



# Saskatchewan Social Worker

JUNE 2020 | Volume 31 Number 2

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A photograph showing the silhouettes of a person wearing a hat and a dog looking towards a large billboard. The billboard is illuminated and displays the text 'UNITE THE NORTH' and '#CRUSHCOVID'. The scene is set against a sunset sky with clouds.

## Sharing Our Stories: Creativity, Leadership, & Inspiration in the Midst of COVID-19

Throughout Saskatchewan, social workers are finding ways to provide services while coping with the restrictions necessary to cope with COVID-19 and help flatten the curve.

### North West Integrated Service Area

“The North West integrated service area with SHA covers North Battleford, Lloydminster, Meadow Lake, LaLoche, Ile A La Crosse, Beavual, Buffalo Narrows and all points in between. It includes everything from farm land, the

oil sector to the boreal forest. Providing social work services to this area can be challenging and the current pandemic has intensified the needs of our community across all sectors. Social Workers, in particular, have gone above and beyond to do what they needed to do to provide the best possible service to the population of the North West during this time.

All staff acted quickly to prevent the spread and moved to working from home. Like many across the province, this has involved troubleshooting and

learning to working remotely but for us, cell service and internet are not always available. For many social workers in the north, this pandemic has been very isolating, personally, but we’ve stayed focused on our providing quality service to our clients. The B.E.A.T.S. Encounter group has been offered as an online program. B.E.A.T.S (which stands for Building Expression and Awareness through Theater and Sound) is the creation of a local social worker. It is a program that collaborates with the local schools to providing skill development to disadvantaged youth. Similarly,

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# Saskatchewan Social Worker

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# Sharing Our Stories: Creativity, Leadership, & Inspiration in the Midst of COVID-19

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the Roots of Hope Suicide Prevention Program, is being offered electronically. We've also seen crisis services such as PACT (Police and Crisis Team) and Mental Health and Addictions intake services, provided differently. Excellent service is still being provided but from the safest distance possible. North West Mental Health and Addictions Services is an extraordinary team!

One client-centered, trauma-informed response worth noting was the urgent development of a Managed Alcohol Program when a liquor store was closed in one of our communities to assist in

limiting the spread of COVID-19. The inability to access alcohol for those who are dependent would create a secondary medical emergency for the health care system in that community. The Mental health and Addictions team, including social workers, were there to implement this program in an unprecedented time frame!

To all the North West Integrated Service Area Social Workers: THANK YOU! Your dedication is making a difference as we continue to provide services during this pandemic.”

- Dianne Lauritzen

## Northern Regions

“Social workers in the north are working hard to provide high quality, client-centered services during this time. We have pulled together even closer to share options for service provision that are creative yet sensitive to the needs of the client. The use of technology has increased; however, the far northern population is not always able to use or acquire technology. At times this is due to lack of means to purchase the technology and other times the use of computers and webex is not comfortable or safe for many reasons. Some homes have many people living in them which means that the client lacks privacy to talk on a phone or computer for a session.

The north is generally a place where people strongly lean on the physical contact of a hand shake and face-to-face contact to share, trust and work together. As a result, we have decided to halt some of the important programs we usually deliver. We look forward to the warmer weather to be able to spend time meeting clients in the great outdoors while practicing physical distancing to help maintain the therapeutic bond that is so important when working in the human services field.

Northern social work services have always held their own unique challenges that we have embraced as practitioners and adjusted to because we love the north and the people we serve. This will be a time of flexibility and creativity for social workers and in the north we will have to adjust even more to the unique challenges that are present.”

- Anonymous

## Youth Mental Health & Addictions team (Saskatoon)

“The entire team has demonstrated incredible skill in adapting the therapeutic approaches such as CBT, DBT,



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# Sharing Our Stories: Creativity, Leadership, & Inspiration in the Midst of COVID-19

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and Family systems to a virtual platform within days of working remotely. This has allowed Youth and Families to continue on their mental health healing journey despite the pandemic. Social workers have also continued to provide single session therapy virtually and to take clients off the waitlist, so vulnerable youth and families continue to have access to both mental health and addiction services. Youth and parents who were attending the DBT group are continuing to access their clinical social worker and learn mindfulness, distress tolerance and other important coping skills virtually.”

- Maureen Kachor (MSW)

## Supervisor of day program for adults with disabilities

“We have three facilities that are community based and one facility which is a on campus program. We had to close our doors to our clients 3/4 weeks ago. Concerned with how this will impact the people we work with, our supervisor created an online day program for our clients to join. She contacted all our clients and asked them if they were interested in joining. Our programming has evolved from community based to making online games, chats, lessons, etc. She has also arranged for us to make phone calls to those who would like them and to those who are unable to join the online programming due to not having the needed tools. Her effort in keeping us working during these times and keeping our clients in touch with each other is amazing. I am so happy to have a boss who not only works hard and cares for our clients, but also who cares for her staff’s well being. She constantly stays in touch to make sure we are doing well emotionally and encourages new ideas to keep our clients connected and engaged with each other. I cannot say enough great things about her and her passion.”

- Anonymous

## Ranch Ehrlo Society

“Being a member of the senior leadership team at the Ranch Ehrlo Society during the COVID-19 pandemic has been inspirational. During the onslaught of media reports, restrictions, and an eventual state of emergency, a high level of creative practice and strength through collaboration has emerged within the agency.

From ‘kindness rocks’ nestled outside the main doors of the Hudson building, to socially distanced Easter Bunny visits facilitated by frontline staff, to the ‘pay it forward’ box, an initiative to share gifts among programs, to concern and nurturance within families participating in the family treatment program, there have been daily examples of the talent and commitment of staff, the guidance and concern of leadership, and most of all, the ongoing strength and resilience of our participants – whether youth, adults in our programs for those with differing abilities, our family programs, and our treatment foster program.

As one clinical caseworker commented, *‘we are so lucky to be able to work here during this time.’*

- Sophie Grahame (MSW)

## Ranch Erlo, MacKay House

“Waiting can be hard. When youth first arrive at Ranch Ehrlo and begin the treatment process, progress can be slow. Goals can seem so unattainable, and home can seem so far away.

With the current state of society, all of us are being forced into a stage of waiting; waiting to see loved ones again, waiting to frequent our favourite shops, gyms, or hairdresser.

Although it is difficult, patient expectation is a part of life that we know well in Saskatchewan; every year, we wait for spring – this year, it seems to be

taking particularly long. Nonetheless, we still have faith that it will arrive, however gradually and slowly.

The boys at MacKay House have also felt the frustrations of their life being put on hold, school and visits being cancelled, and being stuck inside. During group therapy, we discussed how this time of isolation was like an interior winter. And while we may not see the fruits right now, our roots can grow deeper and our character can grow stronger during this time so that when spring comes, the leaves will be that much greener and the fruits will be so much sweeter. The youth were encouraged to take advantage of this time to engage in their own treatment process, learn new skills, and strengthen relationships with loved ones, if only over video calls.

To reinforce this analogy, the MacKay youth planted seeds. Although the growth was not visible right away, it reminded them that interior growth is the crucial first step to a fruitful life. As we watch our plants grow and water them daily, it is a reminder that something IS happening. Even though we may feel “stuck” or stagnant, life goes on; it is up to us how we nurture the time we have. And one day soon, spring will come. The COVID-19 outbreak will subside. Our youth will move on to greater challenges. And those plants will mature and bloom.”

- Angela Montano (MSW)

## The team at RCJC (Regina Children’s Justice Centre)

“During COVID-19, examples of leadership include:

- Unit members always willing to help others on files; working together
- Senior staff always willing to lend a hand and offer advice/strategies to new workers
- Supervisor always checks in with her

staff to debrief and make sure workers own mental health & self-care is being attended to (as we see very extreme and serious investigations at RCJC)

- MSS management allowing worker rotations to minimize close contact with other staff

#### Examples of Changing Practices:

- Screening for COVID-19 symptoms via phone, text or email to make sure clients and staff alike are as safe as possible
- Limiting face-to-face contact (when applicable) and contacting clients through other means (if applicable)
- Safety PPE as needed
- Being supportive of clients and staff alike struggling through COVID-19; offering supports and checking in with each other; putting safety first
- Supervisors and staff balancing personal safety; with clients ensuring children's safety is met at all times"

- Erin Longpre (BSW)

#### Friendship Inn, Saskatoon

"I am the social worker at the Friendship Inn with my daily activities being a positive support and advocate for homeless population, persons with mental health issues, those living in poverty, social assistance clients, child protection clients and anyone else that chooses to use the services of the Friendship Inn. Therefore, it has been a natural fit for my organization to "lend" me to work in the HUB that has been set up to assist the very clients that I always work with in getting into housing and onto assistance.

I am working through my cell phone texting, e-mailing and calling the Ministry staff and property managers to ensure that the process is much quicker and smoother so that we can make sure people have a safe, warm place to isolate if necessary during

*Thank you to local Saskatoon Photographer, Brayden Elliott, for the permission to use his photos. See more of his COVID-19 series at [www.braydenelliott.com](http://www.braydenelliott.com)*



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the COVID-19 crisis. I have found that our community partners have really stepped up to the plate and done all they can to help others at this time of crisis. At the hub we have also been taking applications for people who may need meals or hampers delivered to their homes due to disability, isolation or lack of resources.

The next step that is happening with me is that my organization will also be loaning me to work at the Testing Sites in the city to help with counselling as needed and intake. With all of this and I am still trying to stay connected to my office and my co-workers."

- Lorraine Scott

#### Canadian Mental Health Association, Sask. Division Wellness Support Response

"Research on the SARS epidemic has shown that social isolation, social distancing, and quarantine can exacerbate the impacts of already existing mental illnesses as well as have a negative impact on everyone's wellness. That is why we created a new Wellness Support Response, where any member of the Saskatchewan public can call and get support such as: someone to listen, navigation through new government programs, systems navigation for services that are still operating, and educational materials/suggestions to use in coping with stress or anxiety. We

have people answering calls in every branch in the province as well as a youth line for people ages 12-19. This also allows CMHA to retain employee participation in organizational efforts while vocational or social membership programs have been put on hold until the COVID-19 protocols are no longer in place."

- Rebecca Rackow (BSW)

#### Zoe Teed-McKay (MSW, Director MHAS)

"In the face of this great challenge, leadership has never been more important. Zoe Teed-McKay (MSW, Director) has done an outstanding job in co-leading Mental Health & Addiction Services in Saskatoon every step of the way. She has engaged her leadership team of Managers and admin staff to ensure the entire department of 600+ employees is aware of rapidly changing policy, are supported to implement new policy and the steps that need to be taken to keep us all safe. And at the same time, preserving service provision to those who continue to struggle with mental health and substance use. Not only does she act as the conductor, she also takes the time to encourage staff to hang in there, but ALWAYS says thank you. Her ability to provide confidence and faith in her team is done with grace and helps the team know we will get through this together!"

- Anonymous



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Beginning in a Challenging Time

By Erin Beckwell, MSW, RSW

What an interesting, challenging, and uncertain time to move into my role as President of the Association! As I write this a few weeks before the newsletter goes to press, our provincial State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic has just been extended, and it's hard to imagine what – and how – we will be doing by June.

In many ways, the profession of social work is front and centre during this pandemic – yet, as often is the case, the work we do supporting people, communities, and organizations is

often less visible than that of more familiar, recognizable, and understood professions and roles. Over the past several weeks, I have heard from social work colleagues who are struggling to access adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), and who have unanswered questions about leading practices for protecting the people they support, as well as themselves and their families. Many of us have struggled to feel seen and valued as much as our fellow health and social care providers when we're not named as essential workers or thanked in so-

all of us opportunity to reflect on how we would like our lives, our work, our communities, and our society to be. Some have referred to COVID-19 as an “equal opportunity virus.” As social workers, we know this is not the case. Our training, our professional values, the support we provide, the relationships we nurture, and the resilience and pain we witness are all reminders that the world is not fair, or just, or equal – and, if anything, this pandemic is bringing that into sharper focus. We can – and must – amplify the voices of individuals and communities who

**This global pandemic has also given all of us opportunity to reflect on how we would like our lives, our work, our communities, and our society to be. Some have referred to COVID-19 as an “equal opportunity virus.” As social workers, we know this is not the case.**

cial media posts, TV commercials, and media conferences. Social work students have also had to rapidly adapt to complete their practicum placements and coursework in an unexpected and frequently-changing environment – and, for those who are finishing their training, face uncertain job markets. And of course, we are experiencing this in the context of collective stress, grief, and trauma as we navigate changing programs and policies at work, learning to work remotely (for those of us privileged enough to be able to do so), sorting out new technology and processes to offer services virtually, financial uncertainty, the possibility of illness and death, supporting our families with their work, school, and wellbeing, and (hopefully!) attending to our own emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, and social needs.

are vulnerable due to these structural inequities, and resist calls to return to “normal” when this is over.

I am excited to begin this new role with the Association and thank my fellow Council members for their support and guidance in getting me through my first year on Council. In particular, I would like to thank outgoing President Wanda Miller for her service to SASW and our profession – and for being organized, supportive, and an all-round wonderful social worker and human! I have been fortunate throughout my social work career to travel throughout the province and meet many of SASW members. For those whom I haven't met yet, I look forward to connecting with you – especially once we're able to get out and gather again! In the meantime, I invite you to reach out to share feedback, questions, or suggestions.

This global pandemic has also given



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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

# Adapting Our Work and Our Lives

By Karen Wasylenka, MSW, RSW

March is always a busy month; planning for spring meetings, preparing for the Annual Report, national social work month; planning and attending events for social work week. However, this year, the month of March brought something totally new for all of us. It turned out to be very different than what we expected. By the time social work week rolled around, the campaign and events we all worked so hard on for social work week were overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Cancellations, working from home, making contingency plans, self isolating, physical distancing, standing in line to get into the grocery store and much more – all became our new reality. This was uncharted territory. Our lives were turned upside down.

How did we adapt? How did we cope? What did we learn about ourselves, having been forced into a situation that was beyond our control? Like you, I

missed the things I take for granted – having birthday parties, visiting friends and relatives, sharing meals, getting a haircut. There was a sense of loss, loss of the freedom that we enjoy. But we also saw another side to the new reality – the virtual coming together of community members and groups to offer support and tangible items to those in need. It was heartwarming to see the community connections that are crucial to our well being. Families adapted to technology to share virtual Easter dinners. Although stressful, it was indeed a time to slow down and consider what is most important in our lives. Technology became our saving grace.

As I write this in mid April, I have no idea what our world will look like in June when this newsletter is published. Will we be through the worst? Will we be in our “new normal” or our “old normal”? What will have changed for us as individuals, families, communities,

as a profession?

Social Workers are on the front lines, working tirelessly to make sure services and systems are in place for those who most need them. Has it been easy? Of course not. Has it been perfect? Maybe not quite. Is the work rewarding? I hope so. Is the work done? It is only beginning, as we deal with the impacts of this pandemic.

This edition of our newsletter is being dedicated to the hard and tireless work of social workers in our province who demonstrated their commitment and compassion to individuals, families, and communities and who demonstrated that through working together we can accomplish much. Thank you to everyone who shared their stories, and thank you to all social workers for being there.

Have a Happy Summer!

## Congratulations to the Following Award Recipients for 2020:

SASW Distinguished Service Award – Sandy Spencer Johnson, Weyburn

SASW Student Award: Jenna Gobeil-Aiken, Albertville

CASW/BMS Scholarship: Melissa Flowers-Evans, Curtis Holmes, Shannon Hurley,

Miriam Emmy Kuypers, Tammy MacFarlane, Jonathon Renwick, Kristin Wilde



FROM THE DESK OF THE REGISTRAR

# CPE Required Hours Reduced for 2020

By Fay Schuster, MSW, RSW

All members were sent an e-mail from our Executive Director on April 7, 2020 advising of a reduction in the CPE hours requirement to 20 for 2020 for the 2021 renewal. The e-mail also talked about a number of actions SASW has undertaken in response to COVID-19. To ensure you are getting important e-mails from our office please ensure we have your correct e-mail address and check your “junk” mail regularly.

## Student Upgrades - Do I need to wait for convocation to complete my upgrade to RSW?

Students upgrading to RSW status upon completion of their studies do not need to wait for formal convocation to complete the upgrade. What you do need is the University transcript showing your degree has been conferred. Generally the University committee that confers the degrees meets in the month following the completion of a semester to confer the degrees. You can check with the University Registrar’s office to see when the degrees will be conferred. Please make sure when you order your transcripts to come directly to our office that it is the transcript that shows your degree has been conferred. We do not accept a letter of completion from your Faculty in lieu of the conferred transcript.

## I didn’t get my 2020 Licence in the mail?

Beginning for the 2020 renewal year SASW is now providing renewing members, new members, student upgrades and reinstating members, with the income tax receipts/licence through

our online system. The following are the instructions to print off your 2020 receipt/licence:

1. Go to [www.sasw.ca](http://www.sasw.ca)
2. Click on Member Login (top right hand corner)
3. Enter your username/password which will take you to your Member Home Page.
4. On the left hand side, under the subheading RECEIPT/LICENSE, you will see “Print Your Official Receipt/License”. Please click on this link for the receipt/license to appear and then print.

## Proof of BMS Liability Insurance for Private Practice Members

In the past members who are in private practice and want their information posted on the SASW website under the “Private Practice Roster” were required to provide proof of liability insurance to the SASW office. Effective the 2020 renewal year proof of liability insurance will no longer be required.

SASW provides the “Private Practice Roster” on their website as a benefit for members and the public. SASW does not endorse any practice. Mem-

bers in private practice are essentially self-employed and with that comes the responsibility to ensure certain business and practice requirements are in place.

## Should All Social Workers have the BMS Liability Insurance through CASW?

I have had calls from members where they are concerned about a practice situation/complaint in the workplace and what their legal coverage is with SASW or the employer. SASW membership does not provide any legal coverage for a member. There is not a definitive answer to this question as to whether a member is or will be covered by the employer as circumstance may dictate responsibility/liability.

CASW negotiated on behalf of all of its member jurisdictions to secure professional liability insurance. This insurance is available to all SASW members at a very reasonable cost.

I would encourage all members to check out the CASW professional liability insurance through BMS insurance at <http://www.casw.bmsgroup.com/>.

## Call for Proposals!

The Education Committee welcomes proposals from Registered Social Workers who would like to share their knowledge/expertise in a SASW/CASW webinar. Webinars are 1 hour, done from the comfort of your home/office, the technical details are all taken care of, and its a great opportunity to share information and open dialogue across Canada on a topic of interest. **Your preparation time counts toward CPE hours.** Submit an outline of your topic to [ed.sasw@accesscomm.ca](mailto:ed.sasw@accesscomm.ca)

# Saskatoon Inter-agency Response to COVID-19

By Christina Anderson, MSW, RSW

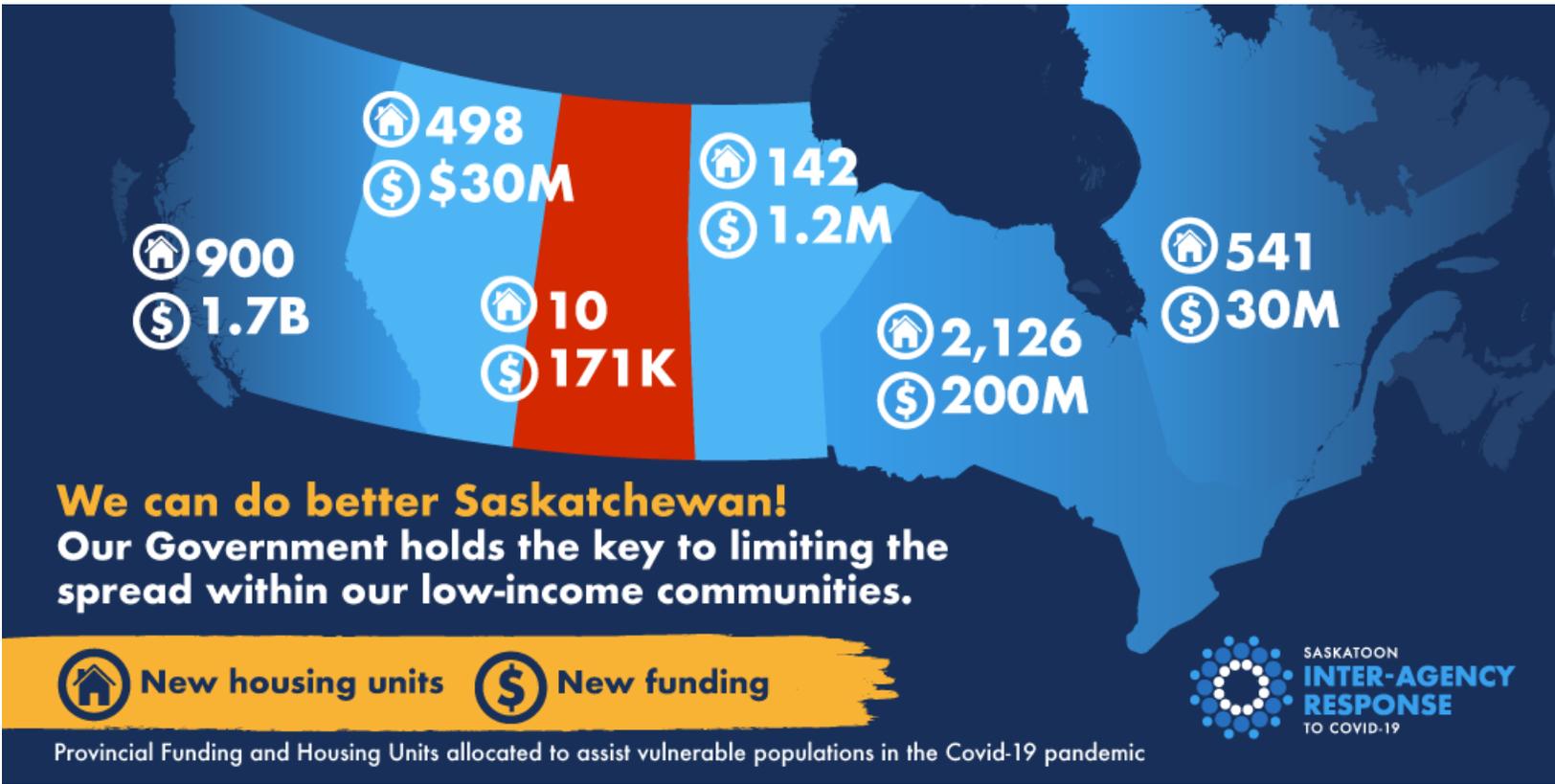
Saskatoon agencies have come together with an unprecedented commitment and action to address the COVID-19 crisis. Made up of over 50 agencies, the Saskatoon Inter-agency Response to COVID-19 was formed within a week of the first confirmed case in Saskatchewan. Focusing mainly on housing and food insecurity, the Saskatoon Inter-agency Response is dedicated to

meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people in our community, reducing transmission of the virus and decreasing the burden and risk experienced by all frontline workers.

Partly because of their efforts, the curve has been flattened in Saskatoon. The Hub (currently operating out of White Buffalo Youth Lodge) provides in-person help to homeless and precariously housed people so they can

gain access to housing and other necessary supports. On average, the Hub continues to see approximately 15-20 people per day and has helped over 80 people seek isolation in local hotels and has conducted hundreds of COVID-19 tests.

To learn more visit: <https://saskatooninteragencyresponse.ca> or email [liaison@saskatooninteragency.ca](mailto:liaison@saskatooninteragency.ca) to get involved.





# Summary of Discipline Committee Decision

## Re: Mr. Lyle Willier

A hearing of the Discipline Committee of the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers was conducted in Regina, Saskatchewan on August 13, 2019, and September 17, 2019, with respect to a complaint against Mr. Willier.

The charges brought before the Discipline Committee, as recommended by the Professional Conduct Committee following their investigation were:

While serving as a mental health therapist, professional boundaries were crossed by:

- a. Offering to drive a minor child to a city for weekend of shopping, without seeking approval or consent from the child’s parent and without any plan for the child’s accommodation
- b. Offering the minor child the sum of \$200.00 as a gift of spending money for shopping without seeking approval or consent from the child’s parent
- c. Stating to the child that Mr. Willier “would treat her like her mom should treat her”

The Discipline Committee heard evidence presented through testimony of witnesses along with documentation submitted by the Professional Conduct Committee. The Discipline Committee concluded that evidence supported a finding that Mr. Willier did offer to drive the child to the city without parental consent and offered the child \$200 spending money without parental consent. The Discipline Committee found no evidence to support the statement in c. above.

The Discipline Committee found Mr. Willier guilty of Professional Misconduct as defined in the Social Workers Act, 1993. The Discipline Committee found Mr. Willier violated Value 1 and Value 4 of the CASW Code of Ethics, and 1.1.1; 1.1.4; 2.1.1 of the Guidelines for Ethical Practice (CASW, 2005).

A Penalty Hearing convened December 16, 2019. On January 16, 2020, the order of the Discipline Committee, Pursuant to the Social Workers Act, SS1993,cS-52, included in part:

- 1. Mr. Willier shall be reprimanded.
- 2. Mr. Willier shall not be entitled to apply for

admission and reinstatement for a period of thirty (30) days from the date of the Discipline Committee Order

- 3. Assuming Mr. Willier is reinstated, he may continue to practice under the condition that within one (1) year of the Discipline Committee Order, he successfully complete a course acceptable to the Registrar that deals with professional boundaries and appropriate communication with children and youth. Until such time he completes the said course, and in the event he chooses to engage in a practice which includes children and youth, Mr. Willier shall be supervised by a supervisor approved by the Registrar.
- 4. Mr. Willier shall pay the costs of the investigation and hearing which shall be fixed in the amount of \$12,000, to be paid on or before January 14, 2022.



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# From the Desk of the Dean of Social Work

By Dr. Cathy Rocke, MSW, PhD

I am very excited to work with the Saskatchewan social work community as I begin my term as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina. As way of introduction, prior to moving to Regina, I was the Associate Dean - Undergraduate Program at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba. I completed my PhD at the Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba where I focused on the how organizations respond to issues of racism. My current research program is focused on addressing and evaluating how we reconcile the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, both on campus and in the community through the powerful process of intergroup dialogue. I also am involved in several research projects focus on child welfare based on my extensive practice experience in this area. Prior to my academic career, I worked for over 25 years in both the social work and education fields. My practice work experience included child protection, counseling women who were victims of domestic violence, diversity training for child welfare professionals, quality assurance for child welfare agencies and, developing postsecondary educational programs for Indigenous communities.

One of the most exciting things that has occurred at the beginning of this year was our accreditation body (Canadian Association of Social Work Education) granted the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina

re-accreditation for an eight year period with no conditions for both the Bachelor and Master of Social Work programs. This achievement is a testament to the hard work of staff and faculty in the past few years and is a gift to a new Dean!

Since beginning at the Faculty, it has been challenging time with the onset of CoVID-19 pandemic in early March. I must say that I have been impressed with both the students and instructors on the transition to remote learning in the final weeks of the winter term. It is my sincere hope that classes will return to normal for the Fall 2020 term. However, in the event that we are required to continue physical distancing in the Fall term the Faculty will be working over the summer months to refine our courses for continued remote teaching and work to develop innovative field placements for students entering the practicum part of their program.

In August, the Faculty of Social Work will develop our 2020-2025 strategic plan based on the University of Regina Strategic Plan entitled All My Relations, Kahk-kiyaw ni wahko makanak set to be released shortly. One of the primary initiatives in this plan will be to enhance the relationship between the Faculty and social work practice field in Saskatchewan. I look forward to meeting many of the SASW members at the upcoming Community Advisory Committee meetings and in my visits to many of the Saskatchewan social service organizations I plan to complete in the next year.



# Leadership and Social Work Students Society My Reflection as a U of R Social Work Student Society (SWSS) President

By Dolapo Onidare,  
Former SWSS president

First, a very big thank you to Karen Wasylenska for giving us the opportunity to put our thoughts and experience into writing. I will like to thank Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers (SASW), Saskatoon Branch for giving students the opportunity to collaborate with them in all that they do. I'm super impressed with what (you) we are doing in strengthening individuals, families, and the community as a whole which is our mandate. I will also like to thank Dr. Amanda Gebhard, Dr. Monty Montgomery, Dr. Olufunke Oba, Dr. Judy White, and 2019 SWSS executives and members at large for their continuous support and encouragement in regard to leadership and mentorship. I wouldn't have done it successfully without you all by my side. The major fear I had prior to being the president was my race and vulnerability. I remember asking myself 'as a Black woman, immigrant, and with a mental health diagnosis, can this work? I have faced a lot of social issues and racism is one of the major one that affected my mental health negatively and now I want to be the president?' I laughed at myself. I really do not know why I was thinking of my race when I am in a program that encourages social justice, diversity, and equality. It is what I really wanted to do so I did become the president. Prior to that, I noticed decrease student involvement in student society in my faculty, so I stepped in. Anyone can be a leader in their prospective workplace and/or career, it is not a matter of age, race, gender, or sexual orientation. Leadership is teamwork, it is knowledge, and it is experience. Our reflection is relevant to students and individuals working in various disciplines.

Our involvement with SWSS is as important as volunteering with various community agencies. We never stop learning; it is a continuous process. Throughout our time, we learned four important things of participating in students' society:

## Learning about Self and Others:

We learned about our goals, values, strengths, and weaknesses. We learned about other people, how diverse we are as a person, in our opinions, and in decision-making. Self-reflexivity is important and encouraged in the Social Work profession.

## Skills Development and Team Work:

We develop written and verbal skills which is important in interacting with others, e.g., grant application, letter drafting, speech, and presentations. These skills can be transferable to employment and course assignments. For leadership skills, we were approached to do presentation about the Social Work program at Sask Polytech, giving speeches, and organizing continuing education for students. We work collaboratively with various groups such as SASW. We work as a team in order to have positive outcomes. We build on

our strengths and work on our weaknesses together.

## Community Development and Critical Thinking:

As executives, we were able to assess the needs of the community and contacted some organizations. We did clothes, shoes, and hygiene products donations to non-profit organizations. We advocated for students by voicing concerns to faculties during the committee meetings. All our involvement in SWSS developed our critical thinking skills in the classroom and ethical knowledge.

## Networking and FUN:

Through the events that we organized, we were able to connect with students and international social workers. I personally helped and mentored two internationally trained social workers and in the process, they are now Registered Social Workers in Saskatchewan. Fun is important for our mental well-being. We had various fun activities throughout the year. This is especially important for student to focus their mind on something else. Students especially like the mentorship panel discussion which usually hold once or twice a year and during Social Work week.

## Newsletter Contributions

Contributions to the Saskatchewan Social Worker are always welcome. Please feel free to share information from books you've recently read, interesting projects you are working on, or any other item you think the membership might be interested in. Please send your articles and ideas to [sasw@accesscomm.ca](mailto:sasw@accesscomm.ca). Deadline for the November 2020 issue is September 15, 2020.

# Prevention in School Social Work? Difficult But Possible

By Markus Beveridge

My recently completed MSW thesis, which focused on school social work practice, responded to contemporary research findings that prevention is a minority focus in many areas of social work. A qualitative multiple case study of school social workers in an urban centre in Saskatchewan was employed to gain insight into the topic by examining their level and types of practice, and their experiences and perceptions of integrating prevention activities in their work. A review of relevant literature identified several major gaps: inconsistent definitions of prevention with little insight into how practitioners themselves understand prevention; reactive, incident-driven interventions being prioritized over prevention approaches; lack of school social work studies, especially in Canada; lack of understanding of what exactly school social workers do and how they do it; and a need for qualitative methodologies to be employed to more fully examine the practice choices and barriers that they face.

The study began with a survey, which indicated that respondents engage primarily in intervention efforts (e.g., individual counseling and crisis management), but would like a better balance, doing less work at that level and engaging in much more prevention work (e.g., increasing family involvement and community engagement). The major barriers to respondents accomplishing that desire were the high number of students/schools they serve, the limits of their prescribed role, and the crisis-oriented nature of the work. These survey findings were mirrored and expanded upon in the subsequent case study interviews. Case study

participants were chosen through purposeful sampling to gather a range of contexts, perspectives, and experiences in relation to the topic area. Analysis of the interviews demonstrated that the role of school social workers is broad and unpredictable. However, prevention is important to them, and despite the notable difficulties—including limited access to resources, significant budget cuts, and a focus on short-term clinical interventions—it is indeed possible to integrate prevention activities in school social work practice. Examples of how participants are currently engaging in prevention activities revolve primarily around taking a holistic perspective in their work. This includes operating across the school-family-community network by engaging in teamwork and delivering education to various clients and stakeholders.

Recommendations on how to best enhance and promote prevention were revealed for school social workers,

administrators, and future researchers. For instance, school social workers and administrators could enhance prevention in schools by: focusing on early identification and support for children at risk of developing issues later on; providing a greater abundance and diversity of prevention-related programming throughout elementary and high school; and working in collaboration with key stakeholders and integrating services in schools. Future researchers are encouraged to build upon the knowledge base regarding school social work, especially in Canada. This could include examining the potential of creating a national or provincial school social work professional association. Researchers are also encouraged to engage in further prevention-focused research in school social work in general, as well as other areas of the greater social work profession. Given the crucial role that prevention plays in the well-being of individuals, it is an ideal worth striving for.

## *Submissions Welcome!!*

Are you developing a new program or service or wish to highlight programs in your workplace? Are you involved in a community initiative that other social workers might be interested in knowing about? Submissions are always welcome for our newsletter. Just e-mail your article to [sasw@accesscomm.ca](mailto:sasw@accesscomm.ca).

# Reconceptualizing Social Work Across the Globe: Connecting MSW Research Reflections to Social Work Practice in COVID-19

By Carolyn Tran

In 2013, I made my way across the world to Vietnam to collect data for my MSW research, *Reading Between the Lines: A Critical Examination of Social Work Education through the Eyes of the Educators*. The profession was quite new and officially recognized for only three years at that time (IFSW, 2010; MOLISA, 2014; Nguyen, 2002; Vietnam Office of the Prime Minister, 2010). As such, little research existed about social work education and practice in Vietnam (Durst, Nguyen, & Le, 2006; Hugman, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2007; Hugman, Durst, Le, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2009; Nguyen, Hugman, & Briscoe, 2010), and it was exceptionally difficult to be privy to its reality. My research was a critical inquisition on how social work education in Vietnam was created and influenced by colonial past and present, with an exploration of insider-outsider perspectives. This also granted me a rare opportunity to indirectly gain insight on Vietnamese social work practice. The study was designed to intentionally highlight the voices and perspectives of Vietnamese social work educators in a manner than had not been done before. Meanwhile, it forced me – an outsider – to understand, experience and shift my perception of social work education and the profession. The ways in which parts of the world could impact and influence others, the interconnectedness of our practice and the dynamics and tensions that can arise were brought to light.

I successfully defended my thesis last year. Yet, I still think about the encouragement to reflect on what it meant to engage in critical research – that is, to comprehensively understand how

power underlies in the world around us and utilize this awareness towards transformative action. My findings highlighted the subtle subconscious preferences for Western ways of being and thinking in our everyday lives. A profound illustration of how government restrictions can impact education and practice was captured. This trickle-down effect found teachers, students and practitioners navigating how learn, teach and work with minimal resources. Expectations of doing more with less were accounted for, including the global interdependency that can flourish within these conditions. The tensions surrounding what should be “best practice” among these barriers were vital to tackle. More importantly, collective community effort was essential to keep the profession alive. At first glance, the issues associated to my research do not seem like compelling concerns to prioritize into action at a local level, especially in Saskatchewan, but they are relevant.

As I write this, we are in the midst of COVID-19. I find my current reality oddly mirroring my study findings, which are now relative to the conditions social work educators, students and professionals locally and globally are faced with during this pandemic. We are in a strange era where we are physically distant but have become more globally connected because of this shared crisis. Behavior and conversation are sprinkled with colonialism; explicit and implicit racism and xenophobia have become more commonplace. We are at the will of our governments, with some becoming increasingly restrictive to personal rights. Social workers find themselves trying to work within more political and fiscal constraints, and creativity

and innovation have become essential practice tools. We also find ourselves juxtaposed between ethical obligations to serve clients/society and mitigating personal risk to self and others in relation to health. Furthermore, agencies are struggling to stay afloat and alive. The impact of COVID-19 has paradoxically and simultaneously granted and stripped privileges while widening the gaps of disparities for social workers, clients and society as a whole.

We are all trying to survive, and in doing so, it is imperative to reflect on how we will critically respond. The lessons from my research were founded in using privilege in a responsible and ethical way. What and how can we learn from other nations in a collaborative manner? How can we have respectful discussions about COVID-19 which remove assumption, bias and stereotyping and encourage others to do so? And how do we bridge these newfound complex gaps with less to work with? COVID-19 has boldly reminded us of the importance to paying attention to broader global issues, being informed on what is happening in other parts of the world, and more importantly, how collective effort is needed on all levels of social work to bring transformative action.

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## Research Opportunity

# Mental health of child welfare workers in Canada

Our goal is to investigate the experiences of child welfare workers in Western Canada, and how those experiences influence mental health. Child welfare workers are at risk to develop mental health problems, such as traumatic stress symptoms, after experiencing a traumatic workplace event. However, there has been a limited amount of research with Canadian child welfare workers on traumatic workplace events. There has been even less research with workers in Western Canada. We are providing a survey to learn more about the experiences child welfare workers have, and what organizations are doing to support their workers.

If this research is of interest to you or someone you know in child welfare, you may complete our survey at: [https://uregina.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6Wjw8tt7zdFI54N](https://uregina.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6Wjw8tt7zdFI54N)

**If you would like more information on this project, please contact**

**Emily at [schtlab@uregina.ca](mailto:schtlab@uregina.ca)**

**or visit the Facebook page at**

**[facebook.com/ChildWelfareMentalHealth](https://www.facebook.com/ChildWelfareMentalHealth).**

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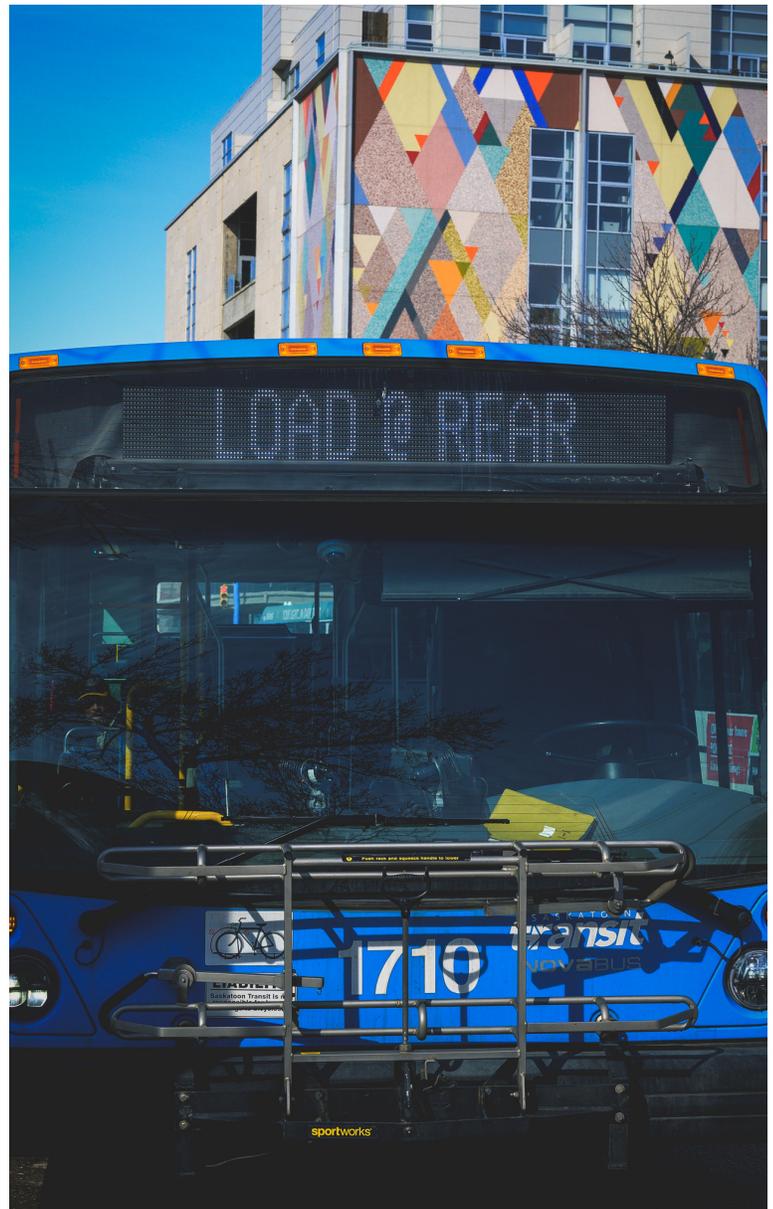


Photo by Brayden Elliott  
[www.braydenelliott.com](http://www.braydenelliott.com)

# SOCIAL WORKERS NEEDED TO PARTICIPATE IN A CANADA-WIDE SURVEY

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## YOU ARE ELIGIBLE IF:

- You have received a BSW and/or MSW degree; AND
  - Your primary employment is as a social worker
    - Providing services such as counselling, case management, administration, advocacy, community outreach, community organizing, etc.
- 

## THE RESEARCH:

We are a research team from the FIFSW at the University of Toronto launching a national survey about the attitudes of social workers towards immigrants.

## THE GOAL:

Our goal is to use the data to formulate future practice, policy, and educational directions in social work.

## THE SURVEY:

The survey can be accessed below. It will take approx. 15-20 minutes to complete and offers full confidentiality. You can opt-in for a chance to win **1 of 5 \$25 PC Optimum gift cards** upon completing the survey:

[https://utorontofsw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6hQBsuBehXf7mA](https://utorontofsw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6hQBsuBehXf7mA)

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## CONTACT INFORMATION:

For more information about the REB approved project, please contact [sw.immigrantsurvey@utoronto.ca](mailto:sw.immigrantsurvey@utoronto.ca)

# News Briefs

## SASW AGM

The SASW Annual General Meeting was held on May 28 via Zoom. Welcome to Margarita Sysing, new to Council as member at large. Also we welcome Erin Beckwell to position of President, Wanda Miller to Past President, and Sheila Szakacs to position of Secretary. Carole Bryant will continue as Treasurer of SASW.

## Practice Ethics Committee

Ethical Dilemmas related to the COVID-19 pandemic? The Practice Ethics Committee is available to respond to ethical dilemmas, including those that arise due to the pandemic. To contact the committee, log into your Member's Home Page on our website, complete the form that is there, and submit. It will be forwarded to the Committee for review and response.

## Coping with COVID-19 Restrictions

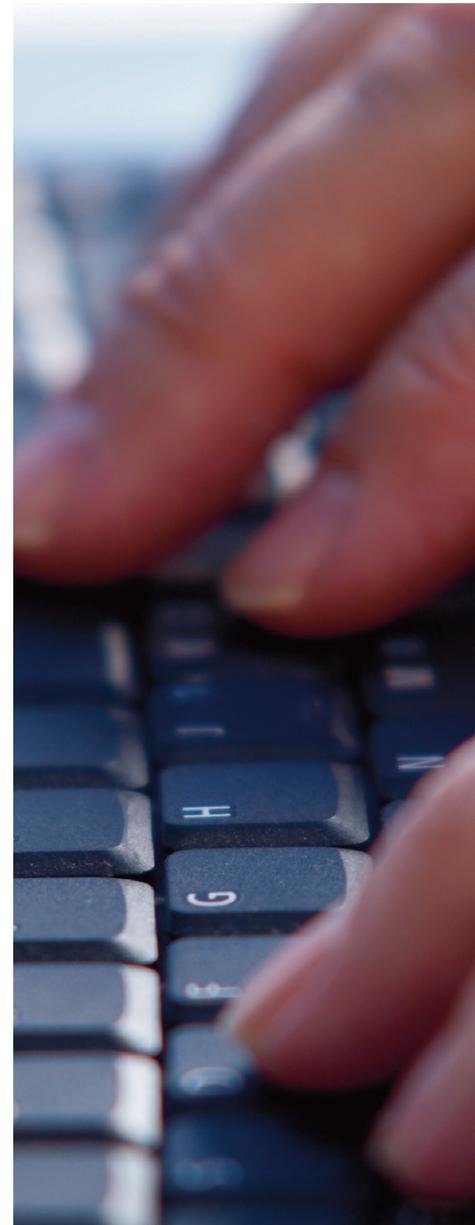
Questions about Videoconferencing, liability, licensure during the pandemic restrictions? Check out our website under the COVID-19 tab to access information on current issues and topics.

## Keeping Up with Continuing Professional Education

Looking for CPE? There are many CASW webinars available. Check out the CASW website under Continuing Education. Some are related to COVID-19 and provision of services.

## Volunteering for SASW Committees

Thank you to everyone who indicated an interest in volunteering for SASW committee work when you completed your 2020 renewal. Committee positions are filled on an "as needed" basis by the SASW Volunteer Development Committee. When there are vacancies on a committee, an email will go out to those who identified interest in that committee. You will be asked to confirm your interest, the amount of time you can commit to the committee, and provide a short statement of your interest and experience. New committee members will then be selected. Please contact the office at [sasw.accesscomm.ca](mailto:sasw.accesscomm.ca) if you have any questions about the committees or the process of recruitment.



## *Educational Opportunities*

Please check the SASW Website and Facebook page for educational opportunities during pandemic restrictions.

