

DRISC (Decolonization, Reconciliation, & Indigenization Standing Committee) 2020-2021 Year-End Report

Dear Colleagues, Witnesses, and Friends,

The 2020-2021 fiscal year has been unsettling on so many levels, yet our committee members remained vigilant, present, and hopeful over this past year. DRISC remains committed to the transformative praxis of disclosure, transparency, and informed consent recognizing power imbalances and misogyny in our deliberations. Everyone is welcome in our circle. All that we ask is that you grab a paddle and help us pull. While the challenges of physical isolation made communication with one another difficult at times, we are extremely proud of the dedication and contributions our committee members (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike) have made this past year. This report celebrates our collective achievements in service to all our locals and membership for creating a more inclusive collegial structure - Collectively, DRISC continues to do the heavy lifting for our federation, and this is something we are extremely proud of.

DRISC utilizes 'the consensus model' in all our deliberations because it provides a process that ensures all committee members feel heard, understood, and valued as we align our individual intentions and efforts with our collective actualization - Simply put, together everybody achieves more (T.E.A.M.). As Co-Chair, I have had the honor of sitting next to, and learning from, incredibly smart and gifted humxn beings including matriarchs like Sharon McIvor. DRISC values the role matriarchs have and their contribution to our communities but over the course of several meetings I have attended, I am embarrassed by white male privilege being used to silence and shut out womxn from contributing. Words alone cannot emphasize how humiliating and impactful misogyny is and it needs to stop. There is no place for it at FPSE and, as someone who describes himself as a recovering patriarch, let me be the first to sign up for anti-misogyny training if it helps men understand how male privilege, prejudice, and bias prevent us from greater collective problem solving.

DRISC was formed in 2017 with a central goal of implementing the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) *94 Calls to Action*. Since this time, we have sought out ways to operationalize the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* amid a diverse tapestry of Indigenous ways of knowing and being throughout our province. Our terms of reference is designed to guide and support the President, the Presidents' Council, and FPSE membership in uplifting, honoring, and integrating diverse Indigenous ways of knowing and being. We affirm the collective and inherent rights of self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, and that our work takes place on the unceded and occupied lands of Indigenous Peoples. The land and the People are one, and the traditional knowledge and governance systems of Indigenous nations centre truth, human dignity, respect, and courage as practices that must be enacted daily in order that

we may learn to live in right relationships with the land, Indigenous nations, and each other in a good way.

DRISC's mission is to build a balanced foundation of 'mutual respect' where people of every background, experience, and different ways of knowing and understanding can collegially create a positive future together - Until there is cultural freedom for Indigenous People(s), academic freedom remains an illusion. DRISC recognizes the bravery and courage of Indigenous People whose embodied experiences of 'racist backlash' form part of their daily precarious working conditions - Inside the very institutions asking for their help and guidance. In this context, we extend a hand to support our members in this important work we do together, but this is our point of departure and why we need 'your' help to make things right.

DRISC calls upon the FPSE membership to move beyond tokenistic approaches and empty rhetorical statements toward action on decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization (DRI) efforts. Operationalizing British Columbia's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* means developing educational practices (see Articles 8, 14, 18-19, and 34 respectively) that recognize, protect, and enhance the cultural integrity of Indigenous Peoples. Cultural security must inform one of FPSE's main strategic goals by using an anti-racist lens (confirmed in the past two AGMs) in our policies and equity-seeking work. While the federal and provincial governments, as well as many Canadian organizations, are rushing to define themselves as 'anti-racist' institutions dedicated to the work of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI), little progress has been made to address the brutal reality of racism that is an undeniable part of the foundation of Canadian society when certain voices are privileged, and others are silenced/erased. By not addressing power imbalances and collegial supremacy, this serves to reinforce colonization, sexism, and racism inside the very structures DRISC was created to help mitigate. Far too often we have heard reports of unsafe workplaces and dehumanization of Indigenous and non-white people and this makes the work of FPSE and DRISC urgent.

We must centre Indigenous Peoples' truths about the ongoing brutality of Canadian colonization and its genocidal impacts by drawing attention to policies/practices designed to destroy Indigenous nations. These forms of domination translate into daily attacks on the identities, languages, and cultures of Indigenous People inside our classrooms, workplaces, and public life. Indigenous Peoples must lead this work as they have developed the capacity to 'walk in two worlds' and understand the needs of Indigenous learners and the barriers they face. We need courage and commitment to develop effective strategies that move beyond 'performance and virtue signalling' toward transformative educational practices that centre land-based models of peaceful co-existence inside our workplaces.

We call on the FPSE membership to support an action plan for Decolonization, Reconciliation, and Indigenization that reflects the following goals:

1. Mobilize the wisdom, expertise, experience, activism, training, and facilitation skills of DRISC members who are Indigenous persons, many of whom are leaders in the work of DRI in their institutions and communities. This includes DRISC members who carry educational practices that have evolved over thousands of years, surviving even the last few hundred years of concerted efforts to destroy the nations that carry this knowledge.
2. Provide funding to DRISC so that committee members can create the tools needed to educate our union executives and members about DRI. These tools include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. A DRI workshop developed by DRISC members that centres the lived experiences of Indigenous educators in BC.
 - b. The creation of posters, resource guides, academic writing, and other practical tools that draw upon current research, scholarship, needs assessments, and best practices.
 - c. Designing course outcomes/curricula that prioritize positive self-concept of Indigenous learners especially as it pertains to reframing the portrayal of Indigenous peoples from harmful pathological deficits to one of communal strength and resiliency in relation to power and dominance.
3. Use these resources to make racism in the academy visible to shop stewards and union members by teaching them to identify common experiences of racialized discrimination including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. harassment and bullying through daily micro-aggressions.
 - b. lack of culturally safe spaces.
 - c. attacks on cultural identity.
 - d. 'model minority' expectations (of good moral character...).
 - e. emotional labour, risk-taking, and exhaustion.
 - f. barriers to recruitment, retention, advancement, and promotion.
 - g. silencing of dissent.
 - h. impinging on academic freedom by diminishing, demeaning, and disempowering scholarship and teaching that centres Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing.
 - i. denial of racism and the harm and trauma of experiencing racism.
 - j. isolation, shunning, and ostracizing.
 - k. marginalization, silencing, and discrediting.
 - l. failure to address racism as a health and wellness issue.
 - m. failure to address racism as an occupational safety issue.
 - n. failure to acknowledge racist backlash.
4. Developing language for our collective agreements that confronts racist backlash and fear of reprisal with protections for whistle blowers.
5. Create meaningful methods of reporting and meeting benchmarks on DRI for FPSE and FPSE standing committees.

6. Develop tools for creating evidenced-based reports that establish the frequency and scope of racism in our workplaces and identify the ways that racism is embedded in administrative policies, practices, and/or working conditions. DRISC members have the expertise to create tools such as, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. adapt cutting edge methodologies developed in organizational psychology, critical legal, critical race, and critical Indigenous studies for FPSE member unions to document, categorize, and respond to racism in the workplace.
 - b. develop working conditions studies that:
 - i. establish a baseline of systemic racist experiences.
 - ii. decolonizing our collective agreements by identifying and developing specific culturally and spiritually informed structures and processes that are required to support the long-term career progression of Indigenous faculty.
 - iii. access and build upon a growing body of evidence-based research identifying practices promoting promote land-based interventions that centre cultural and spiritual integrity.
 - iv. Develop fidelity strategies that reduce turnover intentions and supports organizational commitment and job satisfaction for those walking in two worlds.
 - c. Contribute to provincial databases that document systemic and structural racism experienced by Indigenous and non-white people.
7. Develop capacity in FPSE and our member unions to undertake anti-racist initiatives without making this work the 'sole burden' of Indigenous and non-white faculty and recognizing the role that 'each of us' may play in participating in and perpetuating racism.

As you reflect on this evolving action plan, consider the quantitative findings from the report *'In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care'* (Turpel-Lafond, 2020). The sample frame was approximately 9,000 participants (2,780 were Indigenous Peoples and 5,440 were health care workers). Data from the Indigenous People's Survey and the Health Workers' Survey showed that 1/3 of non-Indigenous health care workers witnessed interpersonal racism or discrimination towards Indigenous patients. The largest single stereotype that justified compromised care was an implicit belief that Indigenous patients were 'less worthy' of care and yet 47% said or did nothing. A more troubling finding showed that harm was significantly more pronounced for Indigenous womxn and girls.

For Indigenous People working inside the health care system, data revealed that systemic discrimination not only had negative consequences on their job performance, but on their overall quality of life:

- 92% reported negative impacts on their emotional well-being.
- 81% reported mental health issues.
- 81% reported adverse affects on their self-esteem.

- 80% reported less job satisfaction.
- 80% reported lower levels of spiritual health.

45% indicated they feared reporting or complaining about systemic racism because it would result in negative working relationships with their colleagues. In fact, 35% of all health care worker participants reported that they believed internal workplace harassment & complaint processes would not make a difference.

In closing, British Columbia post-secondary needs to do more to address precarious working conditions of Indigenous staff and faculty experiencing psychosomatic harm – Undue harms that compromise their socio-economic inclusion, scholarship, academic and cultural freedom, and their cultural integrity as distinct Peoples. We need FPSE to advocate and lobby WorkSafe BC for the necessary legislative amendments that incorporate cultural security accordingly. Such accountability measures not only sanction harmful workplace practices but compliment our goal of creating organizational cultures that value and support the duality of their important scholarly contributions. All My Relations.

W`ai,

Justin Wilson, PhD
Co-Chair DRISC (Local 14)