**Five Year Professional Development Plan**

Alissa Amos

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Dr. Noella Piquette

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“Trauma is not what happens to us, but what we hold inside in the absence of an empathetic witness” ~Dr. Peter Levine~. As a child, my counsellor was that empathetic witness that helped me change the trajectory of my own lived experience. It was then that I realized my path, and passion, was to support others by studying psychology and becoming a counsellor. For the past two years, while completing a Master of Counselling degree, I have been employed as the School District #5 Indigenous Support Counsellor and anticipate I will continue in that role until I retire from school counselling. After graduation, I plan to obtain my Canadian Certified Counsellor (CCC), and once I finish a course that was not offered in our program post-graduation, applying for Registered Clinical Counsellor (RCC) designation in British Columbia. Complimentary to this, I intend to develop a private practice over the next five years and continue that practice into my retirement years and beyond. My current work is with Indigenous youth, families, and communities and I strive to continue this work while offering trauma-informed individual, couples, and family counselling in my private work. Eventually, I would love to become a mentor or supervisor for those entering the field to continue to advocate for the profession while contributing to future counsellors’ journeys, as others have stepped up and provided for me. I am also enthusiastic about advocacy and social justice work which I intend to engage with as long as I am able. For the next five years I have many goals that apply to the counselling competencies laid out by the Federation of Association for Counselling Therapists in British Columbia (FACT BC, 2019).

In the first competency area, foundations of counselling, I have three goals. The first two surround working within an established theoretical framework and the final one is applying knowledge of human and cultural diversity. When working towards the first goal, I plan to complete the course “Family Therapy: Theory and Practice” from Athabasca University as a requirement for obtaining RCC status in BC by January 2026. From there my long-term goal is to complete the EMDR basic training by June 2026, obtain a certified EMDR supervisor for long term support and collaboration, and complete EMDR certification within the next five years paired with ongoing supervision and consultation. The final goal within the foundational competency, is applying knowledge of human and cultural diversity. This goal is certainly tied to my job as the District Indigenous Support Counsellor but also supports clinical work with all cultures and diversity of clients. Short term, I am registered in and completing the Indigenous Four Seasons of Learning Courses (level 1-4) through my workplace and plan to complete these four trainings by January 2027. For long term progress towards this goal, I have identified two hours per week to be set aside to read texts and research outlined in my timeline document (four books, and one document outlined). I have also proposed one course per year which qualify as Indigenous continuing education credits as outlined by CCPA guidelines (CCPA, 2022). Current participation in Indigenous community events, elder learning opportunities, and Indigenous student leadership meetings will be continued into the next five years and beyond to further strengthen understanding and collaboration with Indigenous clients and their communities. These foundational goals contribute to the next competency area of communication and relationships.

I have two areas of focus outlined for the communication and relationships competency. The first is to contribute to a collaborative and productive atmosphere by creating and sustaining working relationships with other helping professionals. The relationships built throughout this graduate program, and my practicum experience, have shown me the power of collaborative consultation and continued relationships with peers. Over the next five years, I plan to engage in a consultation group every three months with peers from my cohort that have expressed the same goal. I have also secured ongoing consultation with a number of other counsellors in our school district, and community agencies which support the clients I serve in the Elk Valley area of BC. Secondly, I set a goal to display sensitivity to diversity and initiate consultations with relevant practitioners as appropriate. I currently have a consultation and collaborative relationship with the local Ktunaxa community counsellor, Nasuʔkin (chief), elders/knowledge holders, and Indigenous led agencies such as the Foundry BC, Ktunaxa Kinbasket Child and Family Services (KKCFSS), Ktunaxa Nation Council (KNC), ʔaq̓amnik̓ elementary school (on St. Eugene reserve) and the local Metis Association. The goal is to continue a collaborative relationship while setting time aside to foster relationships and remain informed of policy and services provided. The final long-term plan to support this competency is to review and reflect upon the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (Government of Canada, 2015) and United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (United Nations, 2007) guidelines twice a year to evaluate my own practice of decolonization and reconciliation. Not only is this a goal for my own counselling practice, but it is also part of my professional and ethical duty.

The professionalism competency goal was for self-care and safety by maintaining wellness practices, recognizing and addressing indicators of compromised performance while fulfilling the need for my own personal counselling. Short terms plans are to begin teaching fitness classes again after a three-year hiatus, attend other fitness classes and outdoor dynamic activities, meal prep to support healthy eating and spend time reflecting monthly on any indicators of poor health needing attention. Long term, I plan to engage in personal therapy once every two months (as I currently do), assess signs of poor health continuously and seek service from my medical doctor or therapist when those signs arise. Most of all, over the next five years, I intend to prioritize one weekend each a year for a getaway connection with family, friends, and/or colleagues which will not only support my goals for self-care but also strengthen the collaborative relationships I am working to build and maintain.

The final competency addressed in my five-year plan is counselling therapy processes and a goal to obtain and integrate multiple levels of information during the therapeutic process, specifically assessments. Determining when formal instruments may be required or appropriate, assessing as the counselling approach requires and communicating assessment information so a client understands its relationship to treatment goals and outcomes are each a component of this goal. In the short term, I plan to utilize more informal assessments such as the outcome rating scale (ORS) and session rating scale (SRS) from the Feedback Informed Therapy model (Miller, 2025). Continuing to read research regarding level A and B assessments once per month while engaging in supervision focussed on assessment would allow me to stay up to date on assessment in the field. This would also ensure my assessment practices are sound and applicable to client care. Over the next five years I have selected five continuing education courses focused on assessment and treatment to continue to build my assessment toolbox and ethical assessment practices.

Through continuing education courses, ongoing regular collaboration and supervision, and engagement with current research and texts, I believe all the goals outlined in my 5-year professional development timeline are achievable, applicable to my personal growth as a counsellor, and fulfill more than the required competency adherence from the FACT BC competency requirements.

References

CCPA. *Indigenous Continuing Education credits program*. Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. (2022, February 22). <https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/indigenous-continuing-education-credits-program/>

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Government of Canada. (2015). *Truth and reconciliation commission of Canada: Calls to Action* Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf>

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