



UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Distributed occupational therapy education: How do students find community, connection and engagement?

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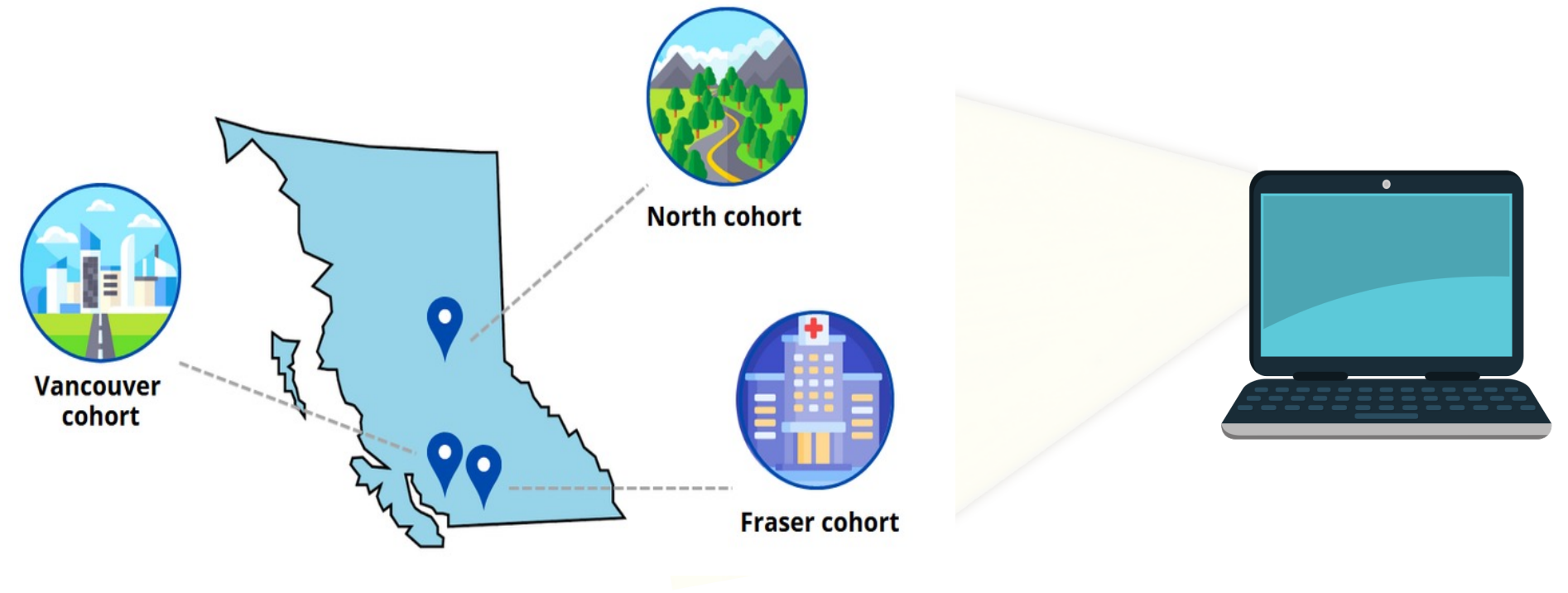
WFOT World Congress 2026, Bangkok, Thailand

OVERVIEW



- **Introduction**
- **Methods**
- **Results**
- **Implications**
- **Contact information**

INTRODUCTION



- Shortages of healthcare staff in BC, Canada
- Implementation of distributed learning sites into educational settings
- Distributed learning, student engagement, community and connection

OBJECTIVES

Within distributed learning cohorts, how do Master of occupational therapy students experience community and connection?

How have faculty, technology, and peer interactions influenced Master of Occupational Therapy students' sense of connection and community in distributed learning cohorts?

METHODS

Research Design:

- Narrative inquiry (Storytelling)
(Connelly & Clandinin, 1990)



Participants:

*Names are
pseudonyms

Nora



2nd year
North Site

Kim



2nd year North
Site

Kaia



1st year
Vancouver Site

Amy



1st year Fraser
Valley Site

METHODS, CONTINUED

Data Collection:

- Semi-structured meetings online
- 1 hour meetings, 3 times over 4 months

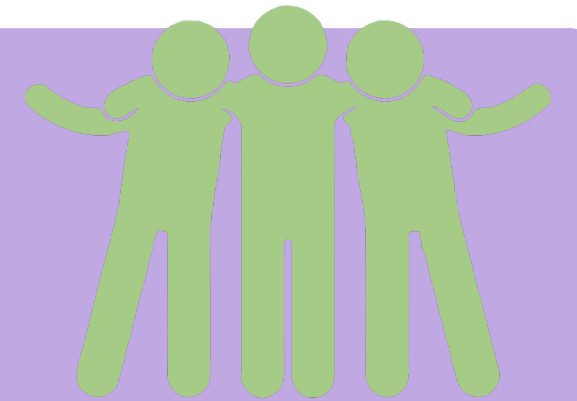


Data Analysis:

- Recordings transcribed
- Co-created narratives
- Themes pulled from narratives
- Member checking data and reflexivity

RESULTS

I) We are Our Own Cohort



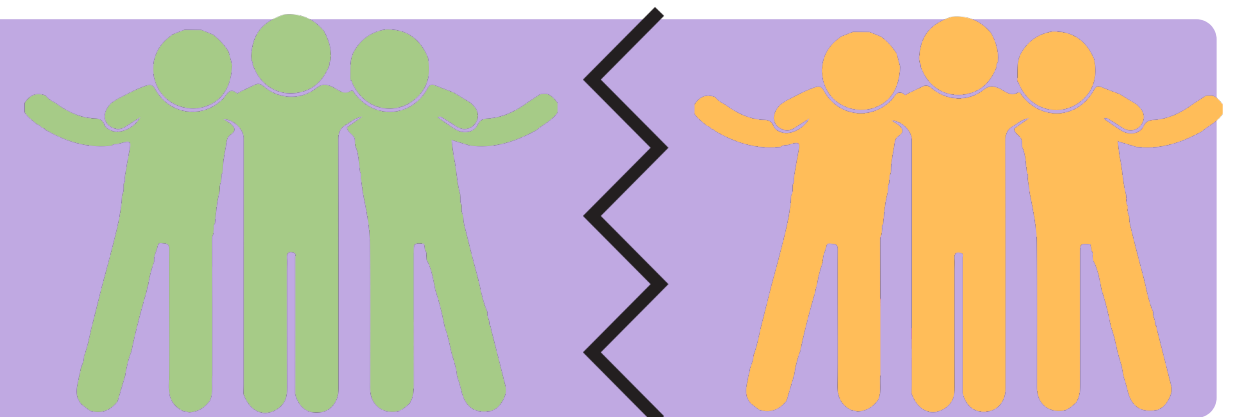
II) Faculty Teaching Across the Distance



III) Out on Placement, a Different Way of Engaging



IV) Disengagement From Other Cohorts



“We are our own cohort”

- **Connection within their own cohort**
- **Increased connection and engagement**



“I kind of reflected at the end of the semester... It’s like leaving a room of 57 people. All of them want to say bye to you. All of them want to greet you. You want to greet them. It’s a very inclusive space” (Kaia, 2024).

Faculty, teaching across the distance



- **Same site connection with faculty, increasing engagement**
- **Disconnect with faculty at other sites, decreasing engagement**

“Being able to come together as cohorts was nice because I think sometimes we feel a bit segregated just because we're so far away. Or, you know, people forget when they're teaching from Vancouver that, the North and Surrey do exist because they're not physically in front of you, they're on the screen.”

(Kim, 2024)

Out on placement, a different way of engagement



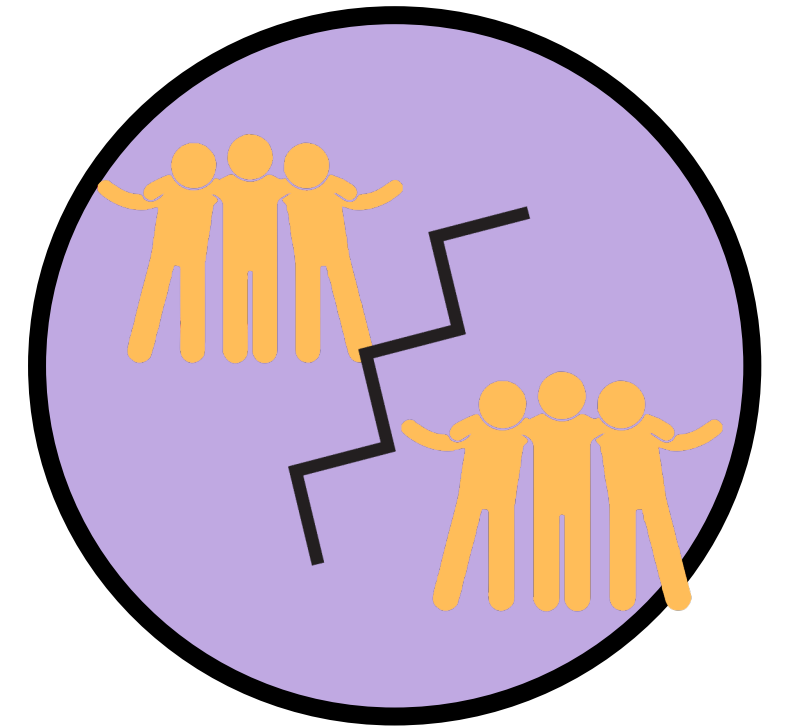
- **Preceptor connection, either increasing or decreasing engagement**
- **Connecting with classmates, fostering engagement**

“If they are going to offer these placements. Connect with the student. Connect them with proper resources. Connect them with actual mental health professionals. Give them a specific mentor.”

(Amy, 2025)

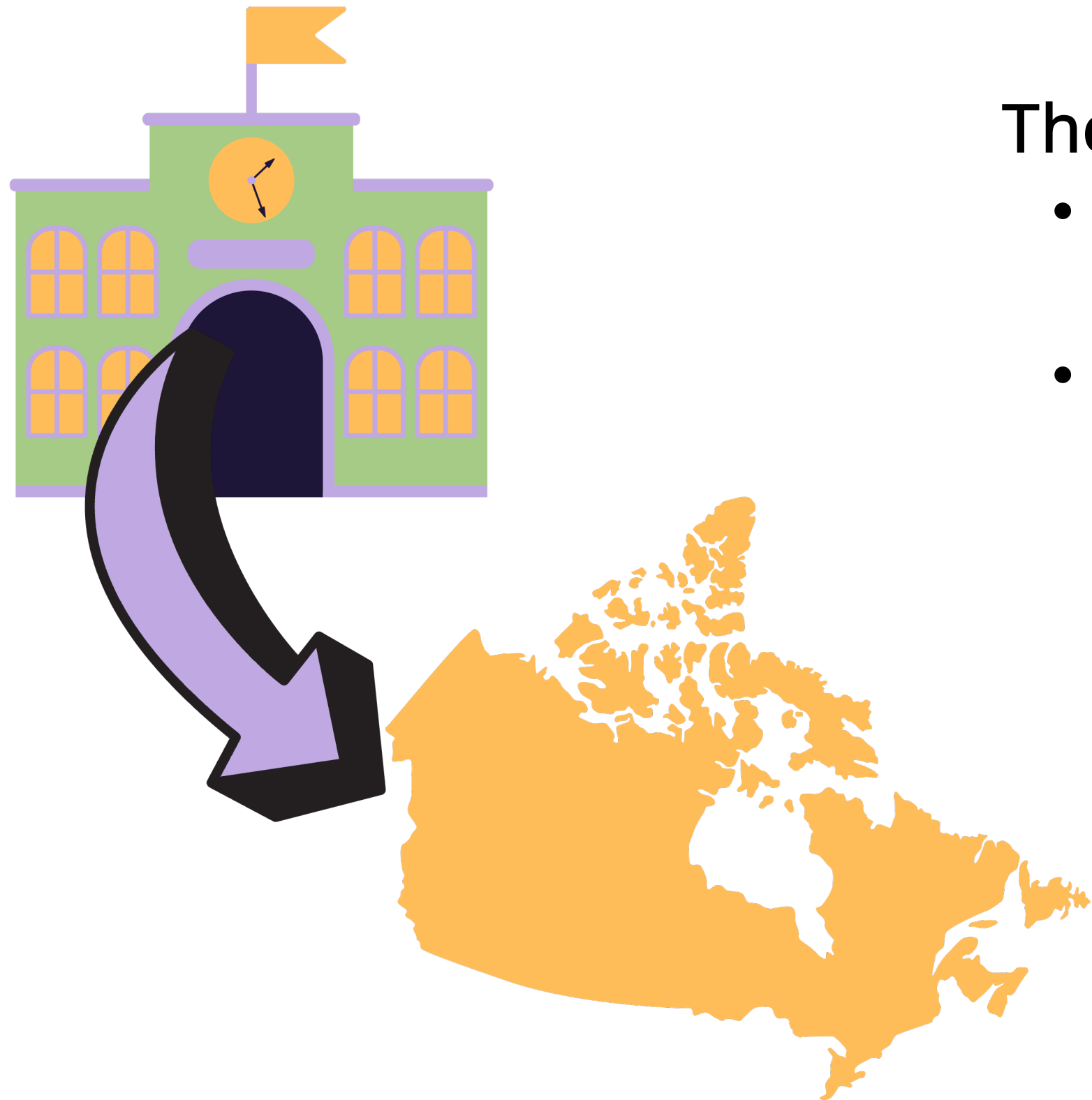
Disengagement from other cohorts

- **Lack of opportunity to connect**
- **Interactions influencing a disconnect**



“Do I feel connected to other cohorts? No. Do I have the urge to connect with other cohorts now? No.” (Amy, 2025)

IMPLICATIONS



The results of this study hope to:

- Inform future research on DL approach impact on student engagement
- Inform educational programs adopting a DL approach on how engagement is shaped by community and connection



THANK YOU



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REFERENCES

