie region to identify wise practices in social work field education in response to an urgent need to ensure the sustainability of quality field education practice. Several wise practices were identified in this study. Wise practices include the following: collective practice, decolonization as a wise practice, engaging with Elders, incorporating Indigenous practices, new ways of doing field learning agreements, parallel process, reciprocal learning, redefining “clinical” social work practice, Indigenous practices, historical awareness and understanding, perspective taking, and bringing philosophy into supervision.