



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Social Work

of

ALYSHA BROWN

BSW (University of Victoria, 2008)

“The Connection Between Culture and Wellness for Indigenous Social Workers: How Culturally-Grounded Practice Can Impact our Work with Children, Families and Communities”

School of Social Work

Friday, December 13, 2019

10:00 A.M.

First Peoples House

Room 160

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Robina Thomas, School of Social Work, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Jeannine Carriere, School of Social Work, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Sarah Wright Cardinal, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Feng Xu, Department of Political Science, UVic

Abstract

Reflecting on my own experience as an Indigenous social worker, and a thorough literature review of mostly other Indigenous researchers, I addressed the following questions: What can wellness look like for Indigenous social workers? Does connection to culture contribute to wellness for Indigenous social workers practicing from an Indigenous way of being? And does this connection to culture impact my approach to practice and how? By exploring the literature, current policy and legislation, and social work practice in this province, I will discuss how I navigate my work and how I ensure that my practice continues to be grounded in traditional ways of being. In addition, recent shifts in policy, legislation and practice, urge us to practice in a way that honours traditional systems of decision-making, planning and caring for children within child welfare in BC. Given this, this research is timely. I will explore cultural and permanency planning for children and youth in care and how my own experience plays a vital role in how I approach this area of practice. I will discuss the integral role of culture in my life and how it keeps me grounded to continue walking alongside the Indigenous community in a good way. Ultimately, though, the foundation of this research is centered around wellness. Wellness for Indigenous social workers directly impacts the work we do, how we approach children and families, and our ability to continue doing the work in a good way.