

September 24, 2021

We have all been sobered by the recent discoveries of the unmarked graves of hundreds of Indigenous children at the sites of former residential schools in Canada. This brutal history must be grieved. But more importantly, non-Indigenous settlers of our country must acknowledge our role in the ongoing intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples directly resulting from colonial policies and practices. Only once we take responsibility can we begin to truly address the deep injustices in our society.

Dr. Samir Shaheen-Hussain has not only taken responsibility through his extensive advocacy for the rights of Indigenous children in need of medical care, but he has engaged in teaching us all about medical colonialism and its corrosive impact on the Indigenous children and families that we are meant to serve. If you have not yet read his book, “Fighting for a Hand to Hold: Confronting Medical Colonialism against Indigenous Children in Canada”, I would encourage you to do so. This book should be required reading for all healthcare professionals in Canada. Many of you will have read reviews or highlights of his book in media sources including the Lancet, the New York Times, Le Monde, and the New Scientist. I would also encourage you all to attend his Grand Rounds presentation next week, Sept. 29, 2021 at 12:00 on this topic.



Samir’s advocacy work is not restricted to the Indigenous population. He also led ‘The Children’s Without Borders’, in submitting a report which was reviewed by the Quebec National Assembly and endorsed by the APQ, and subsequently adopted as loi 83, allowing all children in Quebec access to RAMQ, regardless of their parents’ migratory status.

Please join me in thanking and congratulating Samir on his exceptional work standing up for vulnerable children and their families, and teaching the world why these issues are so important. This type of advocacy is a major pillar of the mission of the Department. Have a wonderful weekend.

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