

DEPARTMENT Name

COURSE OUTLINE – Fall 2026

SW2130(A2): Social Work with Indigenous Peoples - 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

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RSW

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OFFICE HOURS: By appointment

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: This course provides students with an introduction to social work practice working with Indigenous Peoples. Students will explore Indigenous cultural-specific skills and approaches to social work founded on the cultures, values, and philosophies of Indigenous Peoples. Students will also critically examine the historical legacy of colonialism and social work in Indigenous communities.

PREREQUISITE(S):

Complete all of the following
SW1000

COREQUISITE(S):

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Greenwood, M., de Leeuw, S., & Lindsay, N. M. (Eds.). (2018). *Determinants of Indigenous peoples' health in Canada: Beyond the social* (2nd ed.). Canadian Scholars.

Blackstock, C. (2024, October). *The Breath of Life: First Nations knowledge*. [Unpublished manuscript]. [The Breath of Life: First Nations Knowledge](#)



Ryan, J., & Ivelja, J. (2023). Indigenisation, (De)Colonisation, and Whiteness: Dismantling Social Work Education. *Australian Social Work*, 76(3), 300–314.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2023.2203116>

Home | beaverlandalberta <https://www.beaverlandalberta.org/>

https://youtu.be/a6Vs7IcxaF0?si=2rIsWUjzIs_ZMm-P

[Mashkawi-Manidoo Bimaadiziwin Spirit to Soar \(English Version\) | Films | CBC Gem](#)

Reimagining self-determination: Relational, decolonial, and intersectional perspectives (2025):
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0962629824000611>

Energy colonialism (2024): <https://journals.librarypublishing.arizona.edu/jpe/article/id/5659/>

The polarized mind in context (2021)
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8630091/>

[RPT_IndigenousSocialWorkPracticeFramework_Final_20190219.pdf](#)

Stewart SL. (2008). Promoting indigenous mental health: cultural perspectives on healing from Native counsellors in Canada. *International Journal of Health Promotion & Education*, 46(2), 49–56.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14635240.2008.10708129>

<https://youtu.be/PdcrLv5v7LM?si=vpIvn37PKcd6rS-->

[ALIGN's Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework in Alberta \(ICUF\) - ALIGN Association of Community Services](#)

DELIVERY MODE(S): On-Campus

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop cultural competence by identifying and applying culturally-specific skills and approaches to social work when engaging with Indigenous Peoples.
- Critically examine the historical and ongoing impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities and how this shapes contemporary social work practice with Indigenous Peoples.
- Analyze and evaluate the role of social work in Indigenous communities, focusing on the ethical considerations and responsibilities of practitioners.
- Explore and integrate Indigenous perspectives on social justice, healing, and community well-being into social work interventions and approaches.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of decolonization in social work practice, and identify strategies to support the empowerment and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples.
- Critically reflect on personal and professional biases and develop strategies to work effectively with Indigenous communities while respecting their cultural norms and traditions.

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferalberta.alberta.ca>.

**** For courses with alpha (letter) grading, a grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability.**

EVALUATIONS:

GRADING CRITERIA

Assignment	Description	Grade	Due Date
Assignment 1	Creative Practice Project	20	Oct 22 nd
Assignment 1	Experiential Learning	30	Nov 5 th
Assignment 2	Advocacy Campaign/Presentation	40	Nov 26 th
Assignment 4	Participation	10	Dec 8 th

Please note that most institutions will not accept your course for transfer credit **IF** your grade is **less than C-**.

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines		Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100		C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-94		C	2.0	63-66
A-	3.7	80-84		C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79		D+	1.3	55-59

B	3.0	73-76		D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72		F	0.0	00-49

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Sep 3 No Class Complete readings Students are welcome to join us in the landbased healing NT1100 class 8:30-4:30 Sept 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9	Structural Determinants of Aboriginal Peoples' Health Promoting Indigenous mental health	Chapter 1 Article: Stewart SL. (2008). Promoting Indigenous mental health	
Sep 8 No Class Complete Readings Students are welcome to join us in the landbased healing NT1100 class 8:30-4:30 Sept 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 Sept 10 Class Starts	Embodying Self-Determination: Beyond the Gender Binary Reflections of One Indian Doctor in a Town Up North	Chapter 3&4 https://youtu.be/FYKhJAsGMvM ACSW Indigenous social work practice link	
Sep 15/17 Meet at Friendship Centre Community Garden	Two-Eyed Seeing in Medicine The Spiritual Dimension of Holistic Health: A Reflection 94 Calls to Action: Truth and Reconciliation	Chapter 5&6 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada - NCTR	Hide tanning Camp
Sep 22/24	atikowisi miýw-āyā win, Ascribed Health and Wellness, to kaskitamasowin miýw-āyā win, Achieved Health and Wellness: Shifting the Paradigm	Chapter 7&8 Engaging with Indigenous Elders & Knowledge Keepers	

Sep 29 Oct 1	miyo-pimâtisiwin, “A Good Path”: Indigenous Knowledges, Languages, and Traditions in Education and Health Inuit Knowledge Systems, Elders, and Determinants of Health: Harmony, Balance, and the Role of Holistic Thinking	Chapter 9&10	Floor map W/Krista Umble
Oct 6/8	Two Poems Being at the Interface: Early Childhood as a Determinant of Health Knowing Who You Are: Family History and Aboriginal Determinants of Health	Chapter 11&12&13 Class 2 bring something from your family, an item, a story, something to share.	
Oct 13/15	Cultural Wounds Demand Cultural Medicines Grandma and Grandpa and the Mysterious Case of Wolf Teeth in the House!	Chapter 14&15	
Oct 20/22	Activating Place: Geography as a Determinant of Indigenous Peoples’ Health and Well-Being Violence on the Land, Violence on Our Bodies Women’s Earth	Chapter 17&18	Creative Practice Project Due
Oct 27/29	Take Care of the Land and the Land Will Take Care of You: Resources,	Chapter 19&21&26	Guest Speaker Natascha Okimow

	Development, and Health miyo-pimâtisiwin: Practising “the Good Way of Life” from the Hospital Bed to Mother Earth Medicine Is Relationship: Relationship Is Medicine Raven Healing		
Nov 3/5		Blanket Exercise	Blanket Exercise Experiential learning due
Nov 10/12 No Classes		No Classes	
Nov 17/19			Group Presentations
Nov 24/26			Group Presentations
Dec 1/3	Set up displays/Poster Boards		
Dec 8	Closing discussions and circle		Participation reflection due

Experiential Learning Assignment: Attending an Indigenous Event or Ceremony

- Students are required to attend an Indigenous event, ceremony, cultural gathering, community activity, or land-based learning experience this can happen outside of the classroom, but we are participating in a number of experiences through-out through-out the term. Examples may include (with appropriate permission and invitation): a Powwow, Round Dance, community feast, cultural camp, Talking Circle, sharing circle, Elder teaching, pipe ceremony (where appropriate), sweat lodge (by invitation only), National Day for Truth and Reconciliation events, MMIWG2S+ events, Indigenous art or cultural exhibitions, language classes, or other community-based Indigenous gatherings.
- Following the experience, students will write a reflective paper exploring what they observed, learned, and experienced while considering the implications for social work practice. Students should reflect on the importance of cultural humility, relationship-building, and the role of Indigenous knowledges in supporting individual, family, and community wellness. Rather than evaluating or critiquing the event itself, students are encouraged to focus on their own learning, assumptions, and



professional growth. 4-5 pages in length following APA guidelines. References are not necessary but may strengthen your reflection.

Guiding Reflection Questions

- What event did you attend, and what drew you to this experience?
- What did you observe about the values, relationships, teachings, or practices shared?
- What challenged or affirmed your previous understanding?
- How did this experience influence your understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing?
- What role does cultural humility play when engaging in Indigenous spaces?
- How might this experience shape your future social work practice with Indigenous individuals, families, and communities?
- What responsibilities do social workers have in building respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities?

Advocacy Campaign: Indigenous Rights and Social Work

In groups, students will design an advocacy campaign that focuses on a contemporary issue affecting Indigenous communities (e.g., land rights, healthcare access, child welfare, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Indigenous language revitalization, housing, food sovereignty, or justice reform). The campaign should include a public education component such as a poster, informational display board, brochure, or other creative media, and must be grounded in ethical, anti-oppressive, and culturally responsive social work practice.

Students are expected to critically reflect on their own social location and positionality by addressing questions such as:

- Who am I in relation to this issue?
- What is my role as an Indigenous person, ally, or settler?
- How does my social location influence my understanding and responsibility?
- What role can social workers play in advancing truth, reconciliation, advocacy, and systems change?

The campaign should move beyond raising awareness by encouraging meaningful action and demonstrating how social workers can advocate alongside Indigenous communities.

Presentation

- Each group will deliver a 20-minute presentation outlining:
 - The issue selected and why it is important.
 - The research and evidence supporting the campaign.
 - The role of social workers in addressing the issue.
 - A reflection on the group's positionality and advocacy responsibilities.
 - An overview of the campaign materials and intended impact.

This assignment provides students with the opportunity to translate classroom learning into public advocacy while contributing to Indigenous awareness and education across the campus community.

Public Display Requirement: Following the class presentations, campaigns will be displayed on campus as part of a public awareness initiative. Displays should be visually engaging, respectful, and appropriate for a public audience. All posters, display boards, brochures, and campaign materials must clearly identify that they were created by students in the Northwestern Polytechnic Social Work Diploma Program.

Carrying It Forward: Creative Practice Project



For this final project, you will create something that represents what you will carry forward from Social Work with Indigenous Peoples into your future social work practice.

Your creation can take any form that is meaningful to you. You may paint, draw, bead, sew, sculpt, build, create a collage or digital piece, work with wood, fabric, clay, or natural materials, write a poem or story, or develop another creative representation of your learning.

Artistic ability is not being graded. The focus is on the meaning and intention behind what you create.

Your Creation Might Explore:

- What has changed or challenged your thinking?
- What teachings or learning will stay with you?
- What values will ground your practice?
- What does working with Indigenous peoples rather than *for* or *on* them mean to you?
- What responsibilities do you carry as a social worker?
- What kind of social worker do you want to become?
- How has theory helped you understand Indigenous experiences, colonial systems, relationships, healing, or social work practice differently?

Connecting Theory to Practice

Your creation must meaningfully incorporate **at least one theory, framework, or way of knowing explored in this course.**

Rather than simply defining the theory, consider how it shapes the way you understand and approach social work practice with Indigenous peoples.

For example, you may draw from Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing, Two-Eyed Seeing, strengths-based or anti-oppressive approaches, decolonizing perspectives, trauma- and violence-informed practice, relational approaches, or other theories and frameworks discussed throughout the course.

Consider:

How does this theory or framework influence the social worker I want to become?

Sharing Your Creation

You will share your creation with the class and briefly explain:

- What you created and why
- What it represents
- The theory, framework, or way of knowing you incorporated
- How it connects to your learning in this course
- What you will carry forward into your social work practice

Cultural Respect



Your creation should represent **your own learning and practice journey**. Do not reproduce sacred or culturally specific Indigenous items, teachings, ceremonies, or symbols that you have not been given permission to use.

Assessment

You will be assessed on:

- Depth of reflection
- Connection to course learning
- **Integration of theory/frameworks with practice**
- Meaning and intentionality of your creation
- Application to future social work practice
- Cultural humility and relational accountability

The goal is not simply to show what you have learned, but to demonstrate how that learning will shape the way you think, relate, and practice as a social worker.

Participation & Professional Engagement

- This course is grounded in relationship, respect, and shared learning. Participation is assessed not by how often a student speaks, but by the quality of their engagement with classmates, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, instructors, and guests. We will often sit in circle with one another; students are expected to contribute to creating a safe, respectful, and culturally responsive learning environment. Each student will submit a 250-page reflection on what grade they feel they have earned on a scale of 1-10.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

It is essential for students to approach the course with an open mind, respecting diverse perspectives, particularly those of Indigenous Peoples, and to engage in reflective practices that promote cultural humility. Students are also responsible for demonstrating professionalism and ethical behavior when interacting with peers, instructors, and Indigenous communities or representatives. Active participation in group work, timely submission of assignments, and a commitment to self-reflection and critical thinking are crucial for success in this course.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/polytechnic-leadership/policies-directory>.

****Note:** all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

Additional Information:

Assignments submitted late may receive a late penalty of 5% for each day beyond the due date. Assignments are to be submitted via the Course myClass. No assignments will be accepted by email.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Claude) may be used to support learning, including brainstorming, developing search terms, locating potential sources, organizing ideas, editing, and citation support. AI should support, not replace, the student's own critical thinking, analysis, reflection, and engagement with course materials.

Any use of AI that contributes to an assignment must be acknowledged and cited in the reference list, including use for literature searches, locating sources, or citation assistance. Students are responsible for verifying all AI-generated information and references by locating and reviewing the original source. Submitting AI-generated work without appropriate acknowledgement may be considered a breach of academic integrity.