

Article

Student voices within Indigenous social work practicum recommendations and the Seven Grandfather Teachings

Dawn Goss,¹ Joey-Lynn Wabie,¹ Michelle Montreuil,¹ Shaelynn Noland,¹ Andrea Scott,¹ and Arijana Haramincic¹

Abstract

This article examines the integration of Indigenous perspectives, particularly the Seven Grandfather Teachings, in Indigenous social work education and field practicum, focusing on student experiences. Colonization has had significant impacts on Indigenous communities, leading to intergenerational trauma, which calls for the need for culturally appropriate social services. Historically, mainstream social work has been complicit in the oppression and genocide of Indigenous peoples, leading to negative perceptions among Indigenous communities. Western theoretical hegemony in education has marginalized Indigenous perspectives, emphasizing the need for inclusivity. Indigenous social work, rooted in acknowledging colonialism and oppression, promotes self-determination and cultural revitalization, highlighting the importance of Indigenization in the profession. Field education is emphasized as crucial for students, encouraging self-reflection and cultural sensitivity. The Seven Grandfather Teachings—love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, wisdom, and truth—are introduced as guiding principles in ethical behaviour and relationships. The integration of these teachings into coursework and practicum experiences is highlighted, aiming to prepare students for culturally responsive social work practice. Student narratives are utilized to illustrate personal experiences and the application of the teachings in real-world settings. Overall, the article underscores the importance of cultural competency, self-reflection, and community engagement in addressing the unique needs of Indigenous peoples in social work practice.

Keywords

Indigenous social work, placement, field education, seven grandfather teachings, colonization.

Résumé

Cet article examine l'intégration des perspectives autochtones, en particulier les sept enseignements de nos ancêtres, dans la formation en travail social autochtone et dans les stages sur le terrain, en se concentrant sur les expériences des étudiants. La colonisation a eu des impacts significatifs sur les communautés autochtones, conduisant à un traumatisme

intergénérationnel, qui nécessite la mise en place de services sociaux culturellement adaptés. Historiquement, le travail social traditionnel a été complice de l'oppression et du génocide des peuples autochtones, conduisant à des perceptions négatives au sein des communautés autochtones. L'hégémonie théorique occidentale en matière d'éducation a marginalisé les perspectives autochtones, soulignant la nécessité d'une inclusivité. Le travail social autochtone, enraciné dans la reconnaissance du colonialisme et de l'oppression, promeut l'autodétermination et la revitalisation culturelle, soulignant l'importance de l'indigénisation dans la profession. L'éducation sur le terrain est soulignée comme étant cruciale pour les étudiants, encourageant l'introspection et la sensibilité culturelle. Les sept enseignements de nos ancêtres – l'amour, le respect, le courage, l'honnêteté, l'humilité, la sagesse et la vérité – sont présentés comme principes directeurs du comportement et des relations éthiques. L'intégration de ces enseignements dans les cours et les expériences de stage est soulignée, dans le but de préparer les étudiants à une pratique du travail social culturellement adaptée. Les récits des étudiants sont utilisés pour illustrer leurs expériences personnelles et l'application des enseignements dans des contextes du monde réel. Dans l'ensemble, l'article souligne l'importance de la compétence culturelle, de l'autoréflexion et de l'engagement communautaire pour répondre aux besoins uniques des peuples autochtones dans la pratique du travail social.

Mots-clés

Travail social autochtone, placement, éducation sur le terrain, sept enseignements acquis, colonisation.

¹School of Indigenous Social Work, Laurentian University, Canada

Corresponding author:

Dawn Goss, Indigenous Social Work, Laurentian University, 935 Ramsey Lake Rd, Sudbury, ON P3E 2C6 Canada. Email: dawn_goss1978@gmail.com

Situating our article

It is imperative first to situate the main authors of this article which is a common first step in engaging with one another in many Indigenous communities. This situation of self allows the reader to know more about the authors and their positioning within the diverse contexts we find ourselves in. These introductions below allow us to know more about the first author, Dawn Goss and the second author, Joey-Lynn Wabie.

My name is Dawn Goss, and I am a proud Métis woman, embracing multiple roles as a mother to five beautiful children, a wife, a daughter, a sister, and an aunt. I reside on Lake Simcoe-Nottawasaga Treaty No. 18 land. I am a recent graduate of the Honours Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work program at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario. My journey has led me to discover and embrace my Métis heritage, cultural traditions, and teachings, which I now actively reclaim by engaging more with my local Métis community. Though my family circle is small, we share a strong and nurturing bond. My involvement in the community extends

to supporting youth organizations and fellow parents navigating the challenges of the neonatal intensive care (NICU) ‘roller coaster’ ride of emotions. The ride I know all too well. Advocacy is close to my heart, especially when it involves championing the rights and well-being of children and individuals with disabilities. I firmly believe everyone is special and unique and that the Creator has made each individual with intention and purpose. My heart and passion drive my roles as a mother, student, and professional. Living life has me on a continuous learning journey, remaining open to life's lessons through daily reflection and teachings from various sources within my community.

kwe kwe, ziigwankwe n’diizhnakaaz, atik dodem, mahingan sagahigan n’doonjibaa, Algonquin anicinabe ikwe. My name loosely translates to Spring Woman. I am from the caribou clan, and my First Nation is Wolf Lake. I am an Algonquin woman. I have three amazing children, each coming into the family with their own gifts and personalities. I come from a large family with many siblings, cousins, nieces, and nephews. I have been an auntie since age three and have been a grauntie (grandma auntie) many times over. I am an Associate Professor at Laurentian University in the School of Indigenous Relations, where I teach primarily in the undergraduate Indigenous social work program. My research interests include traditional Algonquin spiritual health, authentic community-driven research, and Indigenous youth identity. My real passions are with my family and community: striving to be a role model for my children and learning more about the meaning behind caring for your own lodge first. I also love being an auntie and grauntie to many amazing nieces and nephews.

We can begin our article now that you know a bit more about the two main authors, which is commonly missing from many writings. We want you to actively engage and relate to us as writers and as a reader. Biindigen, welcome, we will now provide an introduction and discuss the impacts of colonization, Indigenous social work as a profession, and the importance of field education through the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Each subsequent author will introduce themselves before writing about their field placement experience. We will then conclude with a discussion of the impacts of the Seven Grandfather Teachings in practicum and guiding principles on how social work placement educators can implement Indigenous-led placements within their respective post-secondary field programs.

Introduction

Indigenous social work is a field that recognizes the historical, cultural, and social contexts of Indigenous communities. We would like to explore the profound impact of well-resourced Indigenous social work placements on students highlighting the importance of integrating the Seven Grandfather Teachings to enhance cultural understanding. The review begins with a discussion of the history of Indigenous social work and its potential impacts on Indigenous communities. There is a need to explore how to implement a culturally appropriate approach to helping Indigenous peoples within mainstream systems, which is vital in today's society. The history in Canada, particularly the enduring impacts of colonization, has created many barriers as Indigenous peoples actively work to reclaim their language, traditions, and oral teachings. The

concept of Indigenization within the social work profession will be examined, emphasizing its transformative impact within the School of Indigenous Relations. The Seven Grandfather Teachings will highlight the role they have in supporting Indigenous social work students during their field practicum and social work field placement educators in their practice.

Under the guidance and mentorship of a respected professor, Joey-Lynn Wabie from Laurentian University, together we will explore four social work students' personal narratives and transformative journeys, examining how the Seven Grandfather Teachings have influenced and guided their field placements. Incorporating Indigenous field placement experiences and the principles inherent in the Seven Grandfather Teachings aims to instil a sense of mindful reflection and conscientiousness in personal and professional endeavours. By honouring and embodying these teachings, individuals can intentionally navigate their actions, fostering harmonious relationships and contributing meaningfully to their communities and beyond through their future social work practices.

As we begin to explore the diverse perspectives and experiences of Indigenous social work students, it is crucial to acknowledge the historical context that continues to shape the lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada. The impact of colonization lingers, manifesting in intergenerational trauma, cultural erosion, and the marginalization of Indigenous knowledge within educational institutions and social work practice (Lavallee & Poole, 2010). These historical injustices have, unfortunately, contributed to negative perceptions and skepticism toward social work in many Indigenous communities. In response to this reality, integrating Indigenous knowledge and principles becomes necessary and paramount to forging a more inclusive and respectful path forward (Baskin & Sinclair, 2015). Embracing Indigenous perspectives allows social work students to actively contribute to healing and revitalization within Indigenous communities by empowering individuals. In this regard, the Seven Grandfather Teachings offer a profound framework that guides social work students within the Indigenous Social Work program along their educational journey and field placements, facilitating authentic connections and transformative experiences.

Impacts of colonization

Canada's colonial history still affects Indigenous peoples in all facets of their lives, even today. Throughout history, colonial powers imposed dominance, leading to land dispossession, cultural suppression, and forced assimilation. The colonial constructs include but are not limited to: eras of the Indian Act (Richmond & Cook, 2016), child welfare (Blackstock et al., 2004), residential schools (Truth and Reconciliation Report, 2015), and the present crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (Olsen Harper, 2006). The consequences of colonization include intergenerational trauma, loss of language and culture, and the breakdown of traditional social structures. The violent disruption of Indigenous ways of life has resulted in various detrimental effects that the Indigenous population in Canada continues to experience today. Lavallee and Poole (2010) share that colonization and its past and present activities have directly influenced Indigenous people attempting to strip them of their cultural identity and land. The Indian Act,

residential schools, and the Sixties Scoop are among some significant injustices put into place to deal with the 'Indian problem,' which many Indian agents felt could be solved through more state intervention (Satzewich, 1997). Many Indigenous peoples today are actively working to reclaim and revitalize their cultural knowledge and heritage but face substantial social and economic struggles due to the impacts of colonization (Baskin & Sinclair, 2015). Indigenous social work students should be conscious of these ongoing efforts and the need to support Indigenous communities in their healing and reclamation processes. By acknowledging the impacts of colonization and working alongside Indigenous peoples and communities, students in an Indigenous social work program can contribute to preserving and revitalizing cultural practices, language, and traditional knowledge.

Indigenous social work

Historically, mainstream social work has contributed to and been complicit in the oppression and genocide of Indigenous peoples (Ryan & Ivelja, 2022). Additionally, mainstream social work is often viewed negatively by many Indigenous people, frequently associated with the removal of children, the breakdown of families, and the intentional oppression of Indigenous communities (Sinclair, 2020). Western theoretical hegemony is evident in educational institutions, perpetuating harmful assumptions that Western thought should be the exclusive educational standard, automatically relevant and valid for all (Sinclair, 2020). This results in the marginalization and neglect of Indigenous perspectives, cultural knowledge, languages, and colonial history, leaving Indigenous individuals as virtual non-entities within the system. Addressing this issue is crucial to creating a more inclusive and respectful educational environment that acknowledges and embraces the diversity of knowledge and experiences.

Indigenous social work is a specialized field that acknowledges and incorporates Indigenous knowledge, values, and cultural practices into social work practice. Key developers of programs such as the Honours Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work program at Laurentian University worked closely with the local Indigenous community, building relationships on trust and respect (Moeke-Pickering & Cote-Meek, 2015) throughout its development. It is rooted in recognizing historical and ongoing colonialism, oppression, and the unique challenges Indigenous individuals, families, and communities face. Indigenous social work addresses these challenges and promotes self-determination, cultural revitalization, and holistic well-being (Baskin & Sinclair, 2015). The history of Indigenous social work is deeply intertwined with the historical experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada. The impacts of colonization, forced assimilation, and systemic oppression have had profound and lasting effects on Indigenous peoples. Students in the field of Indigenous social work need to be aware of the colonial history of Canada and its ongoing impacts today. By understanding the historical context, students can develop a critical lens through which to analyze contemporary issues Indigenous communities face. Moreover, this awareness allows students to approach their field practicum with cultural sensitivity, empathy, and an understanding of the resilience and strengths of Indigenous peoples.

Indigenization within the social work profession represents a critical shift in acknowledging the importance of Indigenous perspectives, knowledge systems, and practices. This transformative process challenges the dominant social work paradigm and seeks to create a more inclusive and culturally responsive approach to helping Indigenous peoples. Indigenization emphasizes the importance of cultural safety, community collaboration, and revitalizing Indigenous ways of knowing and being. By incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices, social work professionals can better address Indigenous communities' unique needs and aspirations, fostering self-determination, empowerment, and holistic well-being.

Gaining experience in the field

Social work practicum, also called field placement, is essential to Indigenous social work programs. The Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) Standards for Accreditation (2014) require Honours Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work students to complete a minimum of 700 hours of field placement (CASWE, 2014; Drolet, 2020). Practicums also provide opportunities for students to engage in critical self-reflection, exploring their biases, assumptions, and privileges. This self-awareness is crucial for effective and ethical social work practice, especially in Indigenous contexts where power dynamics and cultural differences need navigating with sensitivity and respect. Practicum allows students to use the theory, ethical practices, and specialized training they have learned in a practical setting (Clark et al., 2010). As history shapes the world we inhabit, it is essential to adapt professional practicums to reflect the evolving dynamics of society. Drolet (2020) highlights the necessity for social work education programs to reimagine the conceptualization, structure, and delivery of field education to prepare new professionals adequately. Clark et al. (2010) conducted research based on data from interviews and focus group discussions, identifying key factors related to Indigenous field education, best practices, and the experiences of non-Indigenous students in Indigenous field settings. The themes were categorized into six headings: 1) spirituality and ceremony within the social work and human services program, 2) involvement of Elders in all aspects of students' education, 3) grief and loss honouring practices, 4) anti-oppressive education practices, 5) relational supports as strengths in education, and 6) the importance of student wellness plans and self-care in field placements (Clark et al., 2010). However, incorporating an Indigenous specialization within social work programs may present challenges in sourcing suitable practicum opportunities rooted in Indigenous cultural frameworks. Canada's field education has struggled for many reasons and is in crisis (Drolet, 2020). Indigenous social workers are trained to situate themselves, reflect, and engage in a culturally appropriate way. We draw from our professional 'helping bundles' to engage with Indigenous clients. We can use The Seven Grandfather Teachings framework to support and guide our placement and future practice.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings

The Seven Grandfather Teachings, deeply rooted in Indigenous spirituality and worldview, embody wisdom invaluable for social work. Indigenous perspectives on wellness extend beyond

the conventional notions of emotional, physical, mental, and social health. They deeply emphasize the interconnectedness and balance between the mind, body, and spirit and the harmonious relationship between the individual, community, and the land (Kading et al., 2019). There are many versions of stories about how the Seven Grandfather Teachings came to the Indigenous peoples (Manitowabi et al., n.d). In a story by Eddie Benton-Banai, the Creator chose Seven Grandfathers as protectors of the people. When the Grandfathers witnessed the people struggling, they sent a messenger to find a guide for the Ojibway people, as retold by Manitowabi et al., (n.d). The guide was a baby when he was found. After seven years of being with the messenger, the messenger and guide returned to the Grandfathers. The Grandfathers gifted the guide, who was now a young boy, seven teachings (Manitowabi et al., n.d): Love (zaagi'idiwin), Respect (manaadendamowin), Bravery/Courage (aakode'ewin), Honesty (gwayakwaadiziwin), Wisdom (nibwaakaawin), Humility (dabaadendiziwin), and Truth (debwewin) which are used as guiding principles that foster cultural understanding and develop meaningful relationships (Benton-Banai, 2010; Kading et al., 2019; Manitowabi et al., n.d).

For students enrolled in the Indigenous social work program, these teachings provide a comprehensive framework to navigate their field practicums with integrity, cultural responsiveness, and a steadfast commitment to social equity. By integrating the Seven Grandfather Teachings, students are provided with the knowledge to establish genuine connections with clients and communities, respect cultural protocols, and actively contribute to the empowerment and self-determination of Indigenous peoples. These teachings form the bedrock of Indigenous identity, spirituality, and holistic well-being, holding immense significance within Indigenous cultures as a moral compass and a foundation for intergenerational teachings. The Seven Grandfather Teachings are fundamental in promoting cultural competency, fostering respectful relationships, and addressing Indigenous communities' unique needs and challenges within Indigenous social work. By embracing these teachings, social workers can adopt a culturally aware and strengths-based approach that upholds Indigenous knowledge, values, and self-determination. Through the application of these teachings, social workers can facilitate healing, empowerment, and positive transformation within Indigenous individuals, families, and communities, all while advancing the goals of social equity and reconciliation.

Individual practicum experiences

Practicum experiences are vital in Indigenous social work education, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. These experiences offer students hands-on learning experiences, allowing them to develop essential skills, cultural competency, and an understanding of the complexities and strengths of Indigenous communities. The significance of practicum experiences in Indigenous social work lies in their potential to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Through direct engagement with Indigenous clients and communities, students gain firsthand knowledge and insights into the social, cultural, and historical contexts that impact the lives of Indigenous individuals. This experiential learning fosters a deeper

appreciation for Indigenous worldviews, values, and practices and enhances students' ability to develop culturally responsive interventions. With this context in mind, we shall now explore the firsthand accounts of social work students' experiences and the deep influence of the Seven Grandfather Teachings in shaping their path within the realm of social work.

Michelle Montreuil

Hi, my name is Michelle Montreuil, and I am an Indigenous Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work Program graduate from Laurentian University. I am passionate about social work's micro and macro relational aspects and am now pursuing a Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology through York University. Reflecting back to this time, I will share how the Seven Grandfather Teachings guided me through my Indigenous practicum:

Wisdom

Wisdom is embodied in knowing when to be non-directive and using reflexive techniques so clients can identify what is important to them from their cultural frames of reference. Just as my experiences were part of my transformation into a social worker, it is essential to mirror back what clients tell us so that they can see the meaning in their own lives and through self-autonomy.

Love

I worked with a client who did not receive unconditional parental love and suffered from deep attachment issues that affected her present relationships. With the agency worker providing an environment of unconditional love, she was comfortable uncovering the roots of her attachment issues through reflection and seeing the repeating patterns in her present relationships. She was able to develop self-love through the forgiveness of herself and regain balance.

Respect

In cases where clients have isolated themselves and need connection and acceptance, I found that respect-based practice that is sensitive to people's feelings, wishes, and traditions helps people develop confidence and a better relationship with themselves.

Courage/Bravery

Safe Indigenous social work takes Courage to face our own past experiences. While I was in practicum, when a client shared her lived experience, I began to have trouble breathing. I over-identified with the client because I did not have the bravery to process my history with intimate partner violence. We must possess the strength of character to undergo our own transformations.

Honesty

In my practicum, Honesty with myself helped me ask for guidance when I felt I was beyond my scope of practice.

Humility

Humility is translated into practice through self-disclosure where clients can feel equal. I often share my story of inclusion at a pow-wow where my severely disabled son and I were told, “everyone belongs in the circle.” Where society often pushes people outside of the circle for various reasons such as drug addiction or alcoholism, I was reminded that day that we are all equally deserving of wellness through connection and community.

Truth

Being our authentic selves in practicum is the basis for the therapeutic relationship. Speaking your truth means doing it in a non-maleficent way and does not interfere with another's autonomy.

Shaelynn Noland

Hi, my name is Shaelynn Noland. I am a proud mother, sister, auntie, friend and community member. I am a settler residing on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek and Odawa peoples, Treaties No. 45 and 94, also known as Manitoulin Island. I recently graduated with an Honours Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work degree from Laurentian University and am currently working as a therapist. I am currently expanding my practice to work with children by taking play therapy training.

Being of settler descent, using the Seven Grandfather Teachings to guide me through my practicum was imperative. I feel that following the Grandfathers’ guidance is a decolonizing approach to social work. More importantly, the teachings allowed me to ensure I was following a reflective holistic practice in supporting people while having the honour of being part of their stories. These are my reflections on how the Seven Grandfather Teaching guided me through my practicum.

Wisdom

By integrating Wisdom as a guiding principle throughout my placement, I recognized and embraced both my wisdom and the wisdom of those around me. This enabled me to expand my knowledge and insights by confidently sharing my wisdom while humbly learning from others. As I continue my practice, I commit to sharing my wisdom with others and further enriching my bundle through ongoing education and supervision.

Love

The teaching of Love has been a core value of mine and has guided every move I made throughout my practicum and today. Loving myself ensured I took care of myself and allowed me to continue this work and be successful in my placement. By extension of this and using the Medicine Wheel as a tool of reflection and self-assessment, I can help others make changes in their lives and extend Love by supporting them in overcoming their barriers.

Respect

I followed the teaching of Respect by honouring my community throughout my placement experience and reflecting on the importance of self-care, advocacy, and developing partnerships

with communities and organizations. For instance, Respect is upheld by creating a safe, non-judgmental space for clients to open up and respecting their privacy by ensuring confidentiality. Respect was also demonstrated by attending local community events and communicating with other service providers about our communities' needs and barriers.

Courage

By following the teaching of Courage, I saw my role as a social worker in a new light. The teaching of Courage taught me to analyze oppressive structures and be willing to advocate for change. I used this throughout my practicum as I advocated for support and reflected on a lack of available services within the community. I have applied this teaching beyond the practicum setting and into my practice by advocating for the removal of barriers to services for oppressed individuals facing systematic barriers.

Honesty

Honesty guided me throughout my practicum by helping me acknowledge the limits of confidentiality and my scope of practice. It encouraged me to seek supervision, guidance, and wisdom from colleagues, teachers, and placement supervisors. This principle also helped me recognize countertransference in the therapeutic environment. I continue to use this principle today by seeking consultation and supervision as needed and maintaining confidentiality.

Humility

Humility guided me throughout my practicum by reminding me that I am not an expert and there will always be new things to learn. It helped me acknowledge that clients are the experts in their own lives. It showed me that there is never an endpoint in this field and that we grow through constant learning in our experiences, teachings, professional development and interactions with individuals, families, communities, and organizations.

Truth

The teaching of Truth inspired me throughout my placement to acknowledge my role as a helper and the gift of walking alongside others on their journeys. It encouraged me to recognize that my practicum was an opportunity for growth and crucial to personal development. Following this teaching helped me recognize my bundle as unique and enhanced my confidence and ability to practice.

Andrea Scott

My name is Andrea Scott. I am a white settler on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek Nation: The People of the Three Fires. I am of Nordic and German descent and a graduate of the Honours Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work program. I am currently doing my Master of Social Work at Laurentian University and aspire to be a holistic practitioner using a circular framework. The Seven Grandfather Teachings guide my practice. I prioritize self-care and integrate the Medicine Wheel teachings into my daily personal and professional life. I appreciate

the wisdom of my professors, Elders, staff, and peers who share and will carry their teachings with gratitude throughout my lifetime and beyond.

Practicums are unsure spaces for students. The expectations are laid out as thoroughly as possible through guides and manuals, but one does not know what to expect when entering that space as a learner. I believe it was essential to be grounded by the Seven Grandfather Teachings to find our place within a practicum. It takes a great deal of introspection, self-reflection, and constant awareness to decolonize ourselves before we enter a space where colonization has touched all aspects of a workplace, our subconscious and self-preservation. To find the place where I was able to situate myself, I needed to understand where I am within that space, who I am as a person and what I bring to those around me into the circle of interconnectedness. Through reflection, I share below about my practicum, how the teachings supported me, and the community that I was helping.

Wisdom

Wisdom (Nibwaakaawin) was to share knowledge through interdisciplinary teams, learning from Elders where we sit within the Medicine Wheel teachings. It made the space of working as a team turn into a family, where everyone was kin (even if you were not). Care and consideration were taken and valued when wisdom was shared. Time was given to speak within that space without being rushed to get words out, and no one interrupted. Even in silence, it was good to allow for a pause because, eventually, someone spoke, and the rest of the team shared and respected what the speaker had to say.

Love

Love (Zaagi'idiwin) serves as the foundation for all the Seven Grandfather Teachings, intricately woven and interwoven in every aspect and approach in life. Gratefully, I was able to experience a circle of care which continues to this day. I am connected to both agencies and carry my relationships forward, always looking seven generations back, and seven generations forward.

Respect

To Respect (Manaadendamowin) is to understand lived experience is valued. Spirituality is respected—the spirit of self, the spirit of the agency and the surrounding community. The spirit was not always what we wanted to see, but our guides made us listen if we were not paying attention enough.

Humility & Honesty

Guided by humility (Dbaadendiziwin) and honesty (Gwayakwaadiziwin) was to know oneself, the space I occupied and that a learning student was not taking up space from voices who should be heard. Often, Humility meant introducing myself fully to strangers, my descendants and my ancestry, acknowledging that I am a white individual with privilege. Humility walks hand in hand with the other Seven Grandfather Teachings, as it requires Bravery to comprehend the position one occupies. Wisdom must see this truth clearly, without succumbing to the defensiveness often associated with white privilege, which mistakenly interprets challenges to

personal values as attacks. Humility lies safely within the protective space, surrounded by honesty, truth, love and respect. As a student, humility takes honesty to speak your Truth about colonization, the systems touching each other and the interconnectedness of everyone you work with.

Bravery & Truth

In a learning setting, to act with Bravery (Aakode'ewin) was to step into a space that has been harmed by white people of all variations, who continue to harm Indigenous agencies, including those they serve. It is challenging to acknowledge Truth (Debwewin) of harm and injustices out loud. Speaking your truth takes bravery to recognize and to remove yourself where you are taking up space. I had to find my voice within that space, to speak up and remove myself within a frame of non-interference approach, walking consciously with a two row wampum belt approach. Bravery took some self-reflection and consideration through a trauma-informed approach.

Arijana Haramincic

Hello, my name is Arijana Haramincic. I have worked in the public and social services sector for over 20 years, from front-line service delivery to senior and executive positions. I am a graduate of the Honours Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work program at Laurentian University and I am pursuing a Master's in Indigenous Relations. Since making Nunavut home, I have travelled across the territory, listening and learning from the Inuit people, who have been gracious and welcoming in sharing their wisdom and knowledge, for which I am deeply grateful.

The Indigenous Social Work program at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, focuses on First Nations teachings, specifically Anishinaabe. I bring forward the importance of understanding clients and communities. While many academics focus on First Nations teachings, connecting to other Indigenous worldviews is essential in taking a culturally appropriate approach. Culturally restorative practice is defined by Simard (2009) as an integration of cultural frameworks into service practice enhancing the natural protective factors. These factors are the key to connecting to the language, culture, traditions, and spiritual practices, as well as creating a positive effect on an individual's emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being (Simard, 2009; Simard & Blight, 2011), thus providing the necessary foundation for individuals to flourish. Simard's (2009) theoretical underpinnings and research regarding culturally restorative practice are based on the Anishinaabe Nation's practices. However, I can see a strong connection and have applied the Inuit societal values with the Seven Grandfather Teachings to share my practicum experience.

Wisdom

The societal value of Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq focuses on developing skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort. Through my Indigenous practicum, I learned the importance of trusting the wisdom of the Creator—a non-interfering approach to practice. I also learned to honour ancestors' wisdom and participate in Inuit-led community feasts, celebrations, and food sharing to support healing and growth.

Love

Pijitsirniq is another societal value defining the act of serving and providing for family and/or community. During my practicum, I acknowledged reciprocity by honouring all living beings and the teaching of Love. This taught me to be more mindful of my impact on life, including my role as a social worker.

Respect

The next two societal values I will introduce here is Inuuqatigiitsiarniq which is about respecting others, relationships and caring for people and Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq, respect and care for the land, animals, and the environment. I learned to show Respect through silence, observation, humility, and trusting the guidance and wisdom of Elders.

Bravery

The value of Qanuqtuurniq speaks about being innovative and resourceful. I learned how to take risks in my practicum by being an ally and an advocate by challenging, respectfully, the colonial ways of practicing social work.

Honesty

Tunnganarniq centres on the value of fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming and inclusive in society. I learned how to be open and honest by actively listening, observing, and letting the natural healing process of clients occur within my practicum.

Humility

Piliriqatigiinni/Ikajuqtiigiinni, working together for a common cause, is a societal value that can be linked to Humility. I participated in the ceremony of qulliq lightning and honoured the importance of the circle of sharing for healing, growth and empowerment. In order to do so, I need to be humble and remember I am a part of creation.

Truth

Decision-making through discussion and consensus describes the last societal value of Aajiiqatigiinni. In my practicum, I learned how to listen for truth, supporting the creation of ethical spaces through relationships, a cornerstone of counselling.

Indigenous social work practice aligns with Inuit cultural practices, thus, supporting culturally restorative practice as a way towards healing. This healing journey to self-determination and self-reliance is critical when working with Inuit. However, despite the law

supporting culturally embedded services, mainstream practice is often more aligned with other provinces and territories than Indigenous practice. This misalignment is due to a lack of culturally relevant social work training for the social workers practicing with Inuit. Most mainstream social work practitioners have not been trained in Indigenous and culturally restorative practice and have accepted mainstream approaches to helping. Only using a mainstream approach has resulted in a continued colonial, intrusive and oppressive way of working with Inuit children and their families. Advocating for creating and implementing mandatory trauma-informed, culturally restorative, strength-based, and solution-focused training would benefit social work professionals collectively.

Impacts of the Seven Grandfather Teachings in practicum

The profound impacts of students integrating the Seven Grandfather Teachings into their practicum experiences can be better understood through the foundational coursework they undertake before entering the field. Laurentian University's staff and Indigenous community has developed course materials that are culturally appropriate, recognizing that not all students may come from an Indigenous background. Courses are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous perspectives and values, preparing students to effectively apply the teachings in their practicum placements and future professional practice. The Indigenous social work program at Laurentian University is distinguished by its incorporation of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, which are foundational principles in many Indigenous cultures. These teachings—Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Wisdom, and Truth—are integrated into the educational experience through various methodologies aimed at deepening students' understanding and application of these teachings in both personal and professional contexts.

One of the central methodologies employed is experiential learning, wherein students actively engage in Indigenous teachings and practices. This can include participation in traditional ceremonies, visits to Indigenous communities, immersion experiences in Indigenous cultures, and through an Indigenous practicum. Such activities are designed to facilitate a profound connection with the course material and provide a deep comprehension of their practical significance. The program also emphasizes oral traditions through storytelling to impart these teachings. Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers play a pivotal role in sharing their stories and teachings with students in various settings including in person and through online platforms. Using an experiential learning approach is instrumental in cultivating a holistic and relational understanding of the teachings, as storytelling is a fundamental method of conveying essential lessons and values in Indigenous cultures.

Integral to the program is the promotion of self-reflection and introspection guided by the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Students are encouraged to critically reflect on their identities, biases, and experiences and consider how these elements may influence their future practice as social workers. This reflective practice, deeply rooted in the teachings, serves to internalize the principles and foster a thoughtful application in their interactions with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and their broader lives. Moreover, the Indigenous social work program

at Laurentian University offers two practicums where students can apply these teachings in real-world settings. These practicums allow students to reflect weekly on their experiences, further enhancing their understanding and integrating the Seven Grandfather Teachings into their professional and personal ethos. This pedagogical approach ensures that the teachings transcend theoretical concepts, becoming active guiding principles in students' practice and lives.

In their respective practicum experiences, Michelle Montreuil, Shaelynn Noland, Andrea Scott, and Arijana Haramincic, all students of the Honours Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work program at Laurentian University, shared how the Seven Grandfather Teachings profoundly guided their professional journeys through their field placements. Michelle recounts the importance of Courage in facing personal past experiences and transforming herself for effective practice. Additionally, Michelle emphasizes that Honesty helped her seek guidance and acknowledge one's scope of practice. As Michelle, Shaelynn, Arijana shared, Respect is crucial in fostering connections with clients and communities and supporting their well-being through understanding and acceptance. Wisdom, as embraced by Michelle and Shaelynn, guides non-directive practices and reflective techniques to empower clients to find meaning within their cultural contexts. Love, highlighted by Michelle and Shaelynn, is an unconditional foundation for healing and self-discovery. As exemplified by Michelle and Arijana, Humility encourages self-disclosure and creates an equal, non-judgmental space for clients to feel respected. As Michelle and Arijana emphasize, Truth focuses on authentic self-expression within ethical boundaries to facilitate the therapeutic relationship. These students' experiences demonstrate how the Seven Grandfather Teachings profoundly shape their future professional practice, fostering cultural sensitivity, ethical awareness, and meaningful connections with Indigenous clients and communities. As they continue on their educational and professional journeys, their commitment to Indigenous knowledge and holistic approaches promises positive contributions to the field of Indigenous social work and the empowerment of Indigenous individuals and communities.

Indigenous social work placements have been recognized for their impact on students and their future helping practices. Through these placements, students can witness and engage with the realities faced by Indigenous communities, fostering a deeper understanding of their unique needs and challenges. By working directly with Indigenous peoples, their families and communities, Indigenous social work students gain firsthand experience developing culturally appropriate interventions and building rapport based on trust and respect. It is logical to prioritize cultural considerations in placements to ensure that students and clients receive assistance and support that aligns with their unique needs. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous social workers demonstrate Respect by implementing culturally appropriate approaches.

Moreover, understanding Indigenous worldviews can benefit non-Indigenous helpers personally and professionally. Indigenous placements allow students to bridge the gap between theory and practice, helping them develop a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous worldviews, cultural practices, and community strengths. Understanding that Indigenous social work students come from different backgrounds is essential when considering approaches to

placement, including incorporating the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Students learn how to situate themselves with an Indigenous lens through their educational journeys.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings align with the Social Work Code of Ethics, guiding the values and conduct of people in both professional and personal aspects of life (Moeke-Pickering & Partridge, 2014). Indigenous social work students can incorporate the Seven Grandfather Teachings into their personal and professional development during their practicum in several ways. They can practice Love and Respect by cultivating empathy, compassion, and a non-judgmental attitude toward their clients. Andrea and Shaelynn shared that Love is an aspect that drives all other teachings affecting every aspect of being. Cultivating empathy involves treating individuals with dignity and valuing their unique experiences and perspectives. Indigenous social work students can embrace Bravery by advocating for social equity, challenging systemic barriers, and promoting equity for Indigenous communities. They may need to step out of their comfort zones to address complex issues and engage in advocacy work that addresses the root causes of social problems. Michelle shared with us that she had the Courage to acknowledge that she over-identified with her client's shared experiences. Reflecting and seeing the truth of what may hold us back is a courageous feat in itself.

Honesty is crucial in building trusting relationships with clients. Arijana demonstrated this when she took time to listen and learn about Inuit teachings acknowledging that her primary teachings in university come from an Anishinaabe perspective. Indigenous social workers must uphold integrity, transparency, and authenticity in their interactions. This includes being honest about their limitations, acknowledging power dynamics, and promoting open communication. Humility plays a vital role as social workers recognize that often they are guests in Indigenous communities and have much to learn. Students should approach their practicum willing to listen, learn, and collaborate, which shows they value Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. Wisdom involves seeking knowledge about Indigenous histories, cultures, and traditional practices. Indigenous social workers strive to be culturally competent by engaging in ongoing education, consulting with Indigenous Elders or community members, and reflecting critically on their own biases and assumptions. Lastly, Truth encompasses acknowledging the historical and ongoing trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples. Professionals in the field must commit to truth-telling, acknowledging, and addressing Canada's colonial past and ongoing impacts of colonization, and supporting healing through the Truth and Reconciliation process. By incorporating the Seven Grandfather Teachings into Indigenous social work practicums, students can develop a culturally responsive and holistic approach to their work, fostering positive change and empowering Indigenous individuals, families, and communities.

Applying the Seven Grandfather Teachings to the colonized social work system presents challenges and opportunities for Indigenous social workers. The colonized social work system often operates within frameworks and practices that do not align with Indigenous worldviews and cultural values. Indigenous social workers may encounter systemic barriers, cultural dissonance, limited resources, and the ongoing impacts of colonialism on Indigenous communities. However, by incorporating the teachings into professional practice, Indigenous

social workers can better understand their cultural identity, promote self-determination, and advocate for Indigenous rights and healing. The teachings provide a holistic framework that addresses individuals' and communities' spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical well-being. The Seven Grandfather Teachings enable Indigenous social workers to foster cultural competency, build respectful relationships, and address Indigenous clients' unique needs and challenges.

Incorporating the teachings within their practicums and future practices promotes self-reflection, personal growth, and resilience among social workers. The Seven Grandfather Teachings hold immense importance for guiding social workers in their practice and impacting the communities they serve. By embodying Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Humility and Wisdom, social workers can confront their experiences, remain transparent and trustworthy, create safe spaces for clients, empower individuals with cultural sensitivity, foster compassion and non-judgment, and promote equality. Applying these teachings enables personal growth and positively influences the community, fostering a sense of belonging, trust, and cooperation. This holistic and culturally relevant approach facilitates more meaningful and sustainable interventions, ultimately leading to positive change within the community.

In the context of Indigenous field placements, framing the experience with the Seven Grandfather Teachings is of paramount importance. Integrating different helping approaches requires a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness of all aspects of life, which aligns with the traditional Indigenous understanding of healing. The Seven Grandfather Teachings, encompassing Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Humility and Wisdom, serve as a guiding framework for social work students, ensuring they approach their practice holistically and in a culturally appropriate way. By embracing these teachings, students can develop wise practices that allow them to support individuals and communities effectively. Traditional Elders emphasize leading by example, sharing wisdom, and acknowledging the 'winds of change' rather than engaging in arguments over privilege and disadvantage. Emphasizing a respectful balance with all aspects of life in healing practices and acknowledging the importance of a change process fosters a culturally sensitive and growth-oriented approach to helping. Integrating traditional teachings with mainstream approaches requires strength, vision, and commitment to personal healing and growth. As field placement educators/coordinators work with Indigenous social work students, fostering an environment that encourages learning, healing, and embracing the heart-centred wisdom of the Seven Grandfather Teachings will empower students to develop meaningful, culturally relevant, and transformative practices to serve their communities with integrity and compassion.

Guiding recommendations

For the reader's ease, if you are a social work practicum educator and are interested in implementing Indigenous-focused field placements for students in your program, here are some guidelines you can follow using the Seven Grandfather Teachings as a framework. We will also

utilize the rationale and experiences of the authors' practicum experiences to strengthen the guidelines.

1. Love.

To know peace is to know Love (Benton-Banai, 2010) which is an unconditional foundation for healing and self-discovery. It is also an aspect that drives all other teachings affecting every aspect of being. Fostering empathy involves treating individuals with dignity and valuing their unique experiences and perspectives.

Social work practicum educators can incorporate Love into practicum settings by exploring the possibility of other experts as field practicum supervisors. Elders, medicine people, and traditional knowledge people hold a vast amount of wisdom, which should be considered when selecting accredited social work practicum settings.

2. Respect

To honour all creation is to have Respect (Benton-Bani, 2010), which is crucial in fostering connections with clients and communities. This teaching supports the clients' well-being through understanding and acceptance, cultivating empathy, compassion, and a non-judgmental attitude.

Social work practicum educators can ensure they select appropriate field placement consultants who are empathic, accepting, compassionate, and have a non-judgemental attitude towards the practicum setting, including the agency, field practicum supervisors, and practicum students. This includes appropriate social work agencies.

3. Bravery

Benton-Banai (2010) shares that Bravery is to face the foe with integrity. Practicum students were able to face personal past experiences and transform themselves for effective practice. They stepped out of their comfort zones, advocated for social equity, challenged systemic barriers, and promoted equity for Indigenous communities.

Social work practicum educators should be flexible and open to change when policies need adjustment for practicums and advocate within the department for change to occur. This flexibility requires integrity and can improve social work practicums resulting in practices that are more effective.

4. Honesty

Honesty in facing a situation is the fourth Sacred teaching (Benton-Banai, 2010). The authors' experiences through their practicums allowed them to seek guidance and acknowledge their scope of practice, which is crucial in building trusting relationships with clients. Social work practicum students must continue to uphold integrity, transparency, and authenticity in their interactions with clients by being honest about their limitations, acknowledging power dynamics, and promoting open communication.

Social work practicum educators can incorporate Honesty into practicum settings by understanding personal limitations of knowledge and seeking training, educational opportunities,

or partnerships with Indigenous communities to bridge the gap for social work practicum students. For example, taking cultural humility training.

5. Humility

Benton-Banai (2010) shares the teaching of Humility, which is to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation. Practicing humility encourages self-disclosure and creates an equal, non-judgmental space for clients to feel respected. This understanding of Humility plays a vital role as social work students in their practicums can recognize they are guests in Indigenous communities and have much to learn. The approach within their practicum should be a willingness to listen, learn, and collaborate, which shows Indigenous knowledge and perspectives' value.

Social work practicum educators can incorporate land acknowledgements within their practice as a starting point and encourage practicum students to do the same within the agency they are placed. Land acknowledgements are currently seen as bare minimum, so the accompanying step is to work towards acts of reconciliation using the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action Report (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) focusing on the child welfare section. Another excellent resource is the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (2023) website for practical ideas for you, your social work department, agencies, and field placement consultants and supervisors.

6. Wisdom

Benton-Banai (2010) shares the teaching that to cherish knowledge is to know Wisdom. This teaching involves continuously seeking knowledge about Indigenous histories, cultures, and traditional practices. The authors strive to be culturally competent by engaging in ongoing education, consulting with Indigenous Elders or community members, and reflecting critically on their biases and assumptions. They must confront their experiences, remain transparent and trustworthy, create safe spaces for clients, empower individuals with cultural sensitivity, foster compassion and non-judgment, and promote equality.

Social work practicum educators have the capacity to embrace the teaching of Honesty, acknowledge and understand that there may be gaps in your own knowledge base even if you have worked in this field for decades. In order to connect social work students with Indigenous agencies, there should be authentic and ongoing connections with Indigenous people in the community that are not only practicum settings but also remunerated members of an advisory circle. Their recommendations should be incorporated thoughtfully into your practice, which will permeate into policies, forms, and the delivery of accredited practicum settings.

7. Truth

The seventh and final sacred teaching is Truth, which according to Benton-Banai (2010), is to know all of these things. There should be an authentic acknowledgement of the historical and ongoing trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples. Professionals in the field should demonstrate to social work practicum students their own commitment to truth telling, acknowledging and addressing the past and ongoing impacts of colonization, and supporting healing through the truth and reconciliation process. Another facet of the practicum should be

space for the social work practicum students to practice self-expression within ethical boundaries to facilitate their therapeutic relationships with clients.

Social work practicum educators can incorporate the last teaching, Truth, into practicum settings by recentering one's understanding of Indigenous peoples and their contributions (past, present, and future) to education, health, helping, and other fields of knowledge. Using the Seven Grandfather Teachings as a framework for practicums is a method to incorporate an ancestral method of constructing, implementing, evaluating, and completing an accredited practicum for future social work students working with Indigenous people in various capacities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Indigenous social work placements offer invaluable opportunities for students to actively engage with Indigenous communities, fostering cultural understanding and contributing to positive change. Recognizing the historical context of Indigenous social work, the enduring impacts of colonization, and the ongoing efforts of Indigenous peoples to reclaim their cultural heritage and traditions are vital aspects of Indigenous social work fieldwork. Indigenization within social work emphasizes incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices, enabling practitioners to cultivate cultural responsiveness and empower Indigenous individuals and communities. Integrating the Seven Grandfather Teachings into social work practicum serves as a guiding framework for students enrolled in the Indigenous social work program, promoting holistic well-being, deep cultural understanding, and the cultivation of meaningful relationships with clients and communities.

Practicum experiences within Indigenous social work are pivotal in equipping students with cultural competence and responsiveness to become effective practitioners. These experiences provide a transformative platform for students to develop authentic connections, acquire practical skills, and contribute to positive change within Indigenous communities. Embracing culturally appropriate practicum placements and learning alongside Indigenous peoples enables students to foster collaborative and empowering approaches to social work practice. Such initiatives enrich the field of social work and empower Indigenous individuals and communities, working towards a more equitable and inclusive society. As field placement educators/coordinators work with Indigenous social work students, it is essential to recognize the strength and significance of incorporating the Seven Grandfather Teachings as a guide in their practice. By embodying Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Wisdom and, Truth, social workers can effectively address their past experiences, create safe and transparent client spaces, promote cultural sensitivity, foster compassion, and champion equality. Integrating these teachings into their practice not only promotes personal growth and resilience among social workers but also positively impacts the communities they serve, fostering a sense of belonging, trust, and cooperation. This holistic and culturally relevant approach paves the way for more meaningful and sustainable interventions, ultimately leading to positive and lasting change within the community. Thus, framing Indigenous field placements with the Seven Grandfather Teachings is paramount in guiding students toward becoming transformative, culturally responsive, and heart-centred social work practitioners.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Funding

No funding was received for this research.

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Author biographies

Dawn Goss is a Métis Citizen from Region 7 of the Georgian Bay Métis Community. Dawn is a graduate of the Honours Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work program at Laurentian University. She is committed to amplifying student and professional voices. Dawn has a strong passion for creating change and supporting Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, actively advocates for the disability community, and drawing inspiration from her personal experiences. She believes in the power of writing as a form of advocacy to raise awareness of prevalent issues in Canada. She is engaged in her community and continues to pursue opportunities to support and uplift her community.

Joey-Lynn Wabie is an Algonquin Anicinabe ikwe from Mahingan Sagahigan (Wolf Lake) First Nation in northwestern Quebec. Her Anicinabe nooswin is ziigwankwe (spring woman), and she is from the atik (caribou) clan. ziigwankwe is an Associate Professor at Laurentian University in the School of Indigenous Relations. She is an Associate Director for Maamwizing Indigenous Research Institute. Joey-Lynn is also the Academic Director of Indigenous Initiatives at YouthREX (housed at York University).

Michelle Montreuil is a Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work graduate from Laurentian University, and currently pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Counselling Psychology at the York University.

Shaelynn Noland graduated with a Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work degree from Laurentian University and currently works as a therapist and expanding her practice to work with children by taking play therapy training.

Andrea Scott is a graduate of the Honours Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work program, and currently undertaking a Master of Social Work program at Laurentian University.

Arijana Haramincic is a graduate of the Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work program at Laurentian University and currently pursuing a Masters degree in Indigenous Relations. She has over 20 years of work experience in the public and social services sector, having worked from front-line service delivery to senior and executive positions.