

Indigenous Social Work Practice and Social Work Competence

Declaration of Guiding Responsibilities for Indigenous Social Work Practices

We, the Indigenous People of this earth, have the following responsibilities given to us by the Laws of Creation for the purpose of maintaining harmonious relationships with all forms of life.

We have four gifts to guide our behavior in exercising our responsibilities; Our languages, our ceremonies, our knowledge and traditions, and our relationship to the land.

Our children are recognized as the Keepers of our sacred ways: our responsibility is to ensure that they learn and live by these gifts.

Our relationships are recognized by keeping with the Laws of Creation through the transfer of ceremony.

Our sacred ways of knowing must be protected for our collective survival.

INDIGENOUS SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Indigenous Social Work Practice is regulated by demonstrated competencies in the performance of services and functions that are undertaken on behalf of Indigenous populations. These practices are founded upon restoring harmony to Indigenous populations through working with their Sacred Sciences and Practices which are embodied in the experience of their collective knowledge. These practice requirements are predicated on Indigenous ceremonies and recognized through the teachings of Eminent Scholars.

STANDARDS, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Indigenous Social Workers are committed to the highest ethical standards of practise to address the issues of social justice, inequity, and structural oppression while upholding the core values of respect for human dignity and self-determination.

These Practice Standards recognize the structural oppression of Indigenous peoples through the systemic beliefs that they are inherently inferior and must be assimilated into the dominant Euro-centric culture. This has led to the creation of reservations and the annihilation of traditional structures and processes that support human development and functioning, cultural and environmental functioning, and patterns of social interaction among Indigenous people. These Practice Standards address the fundamental mission of Social Work which is social change and social justice. Social workers who want to be recognized as Indigenous Social Workers will have adequate knowledge, practice experience, and demonstrated ability in the following:

1. Traditional knowledge located in the cultural sacred place of practice;
2. Working knowledge and understanding of Indigenous language in the place of practice related to context, core values, and relationships;

3. Knowledge of the core values and practices of service in Indigenous communities: reciprocity, interdependence, interconnectedness and participation;
4. Awareness of the core knowledge and skill sets which are inappropriate for Indigenous populations, including but not limited to: advancing the assimilation process, limitations of society's ability to respond to Indigenous populations, and conflicting relationships with other mainstream theories and approaches;
5. Participation in the cultural continuity of ceremony related to the place of practice;
6. Knowledge of the various and distinct levels of the Kinship system of Indigenous cultures of practice;
7. Knowledge and understanding of the Theoretical Framework for Indigenous Social Work, specifically, the integral nature of the kinship system to responsibilities for practise;
8. Demonstration of an advanced awareness of the colonial pillars of social consciousness; psychology and religion, social theory and institutions, policy and laws, education and research; and
9. Provision of services for the collective good – i.e. community projects respond to family and community services and practices, ceremonies for collective, family and community healing, etc.

In order to become recognized as an Indigenous Social Worker, a person must participate in an experiential process which includes learning/transfer of knowledge through traditional pedagogy and traditional teachers. This will include participation in/completion of an apprenticeship in Indigenous Social Work practice with a person who is recognized in and by their own community as a Traditional Teacher/Elder. As a final step, Indigenous Social Workers must be recognized by their community of practice, i.e. through authentication by a Panel of Elders recognised by the Community. (Blue Quills, Maskwachees, Yellow Head Tribal Council, Red Crow Community College, etc.).