

Towards Developing a Respectful Relationship Project – BCCSW Indigenous Committee Recommendation Schedule for the College

Background

Through the BC College of Social Workers (BCCSW) Strategic Plan 2016-2018, the Board of Directors made positive and lasting engagement with Indigenous communities a high priority. Therefore, the BCCSW sought to engage in and begin a respectful dialogue with Indigenous Peoples through which the College may listen and learn. The BCCSW acknowledges that social work has caused harm to individuals, families, and cultures through its participation in colonization and colonial practices. The College recognizes the need to not only acknowledge the harms of the past and the survivors of these harms, but to deeply embed the knowledge of this history into the social work profession, so that it never again plays such a role in future societies.

In order to move the Board Strategic priority of engagement with Indigenous communities' forward, the College initiated the Towards Developing a Respectful Relationship (TDRR) Initiative.

Purpose of TDRR initiative:

TDRR was designed for Indigenous Communities to engage with the BC College of Social Workers. The long-term outcome is to better understand the current context of social work in Indigenous communities, and in the spirit of reconciliation build meaningful, respectful relationships between the BC College of Social Workers, Indigenous social workers, and Indigenous communities across the province.

In 2016, the BCCSW contracted with Nashwito Creek & Associates (NWC), an Indigenous-consulting firm with members from the Okanagan Nation, to commence this important initiative. In undertaking this task, the College and NWC were guided by the TDRR Reference group in the development and implementation of this project. The NWC Final Report was delivered to the College in March 2017 with a number of recommendations on how to move the TDRR initiative forward.

From the NWC report, the BC College of Social Workers' first action was to follow the recommendation to create an Indigenous-led Board Committee to provide guidance and work with the College to implement recommendations that arose from this initiative. The BCCSW Indigenous Committee spent last year analysing the NWC Report to develop recommendations on how the College can move forward in its TDRR goals. Among the many recommendations we received through the report, the committee is supporting the following:

- Registration: Address barriers to registration and make it more accessible to Indigenous Social Workers. Increase Indigenous involvement by doing more outreach
- Develop Standards of Practice relevant to Indigenous communities and specific to territories and nations. Work with Indigenous community/Indigenous Social Workers to revise the Standards
- Promote Indigenous approaches to social work. Resist a 'pan-Aboriginal' approach
- Build respectful relations through time-sensitive engagement and learning about Indigenous history and perspectives. Be culturally responsive by increasing Indigenous involvement in BCCSW and mandating Indigenous cultural competency for all RSWs
- Engage with Indigenous students. Create posters to disseminate to Universities that engage the reader to find out more about becoming a registered social worker. This way, all Universities would have the opportunity to share the information with students across the province, and particularly within Indigenous social work programs (UVIC and UNBC).
- Reach out to Indigenous communities to ask if the College can share information in their newsletters or other platforms used by the community. The sharing of information would include: benefits and responsibilities of registrants and the role of the College.
- (N.B. During the TDRR sessions, many Indigenous organizations did not appear to be aware of the existence or the role of the College)
- Attempt to increase the accessibility of applying for registration and continue discussions with Pearson VUE to increase examination centre locations in rural areas.
- Explore introducing indigenous components to the registration application process and continuing professional development (CPD) program.
- Connect with each BC University to determine if they would like a College representative to provide an information session. Include information on how the BCCSW is attempting to address Indigenous social work registration and the history of colonization. Explain TDRR.
- Increase indigenous representation in the BCCSW and social work promotion materials. Create profiles in video or other format of Indigenous Registered Social Workers

because community participants said they would be more likely to become registered if they saw themselves represented.

- Increase the use of social media to connect with Indigenous communities and Indigenous youth.
- Increase Indigenous representation in the BCCSW

Through analysis of the NWC Report, the BCCSW Indigenous Committee identified several recommendations that were outside the mandate of the BCCSW, but that the committee could see cross collaboration with other sectors of the social work profession:

Connect with the BCASW to:

- see if they have the interest or ability to offer bursaries for Indigenous social workers
- explore providing continuing professional development training in remote Indigenous communities
- develop interest in developing an Indigenous specific mentoring program for new social workers

Connect with Educators to:

- Require social workers to respectfully engage with their local communities and undertake local Indigenous social work training
- Promote indigenous, Family-focused, community-based social work that is not 'pan-Aboriginal'; revitalise Indigenous knowledge and practices; redefine social work.

Connect with the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) to:

- increase the inclusion of indigenous content in the entry to practice exams