



## Acadia Community Advisory Council Minutes

May 9, 2024

6:00pm – 8:00pm – SEM 231 + Zoom

**Attendance:** Birdie Bezanson, Tanya Surette, Kelly Brenton, Ahlam Rahal, Jean Blackler, Jennifer Shadbolt, Alison Arthur, Jen Moore, Andrea Noylander, Sabitha Masih, Patricia Wentzell, Brian Brooks, Corrine Haigh, Clarence DeSchiffart, Chris Toplack, Tara Moore, and Meghan Fullerton.

**Regrets:** Meghan Hill, Edith Callaghan, Jeff MacDonald, Steve Carrington, George Maringapasi, Ann Sylliboy, AJ Landon, Erin Eavies, Wanda MacDonald, and Gregory Mackinnon.

**Minutes:** Birdie Bezanson

### 1. Welcome & Updates from Advisors

- Welcomed Jennifer Shadbolt FT2023 cohort student rep;
- Tanya welcomed all and gave an overview of the agenda; no additions to the agenda.

### 2. Updates on Red Spruce Pilot

- Three offices furnished thanks to support from Payzant Home Hardware (Windsor) and the Credit Union;
- Fall intake in partnership with Counselling Centre for intakes; soft opening in late fall and full opening in winter 2024;
- Winter Term – One full-time and one part-time intern;
- Winter Term – One part-time at Red Door and Edge on Employment;
- Supported 52 clients, ages 12-70, 263 sessions;
- Remarkable 82% attendance rate for scheduled sessions;
- Anonymous feedback from clients:

*“After looking back, I noticed that I feel a lot more sure of myself, as well as being able to catch certain negative behaviours/thoughts before they go too far. I definitely feel more one with myself, feeling more centered and in the moment.”*

*“Going into this experience, I was skeptical it would actually help, but it did wonders for handling my anxiety and understanding myself better. There are still days when it's still hard, but having someone to talk it through with really helped me see myself in a better light.”*

*“I have never felt more understood and accepted, even from my family. They really helped break down my barriers and said exactly what I needed to hear in moments of large emotions.”*

*“During the course of my counselling sessions, some extremely stressful life changes happened to me (changes in work, partners mental health, sibling relationships, etc). It was extremely helpful to have sessions during this time. I have much better tools to cope with things that come up, better language to use for my feelings, and a deeper understanding of myself.”*

*“Thank you so much for offering this as a free service, cost has previously been a barrier for me in seeking mental health services.”*

- Reopening in Fall 2024, currently waitlisting clients;
- Executive Summary coming within the next few weeks;
- Website is live: [www.redspruce.org](http://www.redspruce.org) (note <https://www.redspruce.org> will not get you there). Please check out our website and pass it around

**Questions Answered:**

**Hopes for next year:**

Integrate learnings from spring and winter; cultivate more satellite sites and apply for grants to support; find partner sites that offer group hours; investigate community supervision opportunities

**How often were sessions:**

Currently up to clients (once a week, biweekly, once a month)

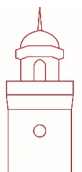
**Wait times:**

There has been no wait time yet  
Full-time intern has 20 spots per week

**Average age:**

We will take a closer look at the demographics

- 13 and up, and we are looking to expand to children;
- We extended hours on Wed to 6:00 pm for pp who work 9 to 5;



- Intend to give practicum students a survey to collect info on their experience.

Could we have year-round coverage:

- July and August are tricky because our students are in intense intersession courses; however, there could be options for practicum students who need to continue to meet hour and competencies requirements

Meeting with Mental Health and Addictions:

- We will send an Executive Summary, and we will continue to send along news items

Did any money come from Nova Scotia Health:

- Not yet

*Suggestion:*

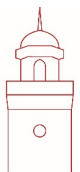
- A future Board of Directors might be an idea
- Might make applications for funding easier

Community Support:

- Payzant and Credit Union provided furniture for 3 offices
- Nova Scotia Mental Health Foundations Grant
- Bishop Accounting
- Owl provided our appointment/information-gathering platform at a reduced rate
- Tim Duguay at Rework Business Solutions in Halifax donated Ezobord soundproofing for offices
- Acadia support – tech services, marketing, physical plant, Acadia’s Counselling Centre (specifically Erica McGill – Thank you!)

Update on Budget - **Corinne Haigh, Dean of Faculty of Professional Studies**

- We are still waiting for the budget to fund the Centre Coordinator position
- She is advocating for collaboration with nursing and other professional programs on campus (appreciated 😊).



### 3. New asynchronous open-entry courses & open elective course offerings

- Queer Affirming Counselling – currently 30 students completed/enrolled, some students from Dal;
- Counseling Spiritually - updated thanks to Clarence, completed/enrolled 14 students;
- Clinical Mental Health for School Counsellors - forthcoming;
- Afrocentric Counselling – offered first in the summer intersession and may develop into an asynchronous course;
- Indigenous Healing – exploring options;
- Courses are open to our students, graduates, and professionals in the community;
- **To do Kelly** – add links to our program website.

#### *Questions Answered:*

Is there faculty support for community members who would like to develop a course:

- We are always open to collaborating. Please contact one of the faculty

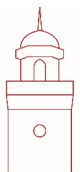
### 4. Professional Seminar Series

- Birdie and Tanya offered Supervision Seminar in the fall of 2023;
- Black Mental Health Canada – looking to offer a seminar in the fall (2024); positive input from one council member; suggested Sept and Dec are not often well attended, suggested Oct, Nov or Feb are better attended; can advertise through CCPA;
- Invited community members to offer suggestions:
  - Chiro blanket exercise (**To do Tanya** - follow up with Bryan Brooks) Jean suggested Ashley Doyle for business and private practice considerations; Counselling approaches for neurodiverse; gender identity (noted Gender Affirming Counselling does cover this foundationally); generational healing; working with newcomers

### 5. Admissions & Application Processes

#### Part-Time Cohort

- 11 school stream and 9 agency stream;
- 100% of applicants who identified from underrepresented groups were short-listed;



- Indigenous, African, African Nova Scotian, Columbian, Lebanese, 2SLGBTQIA+; students with disabilities;

### Full-Time cohort

- 10 school stream and 10 agency stream;
- 80% of applicants who identified from an underrepresented group were short-listed;
- Indigenous, African, Asian, 2SLGBTQIA+, and students with disabilities.

Tanya thanked advisors for their help in developing our admission process to remove barriers for underrepresented groups

Jean suggested our new courses are also increasing our desirability to underrepresented groups

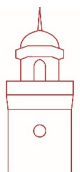
### New program duration & practicum

- All 2024 cohorts will be under the new model;
- Impacts full-time as their program will be 18 months instead 14 months;
- Impact both pt and ft with the separation of 500-hour practicum into a 100-hour and an 400-hour practicum;
- Will be looking for 100-hour (one day a week) practicum opportunities
- With the new program, we are in agreement with our accreditation standards;
- Student can now choose to do their practicum either full-time or part-time;
- Kelly is updating the Student Practicum Placement Guide and will make it available when completed;
- We will offer information sessions to our practicum sites and those interested in hosting a practicum site regarding the new program model.

*Questions Answered:*

Will part-time practicums be two semesters:

- Yes; Sept to April or Jan to June (to complete before summer courses)



Jean identified the possibilities for evenings and weekends,  
Kelly noted the opportunities to be creative with community offering  
supervision to practicum students

Has there been feedback from the school stream on the new model:

- No feedback yet

How does the program identify Indigenous identity?

- Corrine noted that verification takes place at the university level not  
program/admissions level

Can students identify as a member of more than one underrepresented  
group?

- Yes, however, list is not extensive

*Discussion:*

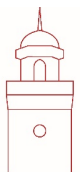
- How we offer opportunities to self-identify (3 pts for  
underrepresented group on rubric)
- Currently options to identify are restricted by the system Acadia uses
- Verifying of self-identification - We do not verify at the program level

#### Forthcoming Admission Requirement Changes

- Identified that the requirement of two years of experience of full-  
time work post undergrad could be a barrier to applicants who had a  
nontraditional path to graduate studies;
  - Changed this to two-year full-time work without post  
undergrad requirement (can be done before undergrad) will  
allow applicants who have taken a nontraditional path to  
graduate studies to be competitive
- International students face challenges getting study permits because  
of our July start;
  - We will now allow international students to accept for current  
year or defer for the following year

#### **6. Small & Whole Group Discussion – Letter of Intent Processes**

- Need to look at ranking of LOI;
- Need to be open to other options rather than only writing.



*Summary of discussion points:*

- Several community members suggested options for creative ways to share beyond written letter – video, audio;
- Opened ended prompts to share passion/motivation for application;
- Lack of prompts allows applicants to demonstrate ability to take on grad level tasks;
- Suggested prompt “Please tell us what attributes and motivations bring you to the program?”
- Andrea Noylander suggested in the breakout group to remove the LOI request or give the LOI less points in the rubric as it could be written by ChatGPT.

**7. Closing & Fall 2024 Advisory Meeting Date**

October 22, 2024 (tentative)

