

Name: Pooneh Golestani & Stacey Boudrias

Institution: Universite du Quebec en Abitibi-Temiscamingue (UQAT)

E-mail: pooneh.golestani2@uqat.ca

Affirming First Nations Teacher Identity through relationality and professional learning communities

Short description / Abstract:

Indigenous teacher education programs have long aimed to support Indigenous pre-service teachers in exploring and affirming their professional cultural identity. This is significant not only for professional growth, but also for the development of teaching practices that reflect Indigenous values, identity and culture.

Research on Indigenous education, decolonization, teacher education, and teacher identity, marking specific areas for further exploration and inspiration, raises new analytical questions made possible through relationality to Indigenous knowledge. The presentation explores the experience of a group of First Nations teachers and teacher candidates from Anishinaabeg and Cree communities, enrolled in the First Nations Teacher Education Program at UQAT, in the Anishnabe Aki of western Quebec. Their participation in a cultural exchange project involving the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) from the University of Alberta, and the Enoch Cree Nations in Edmonton, is the centre of this exploration. The students' experience involves a holistic learning relationship that emphasizes the importance of the Indigenous worldviews embedded in actions, relationships and ceremonies. Literature in Indigenous teacher education calls for further analysis of the relationship between teacher identity and Indigenous knowledge, through connections and interchange between individuals, communities and nations. We reflect on the impact of relational experience leading to pathways of forming Professional Learning Communities for the participants. We further discuss the impact this can have on Indigenous teacher identity, and how it contributes to professional development of teachers in an Indigenous context.