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Clinical placements and the reality for professionals living in remote regions: the Francophone community of Iqaluit.

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Plan

- × Context
- × Research goals and methodology
- × Interviews
- × Results :
 - ▣ Students
 - ▣ Professionals and management

Research goals

- ✧ Analyse the needs of francophone professionals working in health care and social services (speech language pathology, social worker) in Iqaluit
- ✧ Describe the professional development of students completing a practicum in Iqaluit
- ✧ Evaluate the effects (short and long term) of the implication of students on an isolated community
- ✧ Reflect on the complexity of placements in remote regions and the particularities of a Francophone minority context
- ✧ Understand the experiences of various professionals in the community of Iqaluit, in order to better prepare the students for their practicums, as well as better support the next generation of professionals

Data collection

1. Interviews with students completing a practicum in Iqaluit
 - ▣ Pre-placement profile
 - ▣ Intercultural practicum: learning activities, work context
 - ▣ Summary of the practicum: living in the community of Iqaluit
 - ▣ Professional development during the intercultural experience

2. Interviews with professionals and management
 - ▣ Choosing to work in Iqaluit
 - ▣ Obstacles to overcome
 - ▣ Needs of the community

Participants

- ✧ 4 students completing their M.H.Sc. (Speech Language Pathology - *Orthophonie*) (clinical practicum)
 - Rehab clinic
 - Primary school and daycare
- ✧ 1 social service worker student (practicum in communit work)
- ✧ 6 health care professionals
(MD, SLP, nurse, SW, neuropsych)
- ✧ 3 managers

Results: Students

Context of the practicum:

- × Interculturalism: the highlight of the experience
- × Situations that are new, varied and complex, requiring resourcefulness, creativity and mobilisation of skills in a community with pressing needs
- × Requires ongoing learning in the following: autonomy, initiative, unpredictability and the need to go beyond the limits of their clinical skills (challenge)
- × Feeling of powerlessness given the scale of the problems found in the community, the effects of colonization and the social conditions of the Inuits

4 principal themes

1. Challenges observed during intercultural communication:

- ▣ Defining one's role
- ▣ Capacity to interpret the cultural elements at play in the relationship
- ▣ Cultural sensitivity: providing culturally appropriate care

2. Capacity to adapt:

- ▣ Creativity: create and adapt tools to the cultural and linguistic reality
- ▣ Flexibility: redefine priorities according to the urgency of the client's needs and lifestyle; adjusting one's practices
- ▣ Personal strategies to integrate well into the community
- ▣ Different methods of supervision

3. Professionalism and cooperation in a multidisciplinary team:

- ▣ Issues that go beyond the scope of one's profession, but that have an impact on his/her work
- ▣ Critical thinking: tools standardized on the dominant culture (cultural safety)
- ▣ Awareness of the injustice of living conditions
- ▣ Confidentiality and professional boundaries in a small community
- ▣ Accountability to create programs for social change in the future

4. Francophone experience:

- ▣ Strong vitality in this community: community awareness, valorisation and confidence in their Francophone identity
- ▣ Upon return, strengthening of values and engagement in one's community

Professionals and management

1. Reasons to work in Iqaluit:

- ▣ Slower pace of life, interesting and quality family life, Francophone vitality, commitment to help the community
- ▣ Stimulating work opportunities, career advancement, support for continuing education
- ▣ Previous experiences in other indigenous communities or developing countries (intercultural experiences)

2. Challenges: isolation, cost of living, small community, mistrust of caucasians

- ▣ Difficult social problems (trauma, alcoholism, poverty, violence, suicide), overworked professionals, diversity within the clientele
- ▣ Mental health needs, where language spoken by the individual limits access to services and creates insecurity/vulnerability
- ▣ Discontinuity in services and administrative delays due to governmental structure
- ▣ Stigma of mental health

Advice for students

- × Learn to adapt to unpredictable situations; be flexible
- × Accept destabilisation; work outside your comfort zone
- × Be curious; discover the culture and have an openness of spirit
- × Be mentally strong as this is a demanding environment
- × Recognize small gains and be aware of your limits
- × Be willing to contribute to the community, with the hope of returning
- × Develop strategies to manage the situations of this demanding context
- × Identify supports that will facilitate integration within the community

Conclusions

- × Compare student/professionals/management data
- × Learn from the community to better prepare future students
- × Understand the barriers to the development of practicums
- × In the future: resources in mental health, better public consultation to prioritize workers needed
 - × especially important in an area with high birth rates - population estimated to double by 2020
 - × education, reappropriation to Inuits
- × Openness to pursue nordic regions in other territories (Yukon)