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## **Indigenous Social Work Administration: A Qualitative Study**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study, working from an Indigenous perspective, sought to determine the content and pedagogical process of teaching Indigenous social work administration. An Indigenous philosophical and methodological approach framed a participatory action research approach to the topic; Indigenous leaders, managers, and academics in Canada were interviewed, along with a focus group of Indigenous academics to determine what content and pedagogical approach needs to be included when teaching Indigenous social work administration.

There is currently no discussion nationally or internationally in the literature or teaching environment that addresses the content and process of Indigenous Social Work Administration (ISWA). There is an array of research that presents administration in social work from a western perspective and some literature on administration that considers Indigenous issues in the field of business administration; however, there is an apparent gap in the social work literature on ISWA. The well-publicized leadership and accountability issues in Indigenous communities indicate that the area of ISWA needs to be developed and delivered. Although there is written material from an Indigenous perspective in social work practice (Bruyere, 1999; McKenzie & Morrissette, 2003; Morrissette, McKenzie, & Morrissette, 1993; Verniest, 2006), there is no focus on ISWA.

Indigenous leadership, which is part of ISWA, reflects Indigenous ontology, which centers on community. Alfred (1999) provides an Indigenous perspective on leadership and how it is viewed within Indigenous communities when he states,

I like to think of Indigenous leadership in terms of the relationship between the drummers, singers, and dancers at a pow-wow. The drummers and singers give voice to the heartbeat

of the earth, and the dancers move to the sound, giving life to their personal visions and to those of their people. The drum prompts and paces. Drummers, singers, and dancers act together to manifest tradition through the songs: all three groups are essential and related, the role of each group being to respect and represent the spirit of the creation in its own way, according to its own special abilities. (p. 91)

Historically, traditional Indigenous leadership rested on the direction of the people rather than on power and authority. Leaders were considered guides and visionaries for the community (Alfred, 2008; Loizides & Wuttunee, 2003; Ottman, 2005). Crowfoot (1997), a former chief of his First Nation, agrees. He views leadership as a service to the community, where one is promoting change and at the same time articulating a community vision. Leaders within Indigenous communities turn to the Elders for their knowledge of traditional leadership practices, their symbolic connection to the past, and their traditional ways, teachings, ceremonies, and stories (Stiegelbauer, 1996). The choice of leader of a community has historically been based on a consensus (Boldt, 1993; Jules, 1988). Traditional leadership that employed the direction of the people has provided a solid basis for Indigenous people. Leadership is not a position of power, but rather one of a guide and visionary for the community (Alfred, 1999; Loizides & Wuttunee, 2003; Ottman, 2005). Although the leader was responsible for displaying the characteristics that would benefit the community, an emphasis was placed on the community's needs rather than the needs of the individual. "Order and discipline were maintained in various ways. In the first place, the individual had a strong sense of his or her responsibility to the clan and to the tribe" (Adams, 1975, p. 17). Traditional leadership is drawn from within, and direction and control are in the hands of local people. While history dictates that leadership has formed the basis on which present leadership conducts itself, it currently exists in the context of the organizations that employ Indigenous people. Leadership practices derive from the traditional social and political structures and practices of a given culture. Indigenous leadership has always been an important part of traditional culture. According to Jules (1988), "traditionally, Native Indian leaders decided upon a course of action through decision-sharing and consensus of the whole group; failing this, they left the decision unmade" (p. 7). This concept is important because the inclusion of the entire band or community in decision making reaffirms the traditional practices of the culture. Even though the bands elect a chief to provide the basis of leadership, band members consult before any decisions are made. The chief is responsible for executing effective leadership.

There is going to be a clash of systems because of the different cultural philosophies within and outside of Indigenous organizations. Indigenous people need to continue to learn their culture and teachings so that they can bring them into careers. It is about weaving together the western and Indigenous knowledge systems, so there is a better understanding of who Indigenous people are and what they represent. There is an assumption that all Indigenous people speak the same language, practice the same culture, and have peaceful interactions. Indigenous people who reside in British Columbia practice and speak a different language than Indigenous people in Saskatchewan. “One of the keys to understanding the goals and aspirations of Aboriginal people in Canada is recognizing their diversity.... there are differences not only between First Nations, Inuit and Metis people but also among First Nations” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p. 1). There are differences between the different nations in Canada; it is not static. “But it’s often more than simply how you look. It’s how you think, act, where you live, and point with your lower lip” (Taylor, 2000, p. 58). These differences play itself out within the different Indigenous organizations in Canada as they reflect the local nation and territory. Although this difference is evident in some organizations, there is an openness to learn about the community and practices that exist to function properly. “Indigenous thinkers in Canada know that to acquire an Indigenous perspective on knowledge requires extended conversations with the elders of each language group” (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 41). It is important to learn and understand the local community because relationships are important within Indigenous society; although the nations may be different, everyone is an Indigenous person and has encountered similar problems as a result.

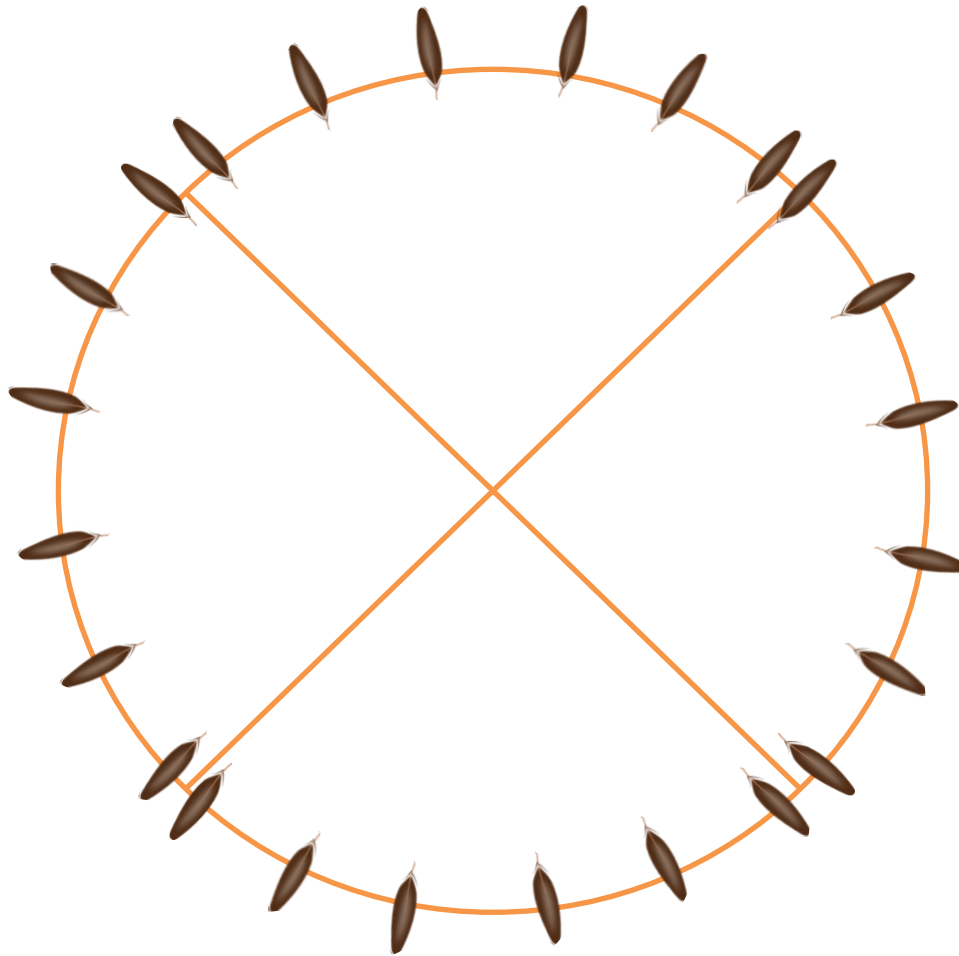
## **PARTICIPANTS**

Participants included 24 Indigenous academics, leaders and educators across Canada, with 11 participating in one-to-one interviews and 13 in a focus group. The inclusion criteria:

- Be of Aboriginal descent (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit)
- Is currently or has been a manager in an Indigenous Social Work organization in Canada
- Is currently or has been in a leadership position within an Indigenous organization in Canada
- Is currently or has been in a leadership position within an Indigenous community in Canada

### **Tribute to Participants**

*Each feather represents a participant in this study and it acknowledges and honours their participation in the study.*



### **RESEARCH PREPARATION – CEREMONY**

Sinclair (2003) offers a rudimentary guideline explaining when or how to incorporate ceremony into the context of the study, but the nature of Indigenous teachings requires the researcher to rely on their specific cultural knowledge and spiritual teachings at each stage of the research. Research that is carried out with Indigenous communities demands adherence to ontological tenets and so the acts of participating in ceremony at the outset, during the research process, and upon completion, are a manifestation of that ontology (Sinclair, 2003).

## **PROTOCOL**

In keeping with traditional Indigenous protocol, participants were given a small pouch of tobacco at the beginning of the face-to-face interviews and focus group, signifying a thankfulness and respect for their sharing. The offering of tobacco signifies the sacred aspect of the communication on both sides. The offering of tobacco in exchange for stories has existed in Plains Cree communities for thousands of years (Michell, 1999). It symbolizes the honest intention of the researcher and in a prayerful way, requests the sharing of information from the participants. It respects the ethic of reciprocity that exists within the Indigenous ontological framework and links research to the spiritual aspects of Indigenous cosmology (Sinclair, 2003). When a person accepts tobacco, they indicate a willingness to share their knowledge.

## **INTERVIEWS**

There were 11 in-depth interviews that consisted of a semi-structured, informal process. Depending on the geographical location of the participants, interviews were face-to-face within their agency and organization, or by telephone. Informed consent was obtained before each interview, with a copy given to the participants for their records. For those interviews conducted by telephone, the informed consent form was sent through a secured email to the participant. The participant was instructed to print two copies of the form, sign them, keep one for their records and return the other to the researcher via mail or email. An interview guide was used to structure interviews, but participants were free to express themselves and answer questions in ways that were comfortable for them. Probing questions were utilized to clarify and seek elaboration in specific areas. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed; also, a pen and paper were used as a means of gathering notes and observations. The interviews varied in length, from 40 minutes to 70 minutes.

## **FOCUS GROUP**

The focus group included 13 Indigenous educators involved in Indigenous Social Work Education (ISWE). The focus group was independent of the individual in-depth interviews, and it only included Indigenous academics involved in ISWE. Informed consent was acquired before the start of the focus group. An elder opened the focus group with a prayer. From there, each participant was given the opportunity to introduce themselves and share their academic and

professional background, along with their experience in ISWE. The questions focused on the content and method of ISWA. The participants had experience in teaching in ISWE and articulated the different variables needed in creating an administration focus of ISWE. The focus group lasted approximately 2 hours.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

The study is framed and guided by Participatory Action Research (PAR). Within a pure PAR method, those involved decide the direction of the research, however, in this study, because there is an established research question, PAR provides a theoretical path for those involved to not only have a voice in the research but to equally contribute to taking any action for ‘emancipatory and transformative change’ (Maguire, 1996). A PAR method provides the opportunity to create new forms of knowledge through the experiences of those involved (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). It is particularly applicable in this study because the intent of the research study is to determine the curriculum context and pedagogical process of ISWA. The PAR framing was juxtaposed with the parameters of Indigenous practice and protocol in the framework of the Indigenous research design. PAR and Indigenous theoretical orientations symbolically guide qualitative interpretive methods because of their shared philosophies.

A PAR approach was used because this study engaged the Indigenous community in research and knowledge, along with using the principles of respect, empowerment, emancipation, and cultural sensitivity (Cochran et al., 2008; Ginn & Kulig, 2015; Maar et al., 2011; Purden, 2005). The use of PAR as a methodological tool is preferred because the study collected Indigenous knowledge and promoted social change at the community level, and the techniques are consistent with Indigenous values (Hoare, Levy & Robinson, 1993). The participants were also viewed as co-researchers because they are researching and analyzing their field of expertise and are reflecting and evaluating their time in this area (Hecker, 1997). The application of PAR to Indigenous research is prevalent because: 1. Gives Indigenous people a voice in the research process; 2. Increases the effectiveness and longevity of Indigenous research development; 3. Contributes to healing Indigenous communities; and 4. The methods are consistent with Indigenous values (Hoare, Levy & Robinson, 1993).

By drawing upon the principles of PAR philosophy, the researcher worked with the Indigenous participants in an iterative and collaborative process to determine the principles and processes that constitute an Indigenous administration theory and pedagogy within ISWE. Through the efforts of academics, leaders, and managers, other questions developed through the interaction and collaboration with the participants because they had a voice throughout the study and suggested new and different areas that were of interest to the topic area. Incorporating PAR with an Indigenous worldview ensured that research on administration in social work was carried out in a respectful, ethical manner through the ethic of reciprocity (Porsanger, 2004; Michel, 1999). It was also cognizant of the fact that even though there may be exchanges that may not reflect the Indigenous way, relationality will exist that made the practice more relatable to everyone involved (Wilson, 2008).

An Indigenous approach to research reflects an Indigenous paradigm of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. These ways of knowing, being, and doing (Martin, 2009), along with ethics, are the foundation of an Indigenous approach. An Indigenous methodological approach enables Indigenous researchers to be who they are while involved in the research process (Hart, 2009; Weber-Pillax, 2001). This study extrapolated knowledge from Indigenous people, so it was inherently necessary to respect the reciprocity of life and use the knowledge gained from the study to inform Indigenous communities on the parameters of ISWA. Giving back to Indigenous communities reflects the reciprocity of life and that knowledge is borrowed, with the intent that something beneficial will come out of the exchange (Michell, 1999). An important consideration of an Indigenous approach relates to controlling, developing, and approving the research, along with self-awareness (Wilson, 2003).

This study accomplished this by giving participants the flexibility to share their thoughts and knowledge, without restrictions or time limits. Further, the study followed traditional protocols and practices of the Plains Cree culture and was sensitive to the traditional needs of the Indigenous people involved in the study because participants came from a perspective that aligns with their tribal affiliations; as a result, an adaptation of the research process was respected and embraced the diversity that was shared. This study was also respectful of the customs, practice, and protocol of Indigenous people. According to Hoare, Levy, and Robinson (1993), PAR will integrate well with Indigenous culture as it meets the criteria regarding validity and reliability, along with a means for cultural representation. This study connected with Indigenous community members to

establish the content and method of ISWA, along with the purpose of increasing community autonomy through a process of praxis, which includes elements of PAR (Hall, 1981; Hoare, Levy & Robinson, 1993; Tandon, 1988). The participants are the experts in this study, and it is important to have them recognize that they have the power to create change (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009).

## DATA ANALYSIS

A thematic analysis guided the data analysis along with thematic networks as described by Attride-Stirling (2001). The thematic networks are web-like illustrations that summarize the main themes from the text (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Data is mapped to frame a basic theme; from there an organizing theme evolves, and finally a global theme is mapped out. A thematic network is a simple way of organizing the thematic analysis of the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). A thematic network puts themes into a context that is easy to understand and not only enables the researcher to gain a better understanding and clearer picture of the themes, but also allows participants to view the construction of the thematic process and develop an understanding of the analysis process. Indigenous people are visual learners, and within Indigenous pedagogy, the use of maps is an optimal way for Indigenous people to create a holistic and concrete image of the tasks, along with a reference point (Hughes & More, 1997). Also, thematic networks are constructed in a non-linear fashion because according to Wheaton (2000) the linear perspective marginalizes Indigenous people and prevents them from creating an identity. Within Indigenous ways of learning, a non-linear approach is more conducive because Indigenous people are encouraged to think and perceive things in a way that encompasses their perspective and not those of others (Wheaton, 2000).

A thematic approach is a method for identifying and analyzing patterns in qualitative data and is appropriate because this study is inquiring about people's experiences and understanding of a context (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The data was carefully read and re-read to identify the appropriate themes and patterns (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). According to Clarke and Braun (2013), there are 6 steps in a thematic analysis: 1. familiarizing yourself with the data, 2. generating initial codes, 3. searching for themes, 4. reviewing themes, 5. defining, and naming themes, and 6. producing the report. This study will adhere to these steps in the analysis process. With a thematic approach, the categories are not predetermined but emerge as the data is examined. This type of analysis provides an opportunity for the researcher to take any of the information collected in the interviews and focus group back to the participants for elaboration or confirmation. It is important to come



up with a clear picture as part of the analysis, so the communities understand and are mindful that the research process respects the traditional protocol and practice in all areas of the research.

THEMATIC NETWORKS

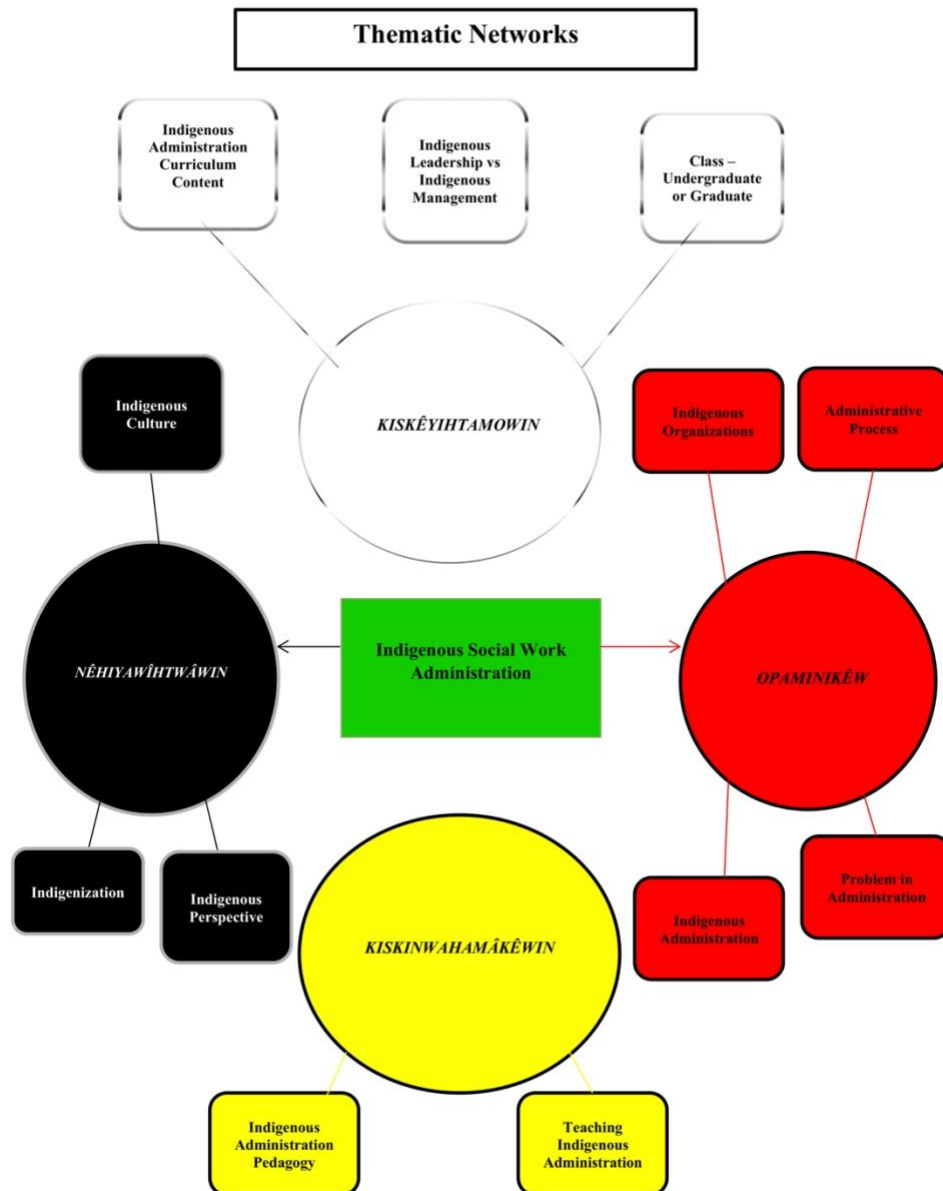


Figure 1: Thematic Networks

The data collected was coded, and different themes emerged. These themes were organized into thematic networks to give fluidity and emphasize the interconnectivity of the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). According to Attride-Stirling (2001), there are three components to thematic networks: Global Theme, Organizing Theme, and Basic Theme. The networks begin with a basic theme and work inwards toward a global theme. The basic themes in this study are the areas identified by the participants as important in ISWA. Twelve different characteristics emerged and were categorized into the basic theme category. The organizing themes are the four main principles; they group the key ideas of the basic themes and dissect the main assumptions underlying a broader theme (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The global theme is ISWA, which is the core of the thematic network as it provides a summary of the main themes, along with indicating the overall theory of the study.

The thematic networks represent the traditional Cree Medicine Wheel colors (Wenger-Nabigon, 2010). The global themes are represented by the color *askihtakwâw* (green), which signifies mother earth. *Askihtakwâw* represents the outer circle of a medicine wheel. Mother earth represents this area because it is the center of the network and represents the overall aspect of the networks.

## **KISKÊYIHTAMOWIN**

This section represents the north direction, which is the color *wâpiskisiw* (white) along with the bear clan and the process of change. “This is the direction of caring, change, movement and air, which has the power to move things around” (Wenger-Nabigon, 2010, p. 147). This area centers around the curriculum, so the objective and process of change align with this approach because the participants are creating change by sharing their knowledge on administration with the intent of setting up a new area of ISW. In this area, the participants provided their thoughts on the curriculum, whether there is a need for an ISWA class at the undergraduate level, and whether Indigenous leadership and management are separate entities.

The Cree word *kiskêyihitamowin*, which in English means learning, being a student, and attending school, was used for this area as it represents what students would be learning in an ISWA class. This area consists of three core aspects of ISWA: a) Indigenous administration curriculum content; b) Indigenous leadership vs. Indigenous management and c) whether there is

a need for an Indigenous social work administration class at the undergraduate level or concentration at the graduate level.

### INDIGENOUS ADMINISTRATION CURRICULUM CONTENT

Participants felt it was important for students to learn the different aspects of Indigenous administration within the curriculum content. It was stated that leadership, management, and supervision need to be part of an ISWA curriculum, and it is important for students to learn about Indigenous organizations. Students need to learn how to manage people, work within unions, and understand the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous people. Participants stated that students need to learn all aspects of being a leader and manager within an organization, and this includes HR issues such as hiring and firing, working with a board of directors, and managing scheduling and grievances. All the participants agreed that students need to learn how to be an effective leader, manager, and supervisor within an Indigenous organization.

Participants wanted certain areas covered in the curriculum such as working with Elders bringing in traditional knowledge keepers, the impact of colonization on Indigenous people, traditional Indigenous governance, and transparency and accountability within Indigenous communities and how to be successful in the recruitment and retention of Indigenous people in Indigenous organizations.

### INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP VS. INDIGENOUS MANAGEMENT

It was suggested that leadership and management are interchangeable, but that leaders are responsible for leading, and inspiring and motivating people, while management implements the vision. Most of the participants viewed Indigenous leadership and Indigenous management as separate entities. They spoke of leadership as the ability to lead, and management as the capacity to manage people. There was little overlap between the two concepts. It was clear the participants viewed Indigenous leadership as the role of leading in the community, such as Chief or Headman, and an Indigenous manager as the executive director or manager of the organization.

### INDIGENOUS ADMINISTRATION CLASS – UNDERGRADUATE OR GRADUATE?

The question of whether one class on Indigenous administration in the undergraduate program is enough for students going into the administrative field or whether there is a need at the

graduate level to create a concentration on Indigenous administration was asked of the participants. It was suggested both scenarios would work, but there needs to be at least one class in the undergraduate stream. There should be a course in the undergraduate program that leads to an opportunity to have what would be a stream; a program cluster in administration at the graduate level. On the other hand, a single course in administration is not enough for students returning to the community and fulfilling administrative positions.

The administrators in the study stated they would have benefited from a class in their social work education in order to be more prepared for administrative responsibilities as opposed to learning on the fly, as was the case. They also mentioned that due to issues of poverty and the lack of education within Indigenous communities, it is important for Indigenous students to learn the administrative area as they will be leaders within their community. This preparation will not only prepare them for these positions, but the community will also benefit because they will have a competent and educated person leading the community.

## **OPAMINIKÊW**

This section represents the color *mihkwâw* (red) and symbolizes the east direction and the positive aspects of vision, purpose, and direction. It speaks to this area because, within Indigenous organizations and administration, Indigenous people are carrying out a vision, purpose, and direction in their daily activities, so it's only natural this color represents it. This area examines the different aspects of Indigenous administration, along with the current problems in administration and the administrative process. This area also centers on the method and practice of ISWA.

The Cree word *Opaminikêw*, translated into English as governess, steward, boss, leader, and administrator, describes the administration method of being a leader along with the different concerns of practicing administration. The participants shared their experience as administrators in Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations. The participants felt that being an administrator was at times difficult, but there were many rewards associated with it and they were all honored to be able to serve the community and be a leader.

## INDIGENOUS ADMINISTRATION

The participants articulated their culture into the context of administration and stated that if administration is going to take an Indigenous perspective, culture must be at the forefront. For example, a participant, who is an Indigenous administrator in another Indigenous territory, had to learn about the cultural aspect of the nation in which they practice showing respect and honor those who occupy the land. At first, they were a little hesitant because they are not from the territory and wanted to respect the customs and process but felt that if they conducted the process according to their teachings, they should be okay and would be respectful of the territorial protocol. They made it a point to be part of the community as this shows respect and a willingness to learn about the community's needs and at the same time learn about the cultural practice of the community.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS

In describing the administrative process, participants went into detail describing their experience in the field and the processes involved. There was a discussion on how Elders will provide guidance in any administrative position. A participant mentioned that elders come from different cultural backgrounds, practices, and policy backgrounds, and Elders need to provide guidance and direction in this new area of social work because they have the historical knowledge. Elders are crucial to the sustainability of the organization and will address any problems and concerns that arise and will deal with them in a traditional manner such as talking circles and ceremonies.

## PROBLEMS IN ADMINISTRATION

All the participants have experience in administration, whether in academics or previous and current employment. The different problems encountered in administration and the different situations that are affecting current administration practice were explored. The difficulties women encounter in administration are not given much attention because men occupy most senior administration positions. There needs to be greater attention to the needs of women in administrative positions because women are going to continue to occupy these positions and they need to be able to concentrate solely on the responsibility of being an administrator. A participant found it difficult to please everyone and had to make decisions some people didn't agree with. In Indigenous society, decisions are collaborative, so when the organization expects the administrator

to decide on behalf of the staff and community there may be some struggles with this process. Some would rely on their traditional teachings and knowledge for guidance and have the decision making be a collegial process.

## INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Indigenous organizations are important in Indigenous society because they serve the needs of Indigenous people and represent a place that reflects their worldview. Indigenous organizations are entities, so Indigenous people must work together and in any Indigenous organization, ceremony needs to be primarily at the center.

Indigenous organizations need to be aware of the impact they have on the community. For example, Indigenous people are custodians of the earth and need to set an example to the community, so they are aware of the environmental impact they have and need to practice constraint. Indigenous organizations need to reflect Indigenous culture, practice, and protocol and need to abide by this on a regular basis.

## KISKINWAHAMÂKÊWIN

This section represents the color *osâwâw* (yellow) and the south direction, which encompasses self-reflection and a time to heal. Part of the healing process is learning and growing as a person, which is reflected in the teaching and learning about ISWA. The method of learning ISWA is the focus of this area because pedagogical approaches reflect the traditional Indigenous ways of learning.

The Cree word *Kiskinwahamâkêwin* translated into English means ‘teaching, education, lessons, and instructions,’ and it describes the pedagogical approach to ISWA and revolves around an Indigenous approach to learning and the methods involved. An Indigenous pedagogical approach sets the context for what and how the students will learn. The participants wanted to focus on traditional methods of learning, with students learning in a circle format because this best represents a traditional way of learning for Indigenous people.

## INDIGENOUS PEDAGOGY

In Indigenous pedagogy, it is important to begin by stating who you are and what your influences are, sharing your story and beliefs in the world, and stating where you learned those

ideas. This process tells the story of the individual and allows the students to get to know others in a way that is comfortable, and in the process, situates them in the context of learning. A participant believes this sets up a strong foundation for learning as everyone gets to know each other, it limits barriers to the learning environment, and it is a traditional way of sharing knowledge. It was suggested that within Indigenous society, it is all about relationships; therefore, this process should be fostered in every class. This process reflects an Indigenous pedagogical approach, and there are participants who found success in this method.

## TEACHING INDIGENOUS SOCIAL WORK ADMINISTRATION

Each participant shared their opinion as to the approach and the inclusion of specific material when teaching ISWA. Oral traditions and storytelling need to be utilized when teaching Indigenous administration. Being an Indigenous administrator is a specialized skill that includes the motivation to lead, inspiring a vision, and the ability to actualize this vision, and this needs to be done in the context of an Indigenous perspective that is reflective of the customs, practice, and protocol of Indigenous people. It was suggested it takes courage, creativity, and determination to approach administration from an Indigenous perspective. Along with these specific aspects of Indigenous administration, it is recommended that Indigenous administration needs to include a ceremony.

In social work education, there is a lack of courses on administration. It was suggested that there is a push for an administrative class in Indigenous social work education because ISW graduates are going back to their community and fulfilling leadership and executive director positions.

## NÊHIYAWÎHTWÂWIN

The final part of the network represents the color *kaskitêwâw* (black) and the west direction. This area is a place of knowledge, wisdom, and eldership. The basic thematic networks of Indigenous culture, Indigenization, and Indigenous perspective are important parts of this area because Indigenous people acquire the knowledge and wisdom from the Elders regarding their culture. This area examines the role and function of culture to Indigenous administration, along with an Indigenous perspective and the process of Indigenization. *Nêhiyawîhtwâwin* represents the

Cree perspective, and the dialogue reflected the Indigenous perspective and centered on the practice and protocol of Indigenous culture.

The Cree word *Nêhiyawîhtwâwin* translated in English means ‘Cree way, Cree culture, and Cree custom.’ It describes how ISWA needs to reflect the Cree way of life; this includes the Indigenous perspective and culture.

## INDIGENIZATION

There was some great discussion in this area and participants expressed different ideas about the Indigenization process. The focus group suggested Indigenizing administration in social work starts from the grassroots in the community, along with the language, because it would frame how Indigenous people live, view the world, and communicate. This framing needs to be formatted in a circle so everyone is equal. Students need to be learning from each other. An example of this is having students talk about the grandfather teachings, a discussion on the clan systems, traditional ceremonies, and knowledge. It will provide the foundation for Indigenizing the curriculum and an opportunity for students to get to know each other. A couple of participants stated that they would Indigenize administration by centering Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and concepts that are in the language and traditional teachings and relate them to administration and drop-in lessons from other cultural perspectives.

One participant felt that Indigenization is a community process; everybody comes together and provides their input. Everyone comes in with a different view, and there are going to be times where people get upset because they may disagree with each other’s assessment, but in the end, everyone needs to work together. Indigenous people need to go out and spend time on the land and look at the gifts that have been left behind. Participants agreed that Indigenous knowledge along with Indigenous principles are a solid foundation for the Indigenization process.

## INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

All the participants in this study were Indigenous and come from an Indigenous perspective. They had their opinion on what constitutes this view in an administrative context. It was pointed out that to truly have an Indigenous perspective, it should be specific to the nation that it represents, for example, an Anishnabe perspective, a Kainai perspective, an Inuit perspective etc. A participant stated their Indigenous perspective is different from not only someone who



comes from a different nation but can also be different from someone who comes from their community. It comes down to our teachings and who we have been informed by in our teachings, our cultures form a different Indigenous perspective. The land informs our different Indigenous perspective.

One participant mentioned that you must look at Indigenous epistemology and knowledge because we all come from different nations, such as Cree, Saulteaux, and Dene, and there needs to be an understanding that each perspective is different but also similar in terms of ceremony and the connection to the land. An Indigenous perspective utilizes Indigenous protocols because this sets the foundation and draws in the ancestors. An Indigenous perspective originates with the person and is reflective of their view and way of life, and participants shared how their perspective reflects the culture and how specific examples such as ceremonies, protocols, and beliefs need to be included within this point of view.

## INDIGENOUS CULTURE

Culture means different things to different people and Indigenous people are going to share their knowledge, which is based on their teachings and cultural background. Although culture will be an important aspect of ISWA, it was pointed out that whenever culture and ceremony are included in the classroom, students should be given a choice as to whether to participate and should be briefed on the meanings behind it.

Indigenous culture strengthens the cultural identity of the social worker practicing administration, because of their relationship to the community, and that provides clarity in their relationship to their family, clan, community, and nation. Even though the cultural aspect is an important avenue for all the participants, participants believe people need guidance on their culture.

## CONCLUSION

The current Indigenous Social Work curriculum does not include any material on administration, so students are unprepared for administrative positions within their community. The literature repeatedly emphasizes that students in social work programs need to learn and understand the basic requirements of administration. But administrative knowledge by itself isn't enough. Understanding the practice of administration along with Indigenous traditional methods

is expected in administration positions. Indigenous people are recruited after obtaining their social work degree because there is a need for trained social workers to fulfill important administrative positions within the community. A couple of the participants stated they felt unprepared for the administrative responsibilities when beginning their journey in administration. One mentioned that it was a traumatic experience taking on an administrative position without any previous knowledge or experience and would not want any future Indigenous administrators to experience this. A participant suggested it is the responsibility of the schools of social work to adequately prepare students for all situations that required social work knowledge and this includes administration. If students are going to be in Indigenous leadership and management positions, they need to have the necessary education. Currently, there are some individuals in administrative positions within Indigenous communities who are lacking the educational knowledge and have become ineffective in dealing with the issues and concerns that arise. Indigenous communities need individuals with strong administrative experiences and knowledge to serve their people on a communal and national level. But administrative knowledge by itself isn't enough. Understanding the practice of administration along with Indigenous traditional methods is expected in administration positions. For example, an individual may become a Band Manager/Administrator for their First Nation band. This position consists of administrative duties such as hiring, implementing band policies, and supervising and managing staff. If there is an Indian Child and Family Services (ICFS) agency within their community, they will be expected to serve in an administrative role due to their education and shared background.

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