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

of

SARAH PERRETT

BSW (University of Calgary, 2014)

“Leadership Supports for Indigenous Staff with Lived Experience”

School of Social Work

Tuesday, March 31, 2020
10:00 A.M.
Conducted Remotely

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Jeannine Carriere, School of Social Work, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Catherine Richardson, School of Social Work, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Aline Bogossian, École de travail social, Université de Montréal

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Karen Courtney, School of Health Information Science, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Social work practice involves acknowledging the interconnection between the personal and professional. Organizations hiring Indigenous staff are responsible to recognize the lived experience that comes with being an Indigenous person. Critical reflections of who benefits in an employment relationship are important to address issues of tokenization and exploitation. The language of ‘lived experience’ is most commonly used in the social work field to imply that a professional has experienced trauma, hardship, and systemic violence similar to individuals receiving or accessing services. In the context of a helping role, ‘lived experience’ is better represented by ‘healing experience’ because it recognizes the responsibilities of leadership and staff in ensuring supports are healing-focused. Anti-oppressive, decolonizing, and Indigenist methods were used to speak with Indigenous staff who self-identified lived experience similar to the people who access services to learn how supervisors and organizational leadership can provide helpful support.

The findings contributed to a supervision model based in the buffalo teaching of sharing, reciprocity, and valuing each aspect of a person as the starting place for relationship and good work. Building on this knowledge, changing the language from lived experience to healing experience offers a shift in the philosophical approach to recruitment and supervision. Each conversation naturally aligned with a quadrant of the Medicine Wheel where tangible insights into practice are shared into the spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental aspects of the self in an employment context. This study accounts for the non-Indigenous researcher’s personal journey to this topic, the importance of developing and contributing to the success of Indigenous social workers, and the ways organizations are responsible to their workforce beyond minimum legislated requirements.