

## Danika Goveas - University of Alberta

**Project:** *Exploring the integration of Indigenous ways of knowing in PHC policy development to promote healing for Indigenous communities in Alberta*



### Biography

Danika Goveas completed her undergraduate degree in Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa, where she had the opportunity to work as a research assistant on several projects focused on Indigenous health, infectious disease, and food security.

Currently, Danika is an MSc Candidate in Epidemiology in the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta. Her current research aims to explore how Indigenous ways of knowing can be integrated into primary health care policy

development in Alberta to inform strategies that promote healing and health equity. She will be using a Two-eyed Seeing approach that integrates both western and Indigenous methods, drawing on the shared strengths of these world views to explore primary health care experiences among Indigenous communities.

Danika aspires to pursue a career as a primary care physician, working directly with patients to help support their health journeys and explore approaches to manage ongoing health challenges. Ultimately, she hopes to combine her interests in patient-oriented research and primary health care to support evidence-based practice, while working to improve patient health care experiences and promote health equity in the healthcare system.

In her spare time, Danika enjoys going on hikes, writing poetry, and cooking. She is thrilled to be a 2020 AbSPORU Studentship awardee and is looking forward to enhancing her skills in patient-oriented research through this Studentship.

## Project Summary

The 1978 Alma Ata Declaration envisions primary health care (PHC) as equitable access to essential health care services for communities. Although Canada has made efforts to shift control over PHC services to Indigenous communities, this population remains one of the most medically underserved in the country. Previous studies have demonstrated that PHC strategies rooted in policy and supported with appropriate infrastructure are associated with improved health outcomes, increased equity and lower mortality rates. PHC strategies have the capacity to promote health equity by engaging Indigenous people in the process and addressing historical trauma stemming from colonization to eliminate health disparities. However, existing PHC strategies have been developed for PHC systems, rather than for Indigenous peoples as recipients of healthcare. For instance, research suggests that contributors to PHC barriers for First Nations communities in Alberta include inadequate health service funding and a lack of cross-sector collaboration with Indigenous communities to promote sustainable solutions. Indigenous PHC strategies should be informed by Indigenous communities, to ensure that healthcare practices align with their experiences, knowledge and values.

This research project aims to engage Indigenous peoples in exploring approaches to integrating Indigenous ways of knowing to inform PHC policy development and strategies to promote healing. The main objectives of this research project are to: 1) Foster relationships and research collaboration with Indigenous communities in Alberta to promote PHC policy and system transformation; 2) Apply community-based, participatory research principles to engage with communities in co-developing a policy brief and thematic analysis to demonstrate PHC priorities for Indigenous communities in Alberta. Overall, these project outcomes will have the potential to direct policy development for Indigenous people in Alberta. More broadly, we hope this project will inform future PHC policy evaluation and relevant frameworks, which will serve to decolonize the healthcare institution, transform PHC policies and promote health equity.