

## **DRISC STATEMENT TO FPSE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL: TRUTH BEFORE RECONCILIATION**

FPSE's Decolonization, Reconciliation and Indigenization committee was formed in 2017 to implement the TRC's "94 Calls to Action." FPSE has formalized DRISC's terms of reference which include guiding and supporting the President, the Presidents' Council, and FPSE membership in "uplifting, honouring, and integrating diverse Indigenous ways of knowing and being" (FPSE 2021). DRISC acknowledges the collective and inherent rights of self-determination of Indigenous peoples, and that our work takes place in the unceded and occupied lands of Indigenous peoples (FPSE 2021). The traditional knowledge and governance systems of Indigenous nations centre truth, human dignity, respect, and courage as practices that must be enacted on a daily basis in order that we may learn to live in right relationships with the land, Indigenous nations, and each other. This is our point of departure.

DRISC calls upon FPSE to move beyond tokenistic approaches and empty rhetorical statements towards action on decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization (DRI). British Columbia's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2019)* specifies the importance of developing educational practices (specifically Articles 8, 14, 18-19, and 34) that recognize, protect, and enhance the cultural integrity of Indigenous Peoples. These practices must also inform one of FPSE's main strategic goals confirmed in the past two AGMs to use an anti-racist lens when reviewing post-secondary policies and conducting 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 our society. This actually serves to reinforce the structures and processes of colonization and racism that continue to make our workplaces unsafe and dehumanizing for Indigenous and non-white people.

Once again, our nation is living with the threats and violence of overt white supremacy and backlash against anti-racist action, making the work of FPSE and DRISC urgent. We must centre Indigenous peoples' truths about the ongoing brutality of colonization, its genocidal impacts on Indigenous nations, and Canadian policies designed to destroy Indigenous nations. These forms of domination translate into daily attacks on the identities, languages, and cultures of Indigenous people in classrooms, institutions, workplaces, and public life. Indigenous people must lead our work as they have developed the capacity to "walk in two worlds" and understand the needs of Indigenous learners, the barriers they face, and the courage and commitment to work for effective strategies that move beyond performance and virtue signalling towards transformative education that centres land-based models of peaceful co-existence.

We call on FPSE to put into action a 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 experience 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
  - 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, and 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. identify and develop specific culturally- and spiritually-informed structures and processes that are required to support the long term career progression of Indigenous faculty
    - iii. develop strategies that reduce turnover by increasing organizational commitment and job satisfaction
    - iv. access and build upon a growing body of evidence-based research identifying practices promoting promote land-based interventions that centre cultural and spiritual integrity
  - 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

We recommend that President's council make time for DRISC to discuss a DRI plan at our 2021 AGM.

**BECAUSE** FPSE created DRISC to implement a plan for FPSE to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's "94 Calls to Action" and

**BECAUSE** FPSE membership voted in 2018 and 2019 to make one of our main strategic goals the use of an anti-racist lens in our policies and equity-seeking work and

**BECAUSE** it is urgent that FPSE move beyond tokenistic gestures towards decolonization, Indigenization, and Reconciliation (DRI) and

**BECAUSE** FPSE must make space for Indigenous people's expertise, leadership and participation in our work on decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation (DRI) and

**BECAUSE** there appears to be little evidence of an anti-racism lens being used in our work, insomuch as there has been no effort to promote, capture, or document the work of committees in this regard

**THEREFORE:** DRISC calls upon President's council to make 60 – 90 minutes of time available at the 2021 AGM for DRISC to present recommendations for FPSE's plan on DRI as per the DRISC statement to President's council.