

**Anti-Indigenous Racism Statement:
Moving Towards Decolonization, Reconciliation, and Indigenization
School of Social Work, Memorial University**

The School of Social Work at Memorial University strongly condemns the killings of Indigenous peoples by police and white settlers in Canada, and the deaths and disappearances of thousands of Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit people. In particular, we honour the memories of Loretta Saunders, Colton Bushie, Rodney Levi, Chantel Moore, Lorraine Moore, Jacqueline Moon, Jeremy Nuvviah, Michel Vienneau, Ryanna Grywachski, Katie Semigak Obed, Martina Ford, Bernice Joan Rich, Stephanie Cormier Chaisson, Carol Nora King, Kimberly Jararuse, Sonya Rogers, Sarah Obed, Ann Maria Lucas, Mary Susan Evans-Harlick, Brenda Gillingham, Joyce Echaquan, and the countless Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, Innu, and Inuit peoples killed or gone missing from the territory colonized as Newfoundland and Labrador.

The genocide of Indigenous peoples is rooted in historic and current colonialism, systemic racism, and white supremacy, and are not aberrant behaviours of a few rogue settlers or police officers. Rather, these are examples of how breaches of Indigenous people's rights are entrenched in the theft of Indigenous land, unjust and broken treaties, the imposition of the *Indian Act*, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and current and historic child welfare, social services, and health care policies and practices. Discriminatory policing and settler aggression and violence against Indigenous men, women, girls, and Two Spirit people are supported by deep-seated racist and colonial systems based on racial hierarchies that promote the view of white people as superior to Indigenous peoples.

Within the university education system, coursework curricula and pedagogical practices often fail to confront institutional racism, colonialism, and white and settler privilege. The failure of universities to respond to the systemic oppression faced by Indigenous people has contributed to multi- and inter-generational trauma and marginalization, experienced as poverty, addictions, criminalization, and inadequate housing and homelessness; barriers to education, employment, health care, and cultural supports; as well as, the ongoing erasure of Indigenous voices, histories, cultures, knowledges, and practices within the dominant discourse of Canada. Despite the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's recommended 94 *Calls to Action* to help repair the harm caused to Indigenous peoples, there has been little concrete change to colonial and racist policies and practices in the academy. The violence, oppression, silence, and inaction must end.

In response, social work education has an obligation to challenge and change the pervasive culture of silence and apathy towards the struggles of Indigenous peoples in Canada. As beginning steps in transforming our colonial reality, the Memorial University School of Social Work commits to a process of decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization. In doing so, we recognize the distinct nature of Indigenous social work and, as such, we position Indigeneity as reflected in the spirit and *Calls to Action* made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (<http://www.trc.ca>).

The Memorial University School of Social Work stands in solidarity with Indigenous academic staff members, staff members, and students; the Indigenous Resource Centre; the President's Advisory Committee on Indigenous Affairs; and allied students, staff members, academic staff members, and

community members in calling for the dismantling of structures of colonialism and racism in our university and beyond.

Each of us at Memorial University's School of Social Work is responsible to actively and constantly resist and work towards eradicating policies and practices of colonialism and racism within ourselves, within our relationships with each other, and within our institutions and society. In sum, each non-Indigenous person is responsible to "unsettle the settler within." Collectively, our first step begins with the School of Social Work administrative leadership, staff members, academic staff members, and students being dedicated to the intentional transformation of our School.

We are committed to the following actions for the School of Social Work:

1. Educating ourselves and each other about colonizing and racist narratives, policies, and practices, particularly those embedded in social work teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and service and practice;
2. Building relationships with Indigenous peoples, organizations, and communities, and actively participating in Indigenous events and calls for social justice;
3. Creating more opportunities for Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers to engage with students, staff members, and academic staff members in our collective journey towards decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization, and ensuring that Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers are well compensated;
4. Implementing directives from the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the *Calls to Action* of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the *Calls for Justice* of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and any forthcoming reports;
5. Creating a School mission statement, governance processes, curriculum, and teaching and learning processes, and incorporating current and comprehensive knowledge regarding the decolonization and Indigenization of undergraduate and graduate social work education;
6. Actively recruiting and retaining Indigenous students and removing barriers, changing admission requirements, and developing retention strategies for Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students;
7. Actively recruiting and retaining Indigenous academic staff members and staff members;
8. Co-creating "safe-as-possible" teaching and learning environments that are actively decolonized, anti-racist, and free from prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and oppression;
9. Encouraging and promoting research and scholarship addressing colonialism, systemic racism, and white supremacy;
10. Supporting and defending students, staff members, and academic staff members who are harassed or discriminated against for integrating decolonization, reconciliation, Indigenization, and anti-racism into their teaching and learning, research and scholarship, service and practice, and collegial relations; and
11. Supporting and encouraging Indigenous students, staff members, and academic staff members in pursuing leadership positions within the School and the University.