

Questions for the ACSW Candidates

Question 1 - Could you speak to what is: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 94 Calls to Action? Why is this important in Social Work?

Responses:

Baiju Vareed

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) appointed in 2008 with justice Murray Sinclair as chair conducted detailed hearing of abuses faced by Aboriginal peoples in residential schools in Canada. (I attended the final public event of TRC in Edmonton in 2014, which gave me a firsthand experience of sharing by survivors of residential schools, and functioning of TRC. I also listened to speech by justice Murray Sinclair in Red Deer College in 2015). The final report submitted by TRC proposes 94 Calls for Action for reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples of Canada. I believe future of Canada depends significantly on taking real actions on Calls for Actions. Social workers need deliberate effort for reconciliation based on the Calls for Action in their regular service, and device special activities to implement Calls for Action. It starts by reflecting on one's social location, realizing privileges and becoming an ally. It is promising to see ACSW suggested that all social work schools in Alberta (mandatorily) have a separate course on Aboriginal ways of helping and reconciliation. I am glad to have been contributed to new course titled 'Reconciliation through Social Work', a compulsory course for all social work students at Red Deer College offer since Fall 2017.

Cardinal Fomradas

The Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada issued a report on the long and painful history of Canada's residential school systems and the multiple injustices that indigenous children experienced. The report spoke of the physical and sexual abuse these vulnerable kids experienced, as well as the thousands who actually died of Tuberculosis, malnutrition, and general maltreatment. The commission also issued 94 calls to action which urges all levels of government in Canada to work together to change policies and programs and work towards reconciliation.

The calls to action are divided into 2 part. Calls 1-42 deal with the legacy of the residential schools. Calls 43-94 deal with how to reconcile these wrongs.

The reconciliation process is very important to Social Work as Social Work is all about addressing wrongs and working towards a fair, and just society where all individuals are fully accepted and have an equal right to participate in society. We as Social Workers all have a role in the reconciliation process as we are in a position to advocate and work for fair treatment of all individuals and to promote inclusion and fight against discrimination and oppression.

Carla Bertsch

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada 94 Calls to Action are listed in a final report to “redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation”. The commission sought out to provide an opportunity for people who have been affected by the Indian Residential Schools legacy to share their story and have their truth be both known and acknowledged. 6 years later and after many thousands of people were heard, the TRC released its findings and the 94 calls to action. This is perhaps the first official step in Canada towards truth, healing, and reconciliation.

It is important to social work because after almost 3 years, it is difficult to see much action from any level of government. It is at the core of social work to highlight and address the inequities in our communities and to be leaders in the change and work needed to allow all people to thrive, particularly those most mistreated. We must continue to urge government to implement the recommendations, and support their appearance in all of our own work. Furthermore, I would argue social work resides in all of the areas noted in the document and were specifically named in two regarding child welfare work.

The social work profession has played a large role in the oppression, aggression, and misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in this country. We definitely have a role in correcting and leading a change of thinking, feeling, and being with one another.

Connie Hesjesdal

I would like to take a moment and thank ACSW members for presenting such questions.

The TRC of Canada 94 Calls to Action is a live document that reflects and outlines actions needing to take place in order to support and rebuild relationships severed during the residential school era. It is relevant in Social work practice for various reasons, as it provides a framework for enhancing services and programs to elevate inequalities, create best practices, and begin to work collaboratively with all nations in Canada.

Rick Guthrie

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada made 94 calls to action in an effort to redress the issues of Residential Schools. These actions fall under 2 main Categories of:

Legacy , dealing with Child Welfare, Education, Language and Culture, Health, Justice), and

Reconciliation , dealing with Canadian Governments and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, Royal Proclamation and Covenant, Settlement Agreement Parties and the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, Equity for people in the Legal System, National Council, Professional Development and Training for Public Servants, Church apologies, Education, Youth, Museums and Archives, Missing Children and Burial information, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Commemoration, Media, Sports, Business and newcomers to Canada.

It is important to Social work because this embrace Social Work course values of Respect for inherent Dignity and worth of persons, Pursuit of Justice, and ongoing Service to Humanity. In addition the disproportionately high number of indigenous children in care stems from the historical atrocities of Residential schools, social works need to understand this and work towards addressing these

actions. The ACSW Council, and the Indigenous Social Work Committee is very aware of this and has been involved in efforts to address these actions. I personally was present at the Truth and Reconciliation hearings in Edmonton.

Jody-Lee Farrah

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was established in 1998 to fulfill a component of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The purpose of the TRC was to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools and to document the truthful, lived experiences of survivors, families and communities. Following the work of TRC to prepare the historical record, a report was completed outlining the findings and included a Call to Action document, which outlines recommendations to address the legacy of Residential Schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.

This is important in Social Work because the TRC Calls to Action acknowledges the injustices imposed upon indigenous children, families and communities across Canada, bringing the truth to light for Canadians and creating understanding of the abuse and oppression, loss of family, loss of cultural identity suffered by indigenous people. Further, it seeks to provide a pathway to reconciliation for Canadians. I believe that the social work profession and social workers have a role to play in reconciliation. In keeping with the social work Code of Ethics and particularly, Value 1: Respect for the Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons, it is important that social workers learn about the work of the TRC, understand the Calls to Action and seek to implement action in their individual practice. Also, Value 2: Pursuit of Social Justice calls upon social workers to oppose prejudice and discrimination and to seek justice for individuals, groups and communities. In accepting and honoring the TRC Calls to Action, social workers are carrying out our collective ethical and professional duty and embracing the cornerstones of our profession.

Katie Borek

The 94 Calls to Action is an action plan to which we as social workers have been called to be accountable for our actions with Aboriginal peoples and communities. These calls to action are to bring together the various levels of government to attempt to repair the harms done by residential schools. Only once is there direct

mention of social workers in regards to proper education and training when working in child welfare. However it is important to note in the NASW Code of Ethics- Social Workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person group or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief or mental or physical disability; these 94 Calls to Action align with our Code of Ethics which guide our practices.