



# NEW DIRECTIONS ALLY COMMITTEE

TREVOR DONER

## WORKING TO PROMOTE SOLIDARITY AND PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

As part of New Directions' commitment to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a new group, made up of colleagues from around the organization, has been formed. The Ally Committee is about solidarity and partnership with Indigenous communities.

The Ally Committee was conceptualized by Darlene Daniels, Senior Director of Culture, Education and Training in partnership with Indigenous staff members and is intentionally comprised of settler (non-Indigenous) staff of

New Directions. The committee's goals and actions are guided by Indigenous employees, with frequent consultation. Indigenous People are not responsible to do the work of persuading settlers to be allies or to convince them to support acts of reconciliation. That part of the work of decolonization falls to settlers.

Soon after forming, it became clear that the committee had a lot of work to do (and still does!) to unpack and

Darlene Daniels (Senior Director) is drumming and singing a song in honour of the Residential school survivors on Turtle Island.



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FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, ADULTS & FAMILIES

THE COMPASS

unlearn our own processes that stem from harmful systems of discrimination. Members were at different points in their journey towards Allyship, which meant lots of discussion and reflection needed to happen. Gradually, a workshop began to take form to share as a conversation with all employees of the organization. Anyone who has taken A Peek at Colonization (see page 6) in the past 2-3 years may be registered to attend the half-day Ally Journey. While New Directions supports many diverse communities who face oppression, this conversation is centred on what it means for settlers to be allies to Indigenous peoples. Although specific in focus, the core principles of allyship that are shared may be applied to other groups experiencing systemic discrimination.

In addition to the Ally Journey, the committee aims to work in partnership with the Indigenous employees to promote events, share learnings and resources, and to strengthen New Directions' efforts towards reconciliation. A multimedia resource list is in development for people to consult to further their knowledge as well as a guide to help bystanders disrupt racism in public. From time to time, we may also be called upon to assist the Indigenous Council with special projects.

Last month, we all learned the disturbing news of the discovery of

(Top right) The sidewalk painted with a bright orange stripe and footprints, and the orange handprints in remembrance of the lives lost in Residential Schools.

(Right) Darlene Daniels (Senior Director) and a family in our community participated by adding their handprints to the mural on 717 Portage Avenue.



Staff (Angela Keough, Karen Hill, Felicia Whiteway, Darlene Daniels, Stacey Watson) putting their orange hand prints on the windows of 717 Portage Avenue.

the remains of Indigenous children near former Indian Residential Schools. Since this tragic news broke, other bodies have been found. The number of gravesites is now approaching 2,000 on Turtle Island. This is not just an oppressive chapter in history, this is the reality of today. Some Indigenous communities still do not have clean drinking water or access to high-quality, well-funded public services, including health care, mental health supports and education. Indigenous people still face oppression and systemic barriers, and many Canadians remain unaware of the true history. Back in 2015, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission included six calls to action, number 71 through 76, that came under the heading of missing children and burial information. In the 6 years that have followed the presentation of the Commission's Report, only 8 of the 94 Calls to Action have been adopted. Many Indigenous people were profoundly affected by

the confirmation of the mass grave and the surrounding media firestorm. While the news caused a ripple of shock and sadness for both settlers and Indigenous people, their needs must be prioritized. Settlers must assist other settlers in accepting the truth and taking action ■

**SETTLERS CAN BEST EXPRESS THEIR ALLYSHIP BY:**

1. Decentering their emotional reactions from the conversation.
2. Educating themselves on what the Residential School System was. Indigenous written/produced resources should always come first.
3. Educating themselves on what the TRC was and especially read the final report and the Calls to Action.
4. Contacting their elected officials and telling them to immediately implement the remaining Calls to Action.
5. Donating to Indigenous organizations that are working to support survivors and educate Canadians.
6. Sign the petition demanding "Ground Penetrating Radar at all Historic Indian Residential Schools" at [change.org](http://chnng.it/fMcKDY5gfg) <http://chnng.it/fMcKDY5gfg>

**WELCOME TO OUR NEW LOOK COMPASS!**

**WE ARE EXCITED TO REVEAL A NEW LOOK TO OUR COMPASS NEWSLETTER** and to introduce you to one of our new writers who will be providing stories in the future.

**Özten Shebahkeget** is a member of Northwest Angle 33 First Nation and an MFA candidate at the University of Saskatchewan. She grew up in Winnipeg's North End and holds a BA in English from the University of Winnipeg. Her poetry has appeared recently in CV2, Prairie Fire and The Winnipeg Free Press. Check out Özten's stories on Food Security and our Peek at Colonization Training.

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# CHANGE IS HARD BUT WORTH IT

LORI HUNTER

JUST PRIOR TO THE START OF THE PANDEMIC – NEW DIRECTIONS’ SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING (SIL) SERVICE WAS APPROACHED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES COMMUNITY LIVING DISABILITY SUPPORTS (CLDS)

As Portage la Prairie (PLP) agency was closing and they wanted to know if SIL could take over providing services to the 20 individuals currently in that program.



They could they said and so began the journey of developing a SIL service in Portage la Prairie. The SIL team reached out to the previous agency and two out of the three former agency staff came over to work with the new SIL team. The transition was successful with new and old staff working together in virtual huddle – keeping everyone in the loop and sharing a wealth of

Richard walking his dogs in Portage la Prairie.

It is a new experience for many as one individual said, “Nobody has ever asked how I felt.”

knowledge – including knowledge of the individuals being supported “The two groups coming together was a beautiful thing,” says Karrie Musicky, Manager of the SIL Service Area. But the transition wasn’t easy Musicky acknowledged. One individual was clear with his feelings “I don’t want a new person; don’t want New Directions, I want my previous Community Resource Worker.” “He refused all services at first, but six months in we proved we can deliver service and he has come around.” Musicky continued “Change is challenging for all of us, it is hard to say goodbye to old relationships and develop new ones.” The changes began with an increased amount of support hours, a welcome change for the individuals in the program. New Directions’ staff have been exposed to more ways of helping individuals with disabilities and with that knowledge and experience were able to convince the government to help with more support hours. With the depth of their experience staff were able to make huge improvements including catching medical errors and addressing medical concerns. By asking questions of individuals and getting to know them, things came to light – things that needed to be tweaked. It was frightening for some, but they all felt the change with one



Irene enjoying an afternoon of baking.

individual expressing “I was scared, but now I am happy.” Others had experienced some trauma but with the option of working with our Therapy Services another individual said after doing just two virtual therapy sessions he is already doing better than he has done in years. Jasmine Currie, Case Manager for the SIL in Portage la Prairie has been with the program from the beginning and says “It took six months but it has been a very positive change – and I glad to see the change in all 21 individuals we support.”

Challenges included switching everything to New Directions procedures, policies and practices but Jasmine’s previous experience with Shift Staffed Homes in Portage la Prairie helped that transition. Staff worked with individuals to help them say goodbye to previous relationships and welcome new ones. Seasoned staff knew how to navigate the challenges of systems like EIA. As Currie explained “We had an individual who had no food, no money and health problems (diabetes) and we needed EIA to understand the complexity of his life and that he needed extra healthy

It’s laundry day for Harold at the laundry-mat.

food to survive. Our experience helped us convince EIA that there were extenuating circumstances and we convinced them to make an exception for him to have this healthy food covered.” In addition to helping everyone with cleaning their homes, food shopping, taking correct medications on time, and medicine reviews with Leila Pharmacy the SIL team has worked with the individuals to create 21 (Person-Centred) My Plans. Next up is a forward planning session that will see those individuals add in their own goals, wishes and needs.

It is a new experience for many as one individual said, “Nobody has ever asked how I felt.”

Being in smaller community (especially during COVID) is another challenge. There are not as many opportunities and they are limited in what they can do outside their home. It can be boring, but staff have searched for ways to encourage engagement – including asking them to help with some computer activities. The SIL staff support individuals using a person-centred, strengths-based approach that includes a trauma informed, dignity of risk perspective. S.I.L Case Managers work with everyone to identify and achieve goals specific to their needs and wants. Another individual knows what he wants and has



goals specific to their needs and wants.

Another individual knows what he wants and has

the goal of moving to Winnipeg and is excited about seeing all the Museums. Working with SIL Winnipeg the Portage la Prairie team can make it a reality for him.

“The next six months will be phenomenal and exciting to see, and who knows where everyone will be in a year or two from now. We are being approached by others with the closing of the Manitoba Development Centre and we will grow taking on those individuals. New Directions has a great rapport with the Community of Portage La Prairie, so all expansion is welcomed and encouraged,” added Musicky ■



Dawna's daily chores include feeding a pet turtle.

**WE APPRECIATE  
YOUR IDEAS  
& COMMENTS**

You can contact us at  
[info@newdirections.mb.ca](mailto:info@newdirections.mb.ca)

# A PEEK AT COLONIZATION TRAINING WORKSHOP – UNRAVELLING BIASED VIEWS

ÖZTEN SHEBAHKEGET

**FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS, NEW DIRECTIONS HAS HOSTED THE A PEEK AT COLONIZATION CORE COMPETENCY TRAINING WORKSHOP AS A MANDATORY EDUCATION FOR ALL NEW EMPLOYEES.**

**T**he training workshop introduces service providers to Canada's colonial history and its lasting impacts on Indigenous peoples. A main goal of the training is to leave participants with an understanding of cultural genocide, historical trauma, and their presence in the contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The current facilitator of the workshop, Kirby Fults, believes this training is important because “there are so many misconceptions of how Canada came to be.”

Kirby Fults has been leading these discussions with New Directions' staff for the past two years. Fults said the perceptions of Indigenous people that his participants share often reveal the prevalence of anti-Indigenous racism in Canadian society, adding that it is more ingrained than he previously thought.

“For instance, new Canadians coming into the country are told not to live in Winnipeg, not to live in Manitoba because of the high population of Indigenous people here. And that if they live in Winnipeg—to stay out of areas that Indigenous people live or spend time in, because they will be

robbed or brutalized by them,” said Fults, who wants his training workshops to help newcomer and settler Canadians understand how colonization has largely disrupted traditional Indigenous ways of life.

New Directions does not currently have a proportional representation of Indigenous staff to correspond to its predominately Indigenous clientele. This is why Carolyn Peters, Director of Specialized Services at New Directions, believes it is important for all staff to understand the history of colonization and how it plays out in the experiences of Indigenous peoples today.

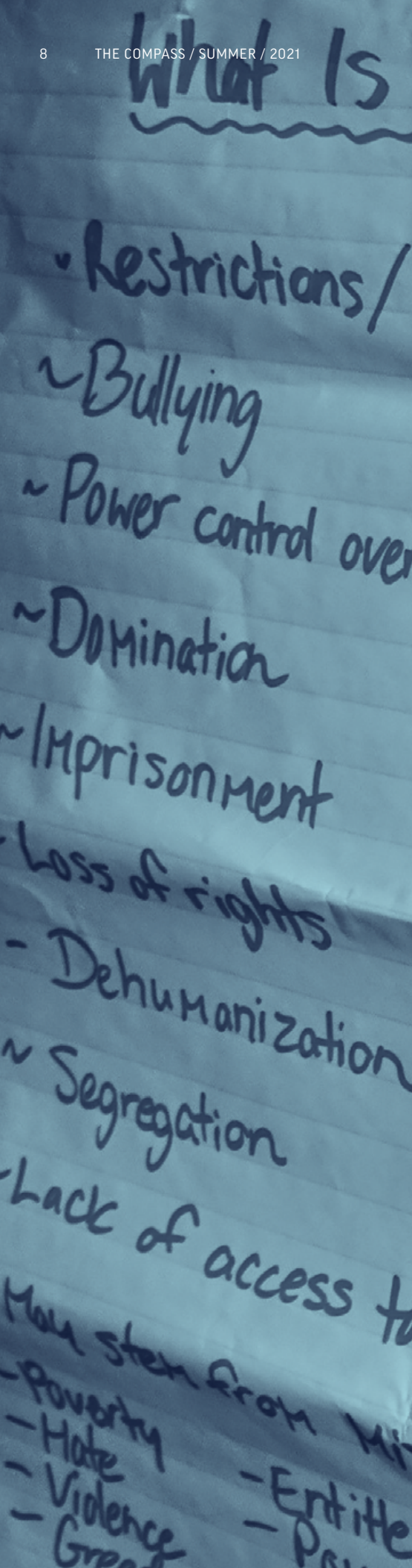
“If you spend a day thinking about the impact of [residential schools] and how it affects the generations that follow, it's a powerful thing,” said Peters. “The experience in some of our current systems for the people we support can be quite negative and discouraging, so it's really important for staff to understand their roles as advocates and allies.”

An aim of the A Peek at Colonization workshop is to address and unravel biased views that participants may hold about Indigenous peoples in Canada. The training has been offered at New Directions for the last twenty-two years, as an acknowledgement of the organization's “long and complicated history of working with Indigenous children and youth in the community.”

For Aaron Amaan, Direct Support Worker at New Directions, the A Peek at Colonization training workshop exposed him to histories that he did not come across in his formal education.

Kirby Fults, instructor/facilitator for A Peek at Colonization mandatory training for all new employees.





“The experience in some of our current systems for the people we support can be quite negative and discouraging, so it’s really important for staff to understand their roles as advocates and allies.”

He said the training is a “needed” experience for staff at New Directions, and that it sparked a desire to educate himself further of Canada’s colonial history.

“It was good to get people together and just talk about it. That’s what I really enjoyed. It was kind of an open floor for anyone to have discussions,” said Amaan.

Facilitator Kirby Fults acknowledged that every service provider brings their own personal experiences to the workshop and that no two participants will hold the same beliefs on the subject. Carolyn Peters hopes the training is a safe space for staff at New Directions to express their personal beliefs and to consider what they mean in the broader historical and political contexts of Canada.

Staff have required more debriefing sessions following the A Peek at Colonization workshops compared to other core competency trainings offered at New Directions, but Peters believes these conversations have always turned into “a positive thing” and prove staff take the issues seriously.

“You want people to be struggling with those questions and thinking it through. What does it mean if I live on someone else’s land? That’s not an easy question to answer, but if you’re not even asking the question then that’s a problem,” said Carolyn Peters.

A common piece of feedback that the A Peek at Colonization workshop receives have been requests for a day two, but the organization is currently unable to offer this due to budget and time constraints. Kirby Fults closes the training workshop with a sharing circle, inviting participants to reflect on what they learned and possible modes of action.

“I think it’s really important that New Directions is taking reconciliation quite seriously to a certain extent, because they were part of the problem,” said Fults. “With every workshop, we are pleasantly surprised by people’s hopeful openness to assist in the [organization’s] decolonization process” ■

# FOOD SECURITY IN INDEPENDENT LIVING

ÖZTEN SHEBAHKEGET

**IN 2020, ONE IN SEVEN CANADIANS REPORTED AN INADEQUATE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD – A 4.1% INCREASE OF THE POPULATION REPORTEDLY FACING FOOD INSECURITY COMPARED TO THE 2017/2018 PERIOD.<sup>1</sup>**

For Sean Gander, Manager of Adult Home Supports and Cluster Housing at New Directions, food security is only one part of a symbiotic web.

“Basic needs include things like belonging, sense of justice, sense of community, shelter and food. All of those basic needs co-mingle, co-exist and each component is as important as the other. You need all parts just to be

able to benefit from the others,” said Gander. “Food, knowing where your food is going to come from, and having a reliable source of it is paramount.”

While there are food programs currently running in Winnipeg, there have been less available due to the global pandemic, and this has had an effect on clustered housing residents at New Directions.

“Those avenues they would usually go to are just not as available as they were,” said Gander, speaking of the individuals he works with.

Food insecurity often leads to diets that are high in carbohydrates and poor in nutrients, setting the stage for preventable diseases such as diabetes and obesity. Anita Posaluko, who works as a part of the FASD Family Support team at New Directions, believes part of the problem is the growing cost of fresh food.

“It’s pretty expensive to buy fruit and vegetables. We all know that. And there are enormous impacts overall to health and well-being that can create medical challenges in the future,” said Posaluko, who believes the COVID-19 pandemic has hurt available food sources in Winnipeg.

But there have been positives during these times. Winnipeg Harvest in particular has been a more helpful source of food for the city, and New Directions received external support in order to further tackle food insecurity.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. Food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, May 2020. Statistics Canada (2020).





“Our program applied for two grants. One was from Breakfast Club of Canada and the other one was from the Good Food Access Fund. We were able to get money for grocery gift cards and spread them to our families and even deliver groceries. We were very fortunate to be able to do that,” said Anita Posaluko.

For the unproportionate rate of Indigenous peoples in Canada facing food insecurity, Posaluko looks to a larger picture of historical colonization playing a role.

“You always have to look at [food security] in that context – going back to loss of land, culture and language,” said Posaluko.

These issues also stem from poverty. Many of the individuals that New Directions works with receive their primary source of financial income through Employment and Income

Assistance (EIA), and Posaluko feels that EIA does not provide recipients with nearly enough money to feed themselves a healthy, nutritional diet on an everyday basis.

“If you barely have enough to pay for rent, how do you stretch enough over to cover food?” she asked.

When inquired about what she thought needed to change, Posaluko said she would like to see a basic income implemented in Canada that can provide more of a stable standard of living for citizens who need government aid to survive; and that in addition to food security, these individuals should also receive a monthly bus pass, basic telephone, and increased dollars for housing—painting a clearer picture of the intricate chain of basic human needs that food security exists within.

“[Our clients are] constantly spending a lot of energy and stress trying to make dollars stretch to meet their food needs, so it has an impact

on their overall health and wellness,” said Posaluko.

What Sean Gander has enjoyed at New Directions is the ability to build access to food into models of support. He mentioned the opening of a new building in the fall of this year for youth who have a label of a disability and who are aging out of the child welfare system. He felt it was important that food security be included in the model of support for this facility because it gives participants a chance to learn how to cook and take care of themselves.

“I’d like to see that throughout clustered housing, making sure that people have access to food but also some mastery in how to get and make it,” said Gander.

For both Sean Gander and Anita Posaluko, helping the individuals that New Directions supports gain a more adequate supply of food has been an important aspect of their jobs, and the benefits are immense ■

“Having food security is just amazing for people,” said Posaluko. “It frees up a lot of space and energy, and they become better able to focus on other things.”



# NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION IS SEPT. 30

PHOTOS: TIFFANY SCHAMBACH

**NEW DIRECTIONS IS DISTRIBUTING ORANGE T SHIRTS IN HONOUR OF INDIGENOUS RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS AND THE MANY WHO DID NOT SURVIVE AS DISCUSSED IN THE TRC RECOMMENDATIONS.**

The story behind Orange Shirts is accessible on-line. New Directions donates a portion of each T shirt sale to the Portage la Prairie National Residential School Museum project. **Check the Opikihiwawin Facebook site for details.**



(above) Orange handprints to remind Portage Avenue traffic about residential school impact. 717 Portage Avenue is an artist's canvas for social justice consciousness raising.

(below) Darlene Daniels (Senior Director) & Kyle Lagiewka (New Directions' Controller) make footprints to remind us of the footsteps of residential school attendees.





(above) Community women singers honour the little children who didn't come home.

(left) Reflecting on the footsteps of all those children.

(below) New Directions supports Orange Shirt Day!



## YOUR GIFT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

If you are interested in making a meaningful impact in someone's life, the Opikihiwawin program is a great choice.

Opikihiwawin, which means **coming home** in Anishinew, was established over 40-years ago. It offers Indigenous adoptees, children and youth in foster care the opportunity to reconnect with their culture and biological families. These connections contribute to a positive identity and belonging within the community.

Before the pandemic, over 350 people registered in the various opportunities offered such as Anishinaabe language classes, regalia making, and land-based activities, e.g., traditional cooking. Sometimes these experiences are new to people like the young boy who confidently expressed himself through traditional song and dance.

You can support Opikihiwawin by making a financial contribution through [www.newdirections.mb.ca](http://www.newdirections.mb.ca) and know that your gift is making a difference.

*Thank you!*

