

Lay Report
March 31, 2021

Project 6: Indigenous Perspectives and Experiences with Caring
Stream B: Healthy, Productive Work Partnership Grant

Co-Investigators:

Dr. Eva Jewell (Ryerson University)

Dr. Andrea Doucet (Brock University)

Objectives and Overview

The collaborative partnership between Brock University and the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (FENFC) is led by principle investigators Dr. Eva Jewell (Ryerson University) and Dr. Andrea Doucet (Brock University). Our team is focused on exploring the ways the Carer-Friendly Workplace Standard can be enhanced to ensure the needs of Indigenous carer-employees in the Niagara region are met. Our team provides an intersectional perspective on the way the CIAW Standard can be adapted to ensure a culturally appropriate and informed design. We are dedicated to enhancing the Standard to recognize the unique ways Indigenous peoples in Canada experience dual responsibilities of paid employment and unpaid caregiving responsibilities.

Our research is guided by a methodological process that combined the team's experience with Indigenous methodologies/epistemologies/ontologies, community-based research, and ecological approaches to knowledge making and narrative analysis (Doucet, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; Jewell, 2018).

Progress to Date

Our progress to date includes securing our research team: our peer researcher Karen Hilston from the FENFC and Jessica Falk, an MA student researcher from Brock University. After completing two ethics applications, one to Brock University's Research Ethics Board (REB) and one to the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), we conducted two focus groups at the FENFC in July and October of 2019. Our discussions were rich and are guiding our writing and analysis. Luckily our focus groups were conducted before COVID-19 restrictions could impact our work, however we did plan on hosting an event with FENFC community members to share our preliminary findings, and have been unable to do so because of COVID-19 restrictions, and the impact COVID-19 has had on the centre.

Preliminary Findings and Next Steps

Our preliminary findings include: exploring the way care work is valued in Indigenous organizations and the unique circumstances of Indigenous peoples in Canada as carer employees.

First, care work is especially valued and held in high esteem in Indigenous organizations; moreover, the broad nature of women-led leadership at the FENFC impacts and deepens the value of care in the organization. Highlighting this Indigenous ethic of care will enhance the Caregiver Standard. Second, Indigenous peoples in Canada have unique social determinants of health as a result of systemic racism, the legacy of residential schools, and differing networks of care and household demographics in Indigenous communities. The team is paying close attention to these unique social determinants of health, such as higher rates of diabetes than the mainstream Canadian population, and how this results in unique care demands and measures relevant to the Standard. We continue writing about our findings, and plan to produce two articles for peer-reviewed journals, and one op-ed detailing our findings in 2021. We also plan a follow up discussion in summer 2021 with the FENFC to discuss the ways the Standard can be adapted for Indigenous led organizations.

Finally, we recently worked on a press release for the Brock news detailing our progress to date. You can find this article here:

<https://brocku.ca/brock-news/2021/03/brock-and-fort-erie-native-friendship-centre-research-indigenous-caregiver-experiences/>