

Trigger Warning: Suicide, Colonialism

April 15, 2016 - TORONTO - The sacred land on which the University of Toronto Scarborough operates is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. These are the caregivers of this land. Recently, the northern Ontario First Nation of Attawapiskat has declared a state of emergency in the midst of a suicide crisis. Within a remote population of 2,000, there have been 100 suicide attempts since September, and 11 attempts this past Saturday alone.

While the provincial and federal government has sent mental health workers to Attawapiskat this week, we must recognize that this is much more than a mental health problem as popular media has conveyed. Systematic discrimination against Indigenous peoples continues to prevent basic access to resources afforded to other Canadians. Intergenerational trauma as a result of forced relocation, the removal of children from their families by the residential school system, the recent shutdown of schools and underfunded education, and other destructive colonial practices continues to negatively impact Indigenous communities.

Indigenous people and allies have been protesting inside the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada office since Tuesday, April 12. They have told the media that they will not leave until the demands of the Attawapiskat youth are met, and until Justin Trudeau meets with the Attawapiskat community to commit to fulfilling these demands.

On Thursday, April 14, a rally was hosted outside the office to show support for those who have been protesting inside the office since Tuesday. Security has barred their use of electricity and bathroom facilities. Recognizing that there is strength in numbers, Black Lives Matter Toronto has been showing their support as well. Both communities recognize the impact of the disproportionate systematic erasure of Indigenous communities at the hands of the state.

The Scarborough Campus Students' Union recognizes that student issues are multi-dimensional, especially as it pertains to marginalized students who are Indigenous to this land. As settlers who benefit from Canada's colonial legacy, we recognize that it is necessary to centre the narratives and experiences of Indigenous peoples in our social justice advocacy.

The Scarborough Campus Students' Union stands in full solidarity Attawapiskat and Indigenous communities across Turtle Island.

SCSU represents 12,000 undergraduate students at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus. Contact equity@scsu.ca if you would like to find out how to show support for Attawapiskat community, or follow the hashtag #GroundZeroINAC.

In Solidarity,

Scarborough Campus Students' Union
Indigenous Students' Association
Racialized Student Collective