

COLLEGE CONVERSATION

REPORT FROM THE REGISTRAR

As I write this article, the fall newsletter is starting to take shape and it appears that a common emerging theme is that of growing and learning as a professional. Professional development is key to our work at the College as it provides assurance to the public that social workers remain current in their knowledge, skills and abilities. The articles in this newsletter span a gamut of opportunities, from the knowledge base of the future generation of social work professionals, to responding to recommendations from a Coroner's inquest. Coincidentally, this newsletter will also be published in the month of October; the month in which Registrant's Continuing Professional Development submissions are due. Hint: reading these articles can contribute to CPD hours.

“...from the knowledge base of the future generation of social work professionals, to responding to recommendations from a Coroner's inquest”

My own personal learning this year has been multi-fold. Every day I understand more about the nuances in the *Social Workers Act* and by-laws and their application to our work processes. I am continually acquiring new skills in management, HR and supervision, IT issues and strategic and operational planning.

continued on page 2.

Contents

<u>Report from the Registrar.....</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Report from the Chair.....</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Diploma Mills</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Coroner's Inquest.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Taking on a Social Work Student.....</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>What Does Your Name Tag Say?.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>More Than a Title.....</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Blanket Ceremony.....</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>RCSW Infographic.....</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Introducing.....</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>List of Board and Staff.....</u>	<u>21</u>

One valuable piece of learning this year has been around the accreditation process for social work educational programs conducted by the Canadian Association of Social Work Education (CASWE) Commission on Accreditation and how this compares to provincial governmental structures. My awareness of systems and relationships within those systems has increased, particularly through a consultation process with provincial and national stakeholders and government. In this, I have also learned how detrimental it can be to forge ahead with one's own agenda without consideration for those relationships and respect for due process.

With valued feedback from Registrants and Board members, I am also recognizing ways we can make small changes to our operational processes to increase transparency and consistency and to be more inclusive. I am humbled and grateful to be in this current position and to work with tremendously knowledgeable staff and Board members. Finally, I am looking forward to working with two new staff members who have recently joined our team, Matt Scott and Margaret Alala. You may read their bios and the wealth of knowledge they bring to the team in this newsletter. Welcome to Matt and Margaret!

“ With valued feedback from registrants and board members, I am also recognizing ways we can make small changes to our operational processes to increase transparency and consistency and to be more inclusive.”

Sincerely,

Chelsea



Chelsea Cooledge, RSW
Registrar
BC College of Social Workers



REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Social Work colleagues,

I hope that you have had a great summer in spite of the forest fires burning around the province. Now that we are into Fall and all of the activities that it brings, I wanted to speak to you about a topic that I think has generated a fair amount of concern amongst current and potential social work registrants.

Since September 2015 the social work licensing exam has been mandatory for all new applicants to the BC College of Social Workers. With the implementation of the exam came some angst for a variety of reasons. Social Workers in Canada are not experienced in writing a licensing exam, so there was understandable fear about that. In addition, some Social Workers expressed concern about the exam being an American

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licensing exam and not necessarily relevant to Canadian social work practice. And finally, there was fear that the exam would not adequately capture the practice of Indigenous social workers, and could serve to penalize those who don't share a Eurocentric, white, middle class perspective.

Although I am not an expert on the exam, I have some experience with it and write this article from my personal perspective. I wrote the Clinical exam in 2006 and in 2007 became an item writer for the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Clinical Exam. I have been involved with the ASWB Exam Program since then and have served on the Clinical Exam Committee and been a Form (Exam) Reviewer. My most recent meeting was in Minneapolis in August where I served on the Clinical Exam Committee. My next meeting is in October in Reston, Virginia where I will be doing Form Review.

“The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) is an association of social work regulators for all jurisdictions in Canada and in the US and Virgin Islands.”

The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) is an association of social work regulators for all jurisdictions in Canada and in the US and Virgin Islands, and owns the licensing exams. The ASWB has four exams: Bachelors, Masters, Advanced Generalist, and Clinical. The Bachelors and Masters exams, which are used in BC for social work applicants to the BC College of Social Workers, test entry to practice skills - i.e. the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for a new social worker on the first day of his or her job. The skills required of someone holding an MSW would, by definition, be more advanced than someone holding a BSW. Candidates for the Clinical exam, an exam that is available to eligible Social Work registrants in BC, must

demonstrate 2 years of clinical supervision by an approved supervisor, post MSW, before they can sit for the exam. In BC, a Registered Clinical Social Worker (RCSW) means the social worker may undertake “the independent use of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association, in the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental, emotional

“... social work exams must reflect our diversity without privileging anyone. So how does ASWB do it?”

and behavioural disorders and conditions, for the sole purpose of providing psychosocial intervention to enhance personal, interpersonal and social functioning” BCCSW Bylaw 42 (1)(b).

ASWB understandably must develop an entry to practice licensing exam that is as relevant to a social worker practicing in Nunavut as it is to a social worker practicing in New York City... an exam equally relevant to social work practitioners of all ethnicity, identified gender, religion, and geography (rural/urban; Canadian/American/Virgin Islands etc). In other words, social work exams must reflect our diversity without privileging anyone. So how does ASWB do it?

ASWB recruits item writers that reflect the diversity mentioned above. It is prestigious to become an ASWB item writer and there is no shortage of interested social workers to choose from. In addition, every 7 years ASWB conducts a practice analysis, where feedback is solicited from (diverse) social work practitioners across Canada, United States and the Virgin Islands regarding the skills needed for entry to social work practice. The knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) needed for social work practice evolve over time and the practice analysis captures this. The results of the practice analysis

are then incorporated into the KSAs being tested on the exams.

Once an item is written, it begins a very long journey of scrutiny before it becomes an item on an exam. Items must be legally defensible and have a reference that is no more than 8 years old. Item writers submit an item to an Item Development Consultant who vets the item and, once approved, sends the item to the Exam Committee. The Exam Committee reviews or rewrites each item and then approves it for pretest. Statistics are collected on the pretest items. On every test there are pretest items (unknown to the test taker) that are not scored but rather, generate statistics about how the item is performing (too easy/too hard/confusing etc) and whether any group of test takers is advantaged or disadvantaged by the item.

“...an exam equally relevant to social work practitioners of all ethnicity, identified gender, religion, and geography.”

Once an item performs well on the pretest, it is approved for the test. At that point, Form Reviewers carefully scrutinize an entire test (called a Form) to make sure every item reads well and is appropriate for the test. Canadian Form Reviewers scrutinize every test to verify and confirm that every test item is appropriate for Canada.

The ASWB licensing exams rate very well when compared to other professional licensing exams (e.g. medicine; pharmacology, law, etc). The statistics and tables show that the exams are testing the knowledge, skills and abilities that they were designed to test. This ensures that if a candidate fails the test on the first attempt, that

the candidate will need to do additional preparation in order to successfully pass the exam on the second attempt.

Any Registered Social Worker is eligible to apply to ASWB to become an item writer. ASWB is actively recruiting Canadian item writers. This is a wonderful opportunity for Registered Social Workers to become trained as an item writer by ASWB and to meet Social Work colleagues from other jurisdictions during the weekend of training. The item writer training usually takes place in Virginia or Washington, DC and all expenses are paid by ASWB. I have found my experiences as an item writer, and subsequently as an Exam Committee member and Form Reviewer to be very rewarding and indeed, validating as a social work practitioner. I have made many friends over the years, and keep in regular contact with some of them. I would encourage social workers to consider applying to become an Item Writer. One additional incentive is that item writers are paid an honorarium of \$1,000 USD for every 30 items approved for pretest.



Kind Regards,

Deborah Jones, RCSW
Chair of the Board
BC College of Social Workers

DIPLOMA MILLS AND PROTECTING THE PUBLIC

DARREN USHER, RSW

As Registered Social Workers, we know how much work, time and effort we put into our education, not to mention the expense! For those of you who read the September 10th, 2017 article on CBC News Business (Marketplace) about fake degrees, I would like to assure you that your College is definitely alert to the many issues involved in documentation authenticity.

The CBC headline read: ‘All of us can be harmed’: Investigation reveals hundreds of Canadians have phoney degrees (By Eric Szeto, Nelisha Vellani)

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/diplo-ma-mills-marketplace-fake-degrees-1.4279513>

In their investigations, CBC Marketplace found that “more than 800 Canadians could have purchased a fake degree” from “the world’s largest diploma mill” and stated that “some Canadians could be putting their health and well-being in the hands of nurses, engineers, counsellors and other professionals with phoney credentials”. The BCCSW (and the predecessor organization, the Board of Registration for Social Workers) has been diligent in its development and enforcement of bylaws, policies and procedures to prevent any applicants not meeting the BCCSW’s minimum, yet rigorous, registration requirements from being registered. Below are measures that are currently in place for verifying different types of degrees that applicants submit to the College:



Canadian/USA social work degrees: the primary safeguard for applicants with social work credentials from an institution in Canada or the USA is that they must have obtained their degree from a program approved by the BCCSW Board. These programs have been rigorously assessed and are generally accredited by the Canadian Association for Social Work Education-Association canadienne pour la formation en travail social (CASWE-ACFTS) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in the USA. CASWE-ACFTS has developed the Commission on Accreditation (COA) which applies a process of assessment and evaluation to social work pro-

“...your College is definitely alert to the many issues involved in documentation authenticity.”

grams that apply for accreditation. The process of accreditation can take several years and must be renewed by re-accreditation every 8 years (by COA review). Applicant’s academic transcripts and relevant documentation must be sent directly to BCCSW from the issuing authority (usually the academic institution) in an institutionally sealed envelope, which increases security.

Non Canadian/USA social work degrees: the BCCSW also receives applications for registration from internationally trained social workers. The process of verifying the authenticity of their credentials is twofold. First, the applicant must apply to have their transcripts assessed by the International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES). Established in 1995, ICES has built a substantial database of international academic institutions and programs. All documentation

must be sent directly to ICES from the issuing authority (usually the academic institution), must bear the proper seals, signatures, and/or postal markings and where necessary, certified translations into English or French submitted. ICES then authenticates the documents and evaluates them for Canadian academic equivalency. ICES will then issue a report directly to the BCCSW with a copy of all documentation including transcripts. After receiving the ICES report, a BCCSW evaluation is undertaken to ensure the program content is significantly equivalent to a Canadian social work degree. BCCSW evaluators ensure the physical existence of the academic institution, search online course content, and verify details of the program and the applicant's participation in the program. Any irregularities and inconsistencies are thoroughly investigated.

tution's stamped seal. Once received, a BCCSW evaluation of the applicant's 'Knowledge Equivalency Portfolio' is undertaken to ensure the program content is significantly equivalent to a social work degree. BCCSW evaluators ensure the physical existence of the academic institution and search online course content and verify details of the program and the applicant's participation in the program.

The CBC News article goes on to describe a specific case of a fake PhD degree held by "a counsellor, social worker and psychotherapist who specializes in helping people cope with substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder and the trauma of child abuse." The PhD was bought from a University "affiliated with Axiom's international diploma mill scheme, and is not an accredited post-secondary institution. There is no campus, just a website where customers can trade "life experience" and money for a degree." Clearly, based on the BCCSW evaluation processes outlined above, such a degree would be quickly flagged.

As Michael Juskey, a Toronto criminal lawyer, states to the CBC: "Uttering a forged document is a criminal offence that can lead to jail time" and the BCCSW would take such a false representation by an applicant extremely seriously, with a full investigation and likely disciplinary action.

"...a BCCSW evaluation is undertaken to ensure the program content is significantly equivalent to a Canadian social work degree."

"...BCCSW would take such a false representation by an applicant extremely seriously, with a full investigation and likely disciplinary action."

Non Social Work Degrees (Related Degrees): the BCCSW Board has designated seven degrees as being sufficiently related to social work to meet the requirements for registration (for more information: http://bccsw.pubweb.dc.thentia.com/?page_id=508). The applicant must show the knowledge, skill and abilities acquired in their education are 'substantially equivalent' to a social work degree. This equivalency is determined by assessing their course content against core criteria established by CASWE in their social work program accreditation process. In this application process, academic transcripts and relevant documentation must be sent directly to BCCSW from the issuing authority (usually the academic institution). Furthermore, the BCCSW does not simply accept a degree, as noted above, but rather requires a transcript directly from the institution which contains the insti-

Unfortunately, the 'social worker' mentioned in the article was found on the register of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. The CBC did not claim that this reg-

istration was obtained based on false documentation. You can read a response to the CBC report from the Ontario College here: <http://www.ocswssw.org/2017/09/18/message-from-the-registrar/>. All registered social workers in BC are listed on the online register, searchable through the BCCSW website. Anyone suspecting a social worker of being falsely represented should inform the BCCSW and an investigation will be conducted.

“All registered social workers in BC are listed on the online register, searchable through the BCCSW website.”

The CBC article concludes by asking “Who’s responsible?” and as Allen Ezell, a former FBI agent and co-author of the book *Degree Mills: The Billion-Dollar Industry That Has Sold Over a Million Fake Diplomas*, states: “It’s everyone’s problem, the people have to do their homework when they’re getting ready to sign up with a school. It then goes to the employer when they’re presented with the credentials to check it out.” As a new Director of Professional Practice at the BCCSW, I have been impressed to learn about the processes the College has in place for authenticating and evaluating applicant credentials. I intend to do my part to continue this diligent work and collaborate with the staff and Board to constantly improve College processes.

CORONER'S INQUEST INTO THE DEATHS OF THREE PEOPLE AT ABBOTSFORD REGIONAL HOSPITAL

ANDREW KERR CD, RSW

A coroner's inquest was held in September 2016 related to the suicide deaths of three people who were patients at Abbotsford Regional Hospital shortly before their deaths. At the completion of the proceedings, the verdict at inquest made recommendations to many different agencies, including the BC College of Social Workers. The jury findings of this inquest can be found at <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/inquest/2016/geisheimer-abdi-charles-jury-findings.pdf>

The recommendations for the BCCSW were:

#11 Consider enhancing the standards of documentation to require specific evidence (including chronology) of the care provider's assessment of suicide risk and development of a collaborative safety plan.

#12 Consider mandating annual suicide risk assessment and management re-training for health care and behavioral health professionals in order to maintain registration.

“Registrants are reminded that the Standards of Practice require Registrants to remain current with emerging social work knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to their area of practice”

#13 Consider creating an education program designed to educate all health care staff on the practical application of all the privacy laws regarding the sharing of health care information and mandate annual training and retraining as part of maintaining professional registration.

In responding to the jury recommendations, the College and Board considered how these recommendations intersect with the current Standards of Practice, the College mandate of public protection, and the annual Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements of registrants. While the recommendations seem to be targeted towards clinicians who work in acute or community mental health and/or substance use services in health care settings, the BCCSW Standards of Practice have to equitably apply to Registrants working in all different areas of practice.

Our existing Standards of Practice on documentation contain specific requirements about client records (see Principle 4: The Social Work Record). BCCSW considers that the existing practice standards sufficiently address the concerns identified in the verdict. The practice standards and accompanying practice guidelines are currently undergoing revision, and this jury recommendation will be reviewed by the Quality Assurance Committee and the Board as part of the revision process.

In considering the recommendation about annual suicide risk assessment and management re-training, Registrants who engage in suicide risk assessment in their practice are encouraged to consider how the annual self-directed CPD program could be used to augment or reinforce clinical skills related to suicide assessment and suicide risk management. The jury verdict noted that some of the professionals who gave evidence reported they had not engaged in any formal re-training on suicide risk management since graduating from their respective programs. Registrants are reminded that the Standards of Practice require Registrants to remain current with emerging social work knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to their area of practice.

The third recommendation to the BCCSW recommends the creation of an education program about the application of provincial privacy laws that would have to be completed annually in order to maintain registration. Sharing of client information with family members was one of the central issues that was examined in depth at the inquest and a discrepancy was noted where involved staff members cited that privacy legislation prohibited the sharing of client information with family members, yet no specific training was provided to staff about the application of privacy laws. While it is outside the public protection mandate of the BCCSW to implement such an education program, it is acknowledged that this is an issue that is applicable to all Registrants, and the BCCSW Quality Assurance Committee will investigate how this recommendation could be integrated within the BCCSW's policies and annual CPD requirements. BCCSW will also forward this recommendation to the BC Association of Social Workers for possible development of training opportunities.

“Sharing of client information with family members was one of the central issues that was examined in depth at the inquest...”

The purpose of a coroner's inquest is to examine the issues surrounding a death and then provide recommendations to the service providers and relevant agencies about how future deaths could be avoided. Suicide deaths are especially tragic for the families and professionals involved, and almost always allow for reflections on practice and reviews of training, policies, and processes to see if there are ways to improve care for people who are at risk for suicide.

“...consult with your clinical supervisors, other leaders in your organizations or the staff at the BCCSW.”

If suicide risk assessment and suicide risk management are part of your clinical practice, please take some time to reflect how the recommendations made to the BCCSW (and other recommendations in the verdict, if applicable) might apply to your own practice. If you have concerns or ideas to improve services to clients and need support, consult with your clinical supervisors, other leaders in your organizations or the staff at the BCCSW.

On a personal note, I worked with two of the people who tragically took their lives and was asked to give evidence at this coroner's inquest. It is a great privilege for me to honour the memory of these three people and the loss that their families feel in providing this information, and the possible improvements we can reflect on in our respective practices.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN TAKING ON A SOCIAL WORK STUDENT

SELENA BATEMAN, RSW

Not only a benefit to students, the experience of supervising a student can lead to an increased capacity to analyze one's own work and allow for the exposure to new ideas and approaches. Further, the RSW supervisor can claim the time spent with the student as continuing professional development (CPD) hours.

A key component of social work education is the student practicum which provides the student with field experience. No matter where social work students receive their accredited education in Canada, practicums are required. This field education provides the student with the opportunity to integrate theory into practice.

Registered Social Worker (RSW) supervisors help to guide the development of the student's critical reflection, decision making and increase their understanding of social work practice. RSW supervisors should possess the ability to communicate their knowledge, respectfully provide feedback and offer a supportive environment for the student learner. For the student, practicum placements allow for the development of competence and of professional identity.

Once oriented and while supervised, the student is able to provide assistance with work tasks. Keep in mind that an RSW supervisor must co-sign records and reports authored by the social work student (Standard of Practice 4.6).

“Once oriented and while supervised, the student is able to provide assistance with work tasks.”

Additionally, RSW supervisors in direct practice must inform clients ahead of time if their information may be shared with the social work student, or if the student will be involved in ser-

vice provision, in order to provide the client with accurate information in relation to the limits of confidentiality and their ability to make an informed decision (Standard of Practice 5.8).

Typically the supervisor is expected to spend one hour per week in direct supervision with the student, which may or may not be a commitment that each RSW is able to make. Should

“... it is important to consider the complexity and sensitivity of social work tasks.”

an RSW take on a student, it is essential that the student is properly supervised. Some of the direct supervision time can be spent reflecting on the Standards of Practice as they relate to current practice concerns in order to familiarize the social work student with the obligations and responsibilities of an RSW.

As settings vary, it is important to consider the complexity and sensitivity of social work tasks. Some places of employment can accommodate social work students with little experience while others would not be as compatible. Consider what type of employment or educational background and strengths a potential student would need to hold in order to successfully participate in a practicum at your place of employment.

WHAT DOES YOUR NAME TAG SAY?

LUCKI KANG, RSW

Supporting social work practicum students in your work setting has multiple benefits. It contributes to building a foundation for professional practice. You not only have the opportunity to contribute to the development of safe, ethical and competent future practitioners of the profession but you will also have the opportunity to learn and discover from the students about what may have changed in social work education and be brought up to date with current research in the field. Please read the following, from Lucki Kang, Field Education Co-ordinator at the University of the Fraser Valley and Co-chair of the CASWE National Field Education Committee, regarding the benefits and challenges of supervising a student. Lucki also highlights what some may consider to be the 'watering down' of our profession through the use of various titles other than Social Worker. The *Social Workers Act* provides for the legal use of this title and as she so aptly points out, let's proudly own it and use it in our professional realm.

Forward by Chelsea Cooledge

WHAT DOES YOUR NAME TAG SAY?

Mental health worker? Therapist? Counsellor? Facilitator? Case manager?, Program manager? Clinical Supervisor? Clinician? Youth Care Worker? or perhaps Social Worker?

We are Social Workers...

We engage in areas of practice such as mental health, therapy, counselling, facilitation, case management, program management, community development and much more. Should we be asking ourselves why we as a profession are not advocating for the title of Social Worker and why we are allowing systems to provide us with other titles that they may think are more socially acceptable?

Imagine having an opportunity to share your definition of social work. What might it be? How can we, as a profession, take an active role in profiling the strength and value of our profession for what it is and dispel the public myths that we just take children away? Although protecting children is a pivotal and very important part of our work, we are educated to do much more. Let's start with defining social work and naming our skills rather than limiting ourselves by defining ourselves by saying we 'help' people. We are a unique profession guided by a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. Owing our



title and articulating what and how we go about our work is important.

Social Work is a regulated profession that is deeply rooted in social justice where we assess and address the oppression faced by individuals, groups and communities while using a strengths-based and person-in-environment perspective. We engage in leadership skills of teamwork, collaboration, and creativity to bring about social change. We do this through education and awareness building, community development, clinical work at the individual and group levels, navigating systems, analyzing policy and advocacy. Social workers require undergraduate and graduate University degree credentials.

We all have a professional responsibility to advance the profession and can do this in many ways. As Social Workers, we have all completed supervised field placements through our formal education. National accreditation bodies outline

clear standards for the provision of field education and provincial regulatory bodies have developed clear Standards of Practice supporting Continuing Professional Development and mentorship of students.

There is a recognition that the field of Social Work is diverse with qualified social work graduates taking on many roles. Social Work accreditation standards require field instructors: to have a Social Work degree at the undergraduate or graduate level; practice experience in the social work field for a minimum of 2 years; and, to have met the criteria for registration with the provincial regulatory body. Those of us who do not have a work-based title of 'Social Worker' are welcomed to provide field instruction to social work students if the criteria are met. Universities are keen to hear from you as students have much to learn from Social Workers who practice social work in diverse areas.

Social work field education has been based on the principles of service with an expectation for qualified social workers to give of their time freely as part of their professional responsibility as do other professions. The model that has historically been used for social work field placements is individualized where one student is placed with one social worker. It is often reported that most social workers remember their learning in the field placement with it often being referred to as the signature pedagogy of social work education.

“...why then, is it so challenging for Social Workers to provide field instruction to students?”

With such a strong commitment to education and collaborative practice, why then, is it so challenging for Social Workers to provide field instruction to students? Is it that Social Work-

ers feel they don't have the skills or confidence to mentor or is it that systems that they work in are limiting their ability to engage in mentorship of students?

There is a current crisis in field education resulting in an imbalance between the number of field placements available and an increasing number of students being admitted to University Social Work programs. Although we have all

“The reality in the field has shifted the learner centered intent of the field placement...”

had to complete field placements to qualify for our degrees, there appears to be a disconnect as Social Workers in practice are not putting their names forward to mentor students. In fact, it has become very challenging for University programs to recruit qualified Social Workers to provide field placement learning opportunities that meet accreditation standards. The field has shifted to individualized practice with Social Workers experiencing increased demands in the workforce, higher caseloads, and they are faced with organizational policies and procedures that limit the ability for social workers to provide mentorship and supervision.

With these increased demands in the field, Universities often hear from practitioners that there is an expectation for social work students to enter their field placements prepared with a strong practice foundation as there is not the time in the field to invest in basic practice skills. The challenge is that students enter their post secondary education journey with varying degrees of life and professional experience. University Social Work academic courses tend to focus on the development of the theoretical foundation of the profession leaving the practice based learning to the field placement which, in fact, com-

prises between one third and one quarter of the core social work curriculum. The reality in the field has shifted the learner centered intent of the field placement to more of a job readiness expectation and the development of potential employees. The placement is often viewed as a lengthy orientation to the job with a need for students to have a higher level of preparedness for practice prior to entering the field placement; this has affected the number of placements available to students. We must remember that field placements are part of the core social work curriculum to ensure student development of practice based skills, to foster critical thinking and develop reflective practice at a deeper level.

and reach out to University Social Work programs in your communities to collaborate and share your innovative ideas to engage in field education and develop your capacity to teach, mentor, and support your future colleagues. Universities are committed to professional development as a Field Instructor/Supervisor and look forward to hearing from you. There are many Social Work programs situated throughout the province with some providing distance education as well.

We have the power to profile the diversity and strength of Social Work and can do this through engaging in social work field education. We are agents of change...we are Registered Social Workers.

“As we invest and commit ourselves to the future of the social work profession, we are encouraged to think outside the box...”

Supervising students can be challenging as it can be a different focus than the Social Worker's own experience of supervision from a management, disciplinary perspective. Perhaps it is time to use our strengths of creativity and flexibility to review the feasibility of the current models of field education and explore alternate models of field education to build capacity in Social Workers to collaboratively mentor students.



As we invest and commit ourselves to the future of the social work profession, we are encouraged to think outside the box, or, like there is no box,

MORE THAN A TITLE: NAVIGATING THE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF A REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKER

SELENA BATEMAN, RSW

Becoming a Registered Social Worker (RSW) means more than the ability to call oneself a Social Worker. RSWs are accountable to service recipients, employers and the College. RSWs are governed by the BC College of Social Workers and must adhere to the Standards of Practice, *Social Workers Act*, College Bylaws and all applicable legislation. This article highlights the obligations of RSWs in the workplace.

For some RSWs, their employer or supervisor may not be a regulated professional or there may not be other regulated professionals in the organization. Other RSWs may work with many other regulated professionals, such as in hospital settings or interdisciplinary teams. No matter the reporting structure or organizational framework, all registrants are required to follow

is why it is vital to clearly understand and work within the Standards of Practice. Should a RSW's workplace policy conflict with the Standards of Practice, registrants still hold an obligation to follow the Standards of Practice, in accordance with Standard 2.15:

If there is a conflict between the College Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice and a social worker's work environment, the social worker's obligation is to the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice.

“The College governs Registered Social Workers rather than employers or organizations...”



the minimum acceptable levels of practice that are established in the Standards of Practice. The Standards of Practice document is the key tool used to assist with ethical, safe and effective service delivery – which ultimately works towards protecting the public. As each situation is unique, the Standards are meant to be a set of overarching requirements rather than direct, step by step instructions.

The College governs Registered Social Workers rather than employers or organizations, which

While this requirement could appear conflictual with workplace environments, keep in mind that there are a breadth of work environments, employers and organizational mandates. Should a RSW recognize that employment practices are inconsistent with the Standards of Practice, the RSW is responsible for advocating for practices that do align, as per Standard 2.16:

A social worker shall advocate for workplace conditions and policies that are consistent with the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the British Columbia College of Social Workers. A social worker will use professional judgment in determining how to advocate. Such advocacy may take the form of documenting concerns and discussing them with a supervisor or manager, or other key persons in the organization.

Some of the RSW requirements that are established in the Standards of Practice may not re-

quire such advocacy. For example, RSWs are required to use the RSW designation in conjunction with social work practice. This means that the RSW designation must be added to work email signatures, listed on reports and all other records that the RSW authors. This way the reader knows that the social worker is a regulated professional and what profession the author is part of. It is recommended to refresh one's knowledge of the Standards of Practice periodically as well as when confronted with challenging situations.

The responsibilities of RSWs do not end with the Standards of Practice. In the unlikely event that a RSW believes that another RSW is harming a recipient of services while practicing social work, they have a legal duty to report this belief to the College. This provision applies even if the information is confidential. This requirement comes from section 40(1) of the *Social Workers Act*:

A registrant who has reason to believe that another registrant, in the course of practicing social work, is causing or has caused physical or significant emotional harm to or is or has engaged in sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a client, must promptly provide to the registrar a written and signed report on the matter.

“Becoming a RSW provides the privilege and recognition of being a professional.”

Becoming a RSW provides the privilege and recognition of being a professional. This professionalism requires the RSW to practice within professional standards and to be accountable to the public. The decision to become part of a profession holds benefits and obligations, both of which need to be kept in mind while practising.

BLANKET CEREMONY STRENGTHENS CULTURALLY SAFE PARTNERSHIP WITH 23 BC HEALTH REGULATORS

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THANK YOU TO THE FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AUTHORITY

Version: 31 May 17

Led by Elder Leonard George (Səlilwətaʔ First Nation), the ceremony was the next step in the partnership journey that began when BC's health regulators signed onto the Declaration of Commitment to Cultural Safety and Humility in March 2017.



Coming together in ceremony was important to honour the commitments made by our 23 new partners and begin cultural safety work in a good way, explained Leonard, who has been FNHA's Elder Advisor since before Transfer.

Health providers such as nurses, doctors, dentists, and many others who are represented by BC's health regulators play a vital role in shaping the healthcare experiences of BC First Nations. A commitment to cultural safety and humility by these professions is a critical part of creating an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe receiving health care.

BLANKET CEREMONY: LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR A STRONG RELATIONSHIP

Leonard opened by sharing a song and the First Nations perspective of health and wellness. He

emphasized the importance of physical, spiritual, emotional and mental aspects of health.

“It's an honour to be with you here today, on behalf of all the Nations in BC that have mandated the FNHA to deliver health for First Nations people,” said Leonard. “We are here to lay the foundation for healthy communities in BC with our traditional spiritual guidance...to ensure that wholistic wellness is put back in the roots of our people.”

Four witnesses were tasked to carry the knowledge of the day forward: Gabriel George (Səlilwətaʔ First Nation; Leonard's son), Janene Erickson (Nak'azdli First Nation; FNHA Manager, CEO Office), Donald Scott (Director of Finance & Corporate Services, College of Licensed Practical Nurses) and Carmel Wiseman (Deputy Registrar, College of Dental Surgeons).



Each of the health regulators were sung into the room by Gabriel and Leonard. As they stood in a half circle, helpers Shayla Jacobs (Squamish Nation; Ancestral Name Sumkwaht; FNHA Vancouver Regional Team), Jennifer Lynn Smith (Wuikinuxv and Campbell River; FNHA Vancouver Regional Team), Katie Skelton (Anishnabe from Wikwemikong & Wahnapiatae; FNHA

CEO Office), and Janelle Tom (Squamish Nation; Vancouver Coastal Living Marker; FNHA-CEO Office) blanketed and wrapped each representative. Blankets carry important meaning in many other BC First Nations cultures.

Among *Səlilwətaʔ* people they represent wealth, nobility and reciprocation.

“Our Elder here, he is covering you with his love. Your heart is covered and your mind is covered. The job you have is not easy – protecting the public interest, making sure that the public is going to be okay, knowing that lives are at stake. These blankets honour you but also help you in your work, to help you have a strong heart and strong mind, and an open heart and open mind,” said Gabriel.

When each regulator had received a blanket, FNHA staff in attendance joined Leonard and Gabriel in singing the Coast Salish Anthem. Witnesses were recognized and shared their observations of the day. “In today’s ceremony what stood out for me were the values of respect and spirituality. The Elder spoke to us about respecting yourself first, and then the universe will push that back to you,” said Donald.

ON A JOURNEY TOWARDS CULTURAL SAFETY

After the ceremony, those gathered discussed the commitments made and the journey ahead to support cultural safety in their professions.

“Every regulator, every provider needs to be a part of this. It is complex, there isn’t one solution. We have to think about things not from our perspective, but from the prospective patient and their view of health, sickness...their historical experiences,” said Jerome Marburg, Registrar and CEO of the College of Dental Surgeons.

The work ahead includes implementing and sustaining change with members of each of the 23 health professions represented. This Fall, regu-

lated health providers will convene a gathering with BC First Nations health leaders to identify further opportunities for embedding cultural safety and humility into their health practice.



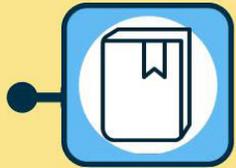
“Cultural safety, cultural humility – it isn’t a tick box, it isn’t just one training. It is a journey and a partnership. It is about creating a new relationship between the health system and First Nations,” said FNHA CEO Joe Gallagher (Tla’amin Nation).

Did you know? BC’s health regulators are not the only health leaders to have made this pledge to cultural safety and humility. In July 2015, the BC Minister of Health and CEOs from each of BC’s six health authorities signed on as well.

The BC College of Social Workers is proud to be part of the BC Health Regulators (BCHR) which represents 23 regulatory colleges. It is an incorporated, not-for-profit society with a purpose of promoting collaboration and partnership among health profession regulators governed by the *Health Professions Act* and the *Social Workers Act*. BCHR strives for excellence in public protection and qualified, ethical and safe care from regulated health professionals. Visit BCHR’s website to learn more.



RCSWs may independently assess, diagnose and treat **mental disorders**



RCSWs must have courses in the DSM, **clinical practice** and lifespan development



RCSWs must have a **Master** of Social Work



RCSWs must write the **exam** for Clinical Social Workers



Who Can Diagnose Mental Disorders?



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INTRODUCING...

Since the last College Conversation, the BCCSW team has had the pleasure of welcoming two new faces to the organization.

MATT SCOTT

Director of Professional Practice

Matt Scott has recently joined the BCCSW this fall to fill in temporarily for Selena's parental leave as the Director of Professional Practice - Inquiry. Matt has been a social worker for 20 years in BC.



Matt's practice has not been limited to a specific population or area of practice but has grown with him as a professional and as a person.

His broad background in diverse areas of practice across the lifespan has been in front line areas where social workers tend to encounter direct challenges professionally and ethically. This gives Matt sensitivity to the nuts and bolts of practice and to the sorts of issues which generate complaints to the BCCSW.

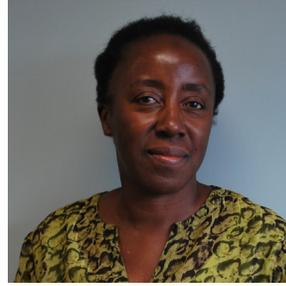
For the last decade, Matt's focus has been helping develop and lead Adult Protection work within the province under the *Adult Guardianship Act* and related legislation.

Matt's earlier social work career was primarily in front line mental health and addictions across the lifespan in both community, and in acute care. Matt also has worked in child protection assessment and investigations with MCFD and as a civilian social worker for members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Matt has always sought out ways to challenge his own practice, and is now greatly looking forward to supporting both his fellow social workers and the public from a regulatory perspective.

Matt and his family are fortunate to spend time between urban living in Vancouver and rural life on an island off an island in the Salish Sea.

MARGARET ALALA

Professional Practice Associate



Margaret possesses an interest in trauma-informed practice particularly as it relates to the role of social injustice in poor mental health. Her interests span both mainstream

and non-mainstream forms of knowledge and global knowledge exchange. She is keen on discovering ways in which marginalized perspectives can be incorporated into practice.

While completing her final practicum at the Africa Mental Health Foundation in Kenya, Margaret was interested in how they incorporated alternative approaches to practice in a practice that respected both traditional healers and western medicine. She completed her first practicum with Coast Mental Health/Mental Health Commission of Canada's At Home/Chez Soi's Housing First pilot project where she worked with the intensive case management team on housing homeless people in Vancouver living with mental illness and addictions.

Margaret has an MSW from the University of Victoria and business degrees from New York University and Adelphi University. Before a career change to social work, she worked in Kenya, the US and Canada for both non-profit and, commercial organizations. She has spent several years working and volunteering in mental health, hospice palliative care, with women in conflict with the law, community court, homelessness, working with seniors and food security. She is committed to critiquing how oppression may be built into social work best practices.

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