

## Modern Disenfranchisement – The Legality of a Registered Social Worker

Denica Bleau, Melanie Lansall and Joban Dhanoa

### Abstract

*The legality of who is considered Indigenous has been created for the purpose of employing settler colonialism and eradicating Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples' identity is held and defined by colonial legislation. Historically, in the North of Turtle Island (Canada), when operating amongst the systems and legislation that have been created by and for the colonizer, such as the Indian Act (1876), Indigenous Peoples are forced to choose between Indigeneity and safety. This paper was formed as a result of the legality which restricts Indigenous, Black and social workers of Colour (IBPOC) from participating in social justice movements, specific to Indigenous rights, human rights, and land rights, due to the fear of losing their social work license / registration in a Northern Turtle Island (Canadian) context. We review the current implications of claiming the label of a Registered Social Worker (RSW), and the use of direct and intentional surveillance of IBPOC and communities through the realm of social work, which inhibits community and relational practice, and exacerbates a colonial agenda of punitive practice. We recommend that the schools of social work review how the legality of registration and licensing is a form of disenfranchisement, when being confronted with choosing Indigeneity or colonized legislation.*

Keywords: Social Work, IBPOC, Surveillance, Policy, Ethics, Criminalization

Enfranchisement, the idea of losing a status or position, has been historically utilized to force Indigenous People to choose between being defined as an Indigenous person, or as an enfranchised, non-Status Indigenous person. This occurred across Turtle Island (North America), however, this paper focuses on the Northern region of Turtle Island, colonially known as Canada. Historically, the Indian Act (1876) was used to define and enfranchise an Indigenous person as a Canadian citizen, based on attaining education, professional licensing and/or marriage (Crey, 2009; Wilson, 2018). Contemporarily, we argue that the latter form, disenfranchisement, is also exercised through revoking professional licensing and registration for participating in Indigenous identity and Indigenous movements for sovereignty. Indigenous Peoples, and their allies, are threatened with losing their Registered Social Workers (RSW) licensure if their advocacy does not fall within the legal boundaries of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), or specific provincial mandates.

This paper originated following the Fairy Creek Blockades, in which one of the authors wished to support the Pacheedaht, Ditidaht and Huu-ay-aht First Nations in defending their land, in accordance to honouring Article 28 in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN General Assembly, 2007). The author was informed by a co-author, who is also a Registered Social Worker (RSW), that social workers are at risk of losing their licenses for partaking in protests, particularly protests that are perceived as 'violent.' As a result of systemic oppression, Indigenous, Black and social workers of Colour (IBPOC) are more severely surveilled, penalized and arrested while participating in social movements or protests (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018). As a social worker, Indigeneity and community practice is held by the confines of colonialism and colonial legality. Crosby & Monaghan state that Indigeneity has

been criminalized “in an effort to make an Indigenous politics of self-determination unspeakable,” specifically in relation to protecting Indigenous sovereignty (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018 pg. 10). It is our recommendation that the CASW and schools of social work to deconstruct the understandings of what is considered criminalization, in order to move away from legality and punitive practices, and instead adopt an Indigenous lens of equity and advocacy.

### **Historical Disenfranchisement**

The enfranchisement of Indigenous Peoples into Canadian society has been utilized as a forced assimilation tactic since the establishment of the 1867 Indian Act (Crey, 2009), which establishes who is allowed to be deemed Indigenous (King, 2003). If an Indigenous Person attained a university education or professional licensing, enrolled in the army, or left the reserve for a long period of time, they became enfranchised as a Canadian citizen, and their Indigenous Status was terminated (Crey, 2009; Johnson, 2020). Until 1982, Indigenous women and their children’s Indigenous Status was terminated for marrying a non-Status man, Métis, or non-Indigenous person, or if their husband died or a divorce/separation ensued (Johnson, 2020; Wilson, 2018). This could also result in losing resources accessible by Status, such as band membership and being allowed to live on reserve, hunting, gathering, and being on the land (Wilson, 2018). This thus caused community division, poverty, lack of resources, and exaggerated violence against Indigenous women (Wilson, 2018). Thomas King (2003) articulates:

“It would be too torturous a journey to try to explicate the Indian Act at one sitting, for it is a magical piece of legislation that twists and slides through time, transforming itself and the lives of Native people at every turn. And sprinkled throughout the act, which, among other things, paternalistically defines who is an Indian and who is not, are amendments that can make Indians disappear in a twinkle. An 1880 amendment allowed for the automatic enfranchisement of any Indian who obtained a university degree.  
Get a degree and, poof, you’re no longer an Indian.  
Serve in the military and, abracadabra, you’re no longer an Indian.  
Become a clergyman or a lawyer and, presto, no more Indian.  
Legislative magic.” (p. 87).

We see this as an ongoing theme of Indigenous erasure and elimination through the dismissal and disregard of Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty (Wolfe, 2006).

### **Current Implications in Social Work**

Within the realm of the social work profession, social workers have the opportunity to complete a test and become a ‘Registered Social Worker’ (RSW) which privileges a social worker to practice in certain settings, complete specific documents (such as Persons with Disability (PWD) applications), being insured under a legislative body, being funded through insurance for counselling, and be legally recognized as a ‘Social Worker’ (British Columbia College of Social Workers, 2022). Registered Social Workers (RSW) are held accountable to the College through which they are registered, which is federal, such as through the Canadian Association of Social

Workers (CASW), and/or provincial, such as through the British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW). The purpose of the accountability established by the College is designed, and intended to, protect clients and community members who work with an RSW.

However, the standards in which registered social workers are held legally do not take into account the oppressive systems which hyper-surveilled IBPOC Peoples and their communities, which historically resulted in punitive measures and moreover would dismiss relational accountability. Specifically, if a person with an RSW is arrested, even within the realm of social justice such as being a part of a demonstration or protest, they are at risk for losing their RSW registration / license.

Part 6, Section 61 of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice: British Columbia College of Social Workers Bylaws* states that a social worker can lose their license for receiving a “Conviction for a criminal offence, the nature of which is relevant to the registered social worker’s suitability to practice social work or which may reasonably be expected to bring the profession of social work into disrepute” (British Columbia College of Social Workers, 2009 p.34). The Canadian Association of Social Workers’ *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Ethical Practice* also states that registration can be revoked as a result of “Malpractice and Negligence Behaviour” that is included in “conduct unbecoming,” including a “criminal conviction.” (Canadian Association of Social Workers 2005a pg. 11; pg. 28).

The *Social Workers Act* of British Columbia states, under Section 25(1), that individuals applying for an RSW must submit a criminal record check, which is reviewed by a committee (BC Laws, 2008). Section 16(1) states that the review committee is responsible in evaluating the risk of the social worker in accordance to the criminal record check (BC Laws, 2008). As a result, we suggest that the legal standards in which an RSW must choose between being accountable to Indigenous community, whether relationally, through allyship, or being accountable to a College of Social Work, is a form of contemporary disenfranchisement. We argue that there is a lack of understanding the discrepancy of criminal charges and police reports which criminalize and demonize those who participate in protests or social movements, especially for IBPOC Peoples (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018).

### **Social Work and Colonial Agendas**

Social work began in the context of carrying out the colonial agenda of assimilation and surveillance of IBPOC Peoples (Hart et al., 2010). The colonial foundations of the social work profession must be acknowledged when discussing the hierarchy of decision-making within colleges of social work, and which views are deemed as accurate. These state institutions continue to enact white supremacy and settler colonial values and actions “of being, knowing and acting, despite rhetoric of empowerment and respect for cultural diversity (Clarke & Yellow Bird, 2020, p. 40). We recognize that social workers enter the field with an intention to support oppressed populations, but nonetheless are indoctrinated to repeat and continue colonial harms, or, are forced to enact in ways contrary to relational and restorative practice, in order to abide by social work regulations (Clarke & Yellow Bird, 2020).

The historical roots of what was considered “just and suited” within the social work profession included social workers partaking in the removal of Indigenous children for the purpose of attending residential schools, or to be illegally adopted as a part of the Sixties Scoop (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2018; Hart et al., 2010; Johnson, 2020). Social workers were accompanied by Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Indian Agents, who also served as a means of enforcement and surveillance (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2018). RCMP and police continue to participate as legal enforcers and overseers during the removal of Indigenous children from their families. RCMP and police opinions, voices, and recallings are routinely validated over those of IBPOC People (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018). This hierarchy translates into the current systemic and societal disregard of Indigenous voices which continue to be devalued within social work practice (Bleau & Dhanoa, 2021). Violence through systemic racism, which has continued as a result of historical beliefs and current implications in Indigenous communities, cannot be ignored.

### **Over-surveilling and Criminalization of IBPOC Social Workers**

On the same page of the CASW *Guidelines for Ethical Practice* which deems a criminal conviction as malpractice and negligence behaviour, the guidelines state that it is the responsibility of social workers to respect and “to protect people from discrimination and harassment” (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005b, pg. 28). Discrimination and harassment of Indigenous Peoples by the state, and more specifically by the Criminal Justice System (CJS) including the RCMP and police, is extensive and ongoing (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018; Johnson, 2020). Johnson states that racial identity drives individuals’ experiences in the world, further asserting, “If you are other than white and you live in a territory dominated by whites, the simple reality is that your race will largely determine most things about your lived experience” (Johnson, 2020, p. 87). The social work profession must recognize the inherent differences that IBPOC social workers face in regards to surveillance and criminalization, in comparison to their white counterparts, in both their personal and professional lives.

Surveillance and strategic arrests are used to control Indigenous Peoples and communities (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018). This form of control is historically prevalent and has been legal, including the forced displacement of Indigenous Nations, the prohibition of accessing natural resources, even so much as banning access to legal services such as lawyers (1927 – 1951) (Johnson, 2020). Indigenous People are surveilled more for *criminal* activity, whose extent is defined by state agencies such as the RCMP, companies who extract resource from Indigenous communities, and politicians, which increases the probability of arrest (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018). Studies in North America have demonstrated that Indigenous and Black Peoples are surveilled and arrested more than white people (Wortley & Jung, 2020). From March 2009 – March 2018, the inmate population of Indigenous people increased by 42.8%, with less than 1% increase of the overall inmate population growth (Zinger, 2018). These means of surveillance are intentional in the ongoing oppression, exclusion, displacement, surveillance, and incarceration of Indigenous Peoples (Lee & Ferrer, 2014; Milward, 2022).

### **Extractivism and Surveillance**

Wolfe states that “invasion is a structure not an event” (Wolfe, 2006, pg. 388), recognizing that the inherent purpose of colonization is to continue extractive capitalism within Canada, and worldwide throughout traditional Indigenous territories. It has been well documented by the extensive research of Crosby & Monaghan (2018) that Indigenous Peoples are targeted in surveillance for activism which specifically defies extractive capitalism and asserts Indigenous self-determination. Within Canada the policing and security state dynamic with resource extractive industries is established to police and surveil Indigenous Peoples in order to protect corporations who are involved in extractive capitalism (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018). Those who choose to defend inherent Indigenous rights are deemed as a “threat, often blurring political protests with violence and criminality” (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018, p. 103) who are labeled as troublemakers (Tobias, 1983).

Crosby & Monaghan articulate that policing thus cannot be “objective or neutral” as policing partakes in “active [support] of extractive capitalism and settler colonialism” (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018, p. 4). Johnson reasserts this rhetoric when affirming that the Canadian justice system prioritizes “property rights of settlers” over Indigenous lives (Johnson, (2020), p. 5). This is shown more recently in the passing of *Bill 1: Critical Infrastructure Defence Act*, which was instated on June 17, 2020 (Justice and Solicitor General, n.d.). The Critical Infrastructure Defence Act prohibits “interference caused by blockades, protests or similar activities, which can cause significant public safety, social, economic and environmental consequences” which can result in fines up to \$200,000 and jail time for up to six months (Justice and Solicitor General, n.d.). This bill impacts Indigenous Peoples’ rights to land and protecting the land. Court Orders are issued, even in the instances when participating in a “peaceful protest that caused no property damage,” as seen in the case of *Canadian National Railway Company v. Plain* (*Canadian National Railway Company v. Plain*, 2013). Thus, the intention of these legal legislations is to minimize and intimidate Indigenous Peoples in their involvement in advocating for sovereignty and land.

The threat of disrupting colonialism, suppression, capitalism and extractivism results in the over surveillance, over criminalization and amplified arrests of Indigenous Peoples (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018). McAdam states that the “law has always been used as a weapon against those who stand against colonial mechanisms and genocidal practices” (McAdam, (2015), pp. 94 – 95). For Indigenous social workers, this means the ongoing threat of criminalization, when partaking decolonial resistance including in protests and movements, which defend human-rights, Indigenous rights, and Indigenous self-determination.

### **Distrust of Law Enforcement**

Indigenous Peoples have long recognized the abuse of power which was established through settler colonialism and enforced by Indian Agents. This surveillance continues to be maintained through the surveillance of RCMP officers (Johnson, 2020). For many Indigenous Peoples, the idea of seeking safety through accessing police services, via the RCMP or police officers, is non-existence. Harms caused by law enforcement are historically rooted, through laws that imprisoned Indigenous Peoples to reservations, enacting the Pass System, which encouraged

punishment and legal ramifications for leaving the reservation without a pass (Daschuk, 2013). These legal ramifications resulted in imprisonment or death (Daschuk, 2013).

Police partook in the illegal removal of Indigenous children from their homes for the purposes of forcefully enrolling them in Indian Residential Schools, and illegally kidnapping and adopting them into non-Indigenous families, otherwise known as the Sixties Scoop. More recently, police have been found to have committed acts of murder in occurrences such as the “Starlight Tours.” In Treaty 4 (Regina) and Treaty 6 (Saskatoon) Territories in Saskatchewan in the early 2000s, the RCMP would take Indigenous Peoples out of town in the middle of winter for so-called “tours,” and leave them to walk home (Hausch, 2023). RCMP officers would take away clothing and shoes, and leave Indigenous Peoples to walk back to the city. This resulted in severe injury, and more commonly in death (Hausch, 2023).

Throughout colonization, there are parallels of stealing the land and justifying the exploitation and punishment of Indigenous bodies (Chartrand, 2019; Razack, 2015). Razack (2015) connects the parallels of settler coloniality claims to the land in mimicking the belief of settler ownership of Indigenous bodies, in the hierarchy of police violence against Indigenous Peoples. Razack (2015) illustrates this by explaining the physical violence of leaving marks on Indigenous Peoples bodies (as exemplified during violent arrests) is a claim to racial hierarchy and the pursuance of the erasure of Indigenous Peoples (Simpson & Le Billon, 2021). A resistance to colonial power by Indigenous, Black and People of Colour continues to be met with violence enacted by the police state. Police brutality is contemporarily endorsed as a means of intimidation against Indigenous Peoples who exercise their right to self-determination and land sovereignty (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018).

Police are deemed as heroes when surveilling *difficult* populations, and these populations are deemed violent and threatening by the law, and further stereotyped and researched through the media, and pathologized via mental health (Razack, 2015; Stevenson, 2015). This narrative encourages the support of white settler colonial society for maintaining “social order,” and thus supporting the maintenance of police brutality (Lee & Ferrer, 2014). Thus, leaving a continued distrust of law enforcement by People of Colour, as well as those who accompany and surveille communities, including social workers (Stevenson, 2015).

### **Surveillance by Social Workers**

Rifkin (2013) refers to “settler common sense” as the act of individuals within the systems of *helping*, such as law and social work, and their compliancy in participating in colonial systems of oppression. Social work is modernly viewed as a political activity, responding to unjust systems of government and policies (Gilbert & Powell, 2010). However, the original establishment of the social work profession was developed to ultimately surveille and assess individuals, leading to power and domination over their societally deemed normalcy of actions, behaviours and overall presence in spaces (Gilbert & Powell, 2010; Lee & Ferrer, 2014). The process of assessment and monitoring results in asserting and pursuing colonial norms and hierarchy.

These processes ultimately deem the service user as needing to be surveilled in order to maintain good social order (Gilbert & Powell, 2010; Lee & Ferrer, 2014). The government continues to

regulate the lives of members of society through social workers, who work for, and by, the purposes of the state (Gilbert & Powell, 2010). We, as Indigenous and Coloured social workers, compliment dominant society by again becoming an Indigenized cog in the wheel of capitalism, who are indoctrinated to view oppressed and segregated individuals as a way to earn and create an economy. As Nadeau discusses at length about how the “great white helper” is placed in a position of “fixing” Indigenous Peoples, so that they can be in “a more comfortable place to position themselves” (Nadeau, (2020), p. 81). Social workers are thus surveilled by registering bodies, while surveilling clients, while paradoxically resisting these normalities (Gilbert & Powell, 2010). Social workers are forced to balance these expectations of social justice and community centered care, while challenging an overarching system that deems community care as primitive and less ordered.

### **The Surveilling Profession: The Child Welfare System and the Carceral State**

Since the beginning of colonization and displacement of Indigenous Peoples and People of Colour were placed strategically within urban spaces, as a “mechanism for surveillance and control both financially as well as socially” in order to be “controlled and surveilled to the benefit of the Canadian state” (Lee & Ferrer, 2014, p. 12). Social workers maintain this surveillance within the realms of probation, child welfare, social assistance, and other practices which require monitorization and judgement. Social work thus inherently becomes a part of the police-carceral state, enacting systems of surveillance and domination (Lee & Ferrer, 2014). The mandates which are upheld by regulatory bodies “often uphold limited ideas of accountability that perpetuate coloniality” by being accountable to restrictive and oppressive structures, rather than being community-based (Sloan Morgan et al., 2021, p. 981). Accountability is thus prioritized to a governing body, instead of being relationally accountable (Indigenous axiology) to relationships with clients / community members, family, community, nation, and other inanimate and non-inanimate beings (Sloan Morgan et al., 2021).

Steve Rogowski (2015) examines this as the process of social workers shifting from working therapeutically with children and families, to enacting surveillance and control as a means of change. This form of surveillance is punitive, and discards strength-based and community-centered practices, which are integral within the axiology of working with Indigenous family and community practices. Decolonizing therapeutic praxis is rooted in authentic relationship. These relationships fundamentally cannot take place if the threat of surveillance and criminalization is present. Social workers inherently become a part of the police, surveilling state, in monitoring and scrutinizing every movement of Black and Indigenous parents (Cole & Maynard, 2021). These systems allow for continued mass surveillance and control, as established since the 1867 Indian Act. The practice of the apprehension of children into the child welfare system, and the child-welfare-to-prison pipeline are a continuation of the practices of the Indian Act (Lee & Ferrer, 2014). These practices intend to re-produce colonial systems of invisibility, erasure and exclusion, resulting in assimilation and legislative extinction of Indigenous Peoples (Lee & Ferrer, 2014).

### **From Community Centered to Surveillance**

Policing and surveillance are not relationally centered, and surveillance is weaponized to maintain settler colonialism dominance and control (Cole & Maynard, 2021). The largest, and most expensive system of surveillance through the carceral and child welfare system is not built on community, it is spent on punishing Indigenous and Black People every day: “to punish us, rather than to care for us” (Cole & Maynard, 2021). Social work has shifted from radically challenging political agendas, to pathologizing and moralizing, without recognizing the wider social impacts (Butler-Warke et al., 2020). Social work has shifted from relational practice to outcome-based practice, in order to measure and monitor those who access services (Butler-Warke et al., 2020). This acts to push political agendas of furthering othering, while maintaining systems of oppression which seek to surveil and criticize intimate aspects of individuals lives (Milward, 2022).

Social workers have become “agents of social control who manages and – where necessary – punishes the vulnerable” (Butler-Warke et al., 2020, p. 71). Whereas community-based practice acknowledges the sharing of resources, surveillance and carceral punishment targets individuals who are socially and societally deemed immoral for accessing (the lack of) resources in illegal or societally deemed morally wrong ways. Because the police state was originally developed to maintain control through utilizing violence and fear, the police state cannot be reformed, but instead needs to be abolished (Cole & Maynard, 2021). Community centered care, and exercising Indigenous sovereignty, is not possible through the exercising of surveillance.

### **Adjusting Social Work Regulations**

As social workers, supporting community members difficulties arise when we are governed by a College that was created by mainstream colonial patriarchal institutions. These institutions currently govern the systems that we live in and abide by, and the ways we practice social work. The over regulation and surveillance narrative is to comply by colonial standards, rather than advocate for social justice. This results in social workers confronting the issue of their own morals and values of community care, versus the Colleges guidelines for the “best interest of the client” (British Columbia College of Social Workers, 2009, p. 1). The Colleges guidelines supersede a client's right to autonomy and care. We, as practicing social workers, question the true understanding of Indigenous sovereignty and axiology, when being governed by a state of surveillance, instead of community care and social justice that prioritizes future generations.

Social worker workers are also placed in a place of power, influence and surveillance over families and communities, minimizing self-determination and sovereignty, and upholding colonial standards of individual and community expectations. Social workers are expected to excerpt power, in order to maintain a power balance between client and State. Practicing surveillance, and colonially deemed appropriateness on reporting on families and communities, is punitive and not restorative, creating distrust and disrupting relationality.

The creation of the practice of social work, and thus the Code of Ethics (2009), has been designed through a Western ontology and epistemology. As previously mentioned, the threat of losing our registration, for partaking in protests for Indigenous sovereignty and human rights, creates a duality. We, as Indigenous People, do not leave our Indigeneity at the door, and we follow a protocol of introduction of our families, clans or houses, as a way to hold ourselves



responsible to our relations and ancestors. This is an imperative consideration for the Schools of Social Work and College of Social Work to consider. Political structures, including the College of Social Work, seek to define our inherent behaviour to defend our lands, which is a part of our ontology, epistemology and axiology as Indigenous Peoples. We are forced to dance between the personal and political worlds, while not aligning or fitting into either, as a result of colonial threats of disenfranchisement (Mitchell, 2018).

However, we understand that, in making recommendations for changes, we must acknowledge “the politics of truth” (Graham Hingangaroa Smith as quoted in Kovach, 2021, p. 194). Māori scholar Graham Hingangaroa Smith speaks about the reality of Indigenous Peoples battles of asserting sovereignty within institutions that are “dominated and controlled by non-Indigenous interests” (as quoted in Kovach, 2021, p. 195). Smith (as quoted in Kovach, 2021) discusses the ways in which Indigenous Peoples are forced to make compromises while working within a colonial structure, but that we must not stop fighting in the continuation of transformation, although this transformation may be limited in, and by, particular institutions. We must be aware of the limitations, and who sets these limitations.

### **Recommendations**

Within our recommendations, we call for the immediate evaluation of federal and provincial Social Work Code of Ethics, for an evaluation of ethics which do not support IBPOC in the pursuit of social justice, and protect IBPOC social workers from disenfranchisement of their registration. We call for accountability of anti-oppressive change within committees and social work delegated agencies, to protect IBPOC social workers from lateral violence. We call upon the Code of Ethics to be relationally restorative, and not punitive. We call upon social work education to apply decolonized, Indigenous ways of knowing and being, into theory and praxis.

As Carniol (2000) states “Client power and choices also gain ground when there is a greater freedom in the client-worker relationship, greater awareness about systemic sources of oppression, and greater consciousness about others similarly oppressed.” (p. 121). We urge an inclusive review of the current Codes of Ethics that the social work profession is controlled by both nationally (CASW) as well as provincially. At this time, if we attend rallies or blockades as a form of social justice, we can be penalized in a manner that removes our livelihood – therefore we are forced into a position of having to enact social justice with this caveat, in a limited fashion. In the protection of social workers involved in protests and social justice movements, we acknowledge the importance of maintaining our Indigenous axiology through partaking in active decolonization, protests, advocating, deconstructing, and changing the system we live in. We call for full protection of registration and legal support for those who are criminalized (arrested, charged and/or sentenced) for protecting Indigenous rights, land rights, and sovereignty, alongside attending movements which advocate for the rights of IBPOC. In this way, we demand the threat of disenfranchisement as a registered social worker to be retracted, and protection of registration be secure and unquestioned. We uphold our resistance of colonialism through “the intelligent, calculated and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and or exploitation of our minds, bodies and lands, and it is engaged for the ultimate

purpose of overturning the colonial structure realizing Indigenous liberation” (Wilson-Wazyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2014, p. 5).

IBPOC representation and voices are needed within all board committees, as active voices who recommend change which is enacted, rather than as tokenization. Too often are IBPOC social workers asked to be a part of committees, while often dismissed or diminished when calling for intentional change. We need to deconstruct the language and recreate an inclusive code that represents current practice and realities that include the awareness of the surveillance and ongoing oppression of IBPOC. Integration of these values within committees needs to be genuine and rooted in the values themselves – rather than virtue signaling through the use of unaccountable language, that does not provide meaningful engagement. We acknowledge that IBPOC women are targeted and deemed aggressive for voicing the segregation, racism, and oppression that they experience, particularly in the workplace. We call for those who enact this workplace and lateral violence to be held accountable by CASW and provincial registration bodies.

We further call for the Code of Ethics to be reviewed and adapted so that intentional, anti-colonial, anti-capitalistic change can occur. This will allow for more inclusive, less punitive practice in all areas of social work, leaving less threat of disenfranchisement from the social work profession. Forms of accountability need to extend beyond a carceral approach, and social workers need to be held accountable in a relational and growth-oriented way. Through decolonizing praxis, we encourage an approach to disciplinary action is not rooted in causing harm to someone, but instead enacts restorative justice models, holding social workers accountable to the clients they serve. We acknowledge that there is a continued oppression within the role of social work, and we hold strong to our Indigenous sovereignty as IBPOC social workers to practice restorative relationality, rather than colonial punitive harm.

We recommend that both the education of social work and Colleges of Social Work begin to recognize historical colonial axiology that is immersed within the Code of Ethics. We call upon social work education and the College of Social Work to implement Indigenous ways of knowing and being, as a precursor for decolonial decision making, recognizing that human and community connection is one of the greatest assets an individual social worker can embody. Our choice in this field of helping is to stand in solidarity and raise our voices and challenge the status quo of the ethics of being an IBPOC person in the profession of social work, who are surveilled, while also expected to surveille. As IBPOC social workers, we start this by practicing what it means to be in relationship with our communities, clients, and their communities. These relationships hold us accountable. When we practice with our Indigenous integrity, this does not impact the College of Social workers. Through the raising of our voices, we continue to decolonize the structures in place that govern our profession in a gentle, but truthful, manner.

## **Conclusion**

It is with the lived experiences and recognition of the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism, surveillance, criminalization, and extractivism that we assert: “Indigenous Peoples have never been idle in resisting settler colonialism” (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018, p. 99).

As Indigenous social workers, we abide by our responsibility to community in upholding relationality, alongside honouring our roles as caretakers of the land. We further reiterate that it is our responsibility, as social workers, to hold accountability to the communities whom we serve and work alongside. We encourage non-Indigenous social workers to advocate for decolonization through challenging systems of oppression and to exercise their roles as allies in amplifying these concerns. It is our recommendation that the CASW and provincial registration bodies review and recreate principles and policies that enact culturally safe, relational, community oriented, and truly socially just ethics. As outlined above, the current status of the Code of Ethics exists to support the ongoing colonial nature from which ethics are viewed; however, it is our belief that practicing in a way that is “ethical” must also include the ethics and values of the communities we serve. It is of the utmost importance that our paradigm for understanding ethical practice includes worldviews outside of the colonial perspective. In this way, social work prioritizes relationality as care, which is separate from a system of hierarchal power and surveillance. We call upon the Social Worker Registration boards to denounce policies which are in likeness of the Indian Act, which continue to assimilate communities, police social workers, encourage surveillance, and disenfranchisement for exercising Indigeneity.

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