**Social work in turbulent times: Reaching for real utopias**

Human rights and equity issues, including Indigenous sovereignty, have expanded significantly in many parts of the world, though more action on the part of governments and larger society continues to be needed. Similarly, social work has expanded its critical knowledge-base, practices and skills by promoting decoloniality, anti-oppression, social justice, and cultural recognition. However, the election of Donald Trump and other right-wing populist leaders around the globe puts human rights, equity and inclusion in serious jeopardy. These right-wing leaders and their supporters are highly critical of groups seeking equity and solutions to social problems that include government or shared responsibility, and see no need for decolonization. As the world struggles to adapt to ongoing instability of tariff wars, regional wars, and disregard for the international rule of law, social justice social workers struggle to find traction for transformative agendas and practice at the local and global levels. As the AI boom is embraced by austerity-driven, technosolutionist governments and public service managers, how should anti-oppressive social workers respond? This year our critical social work stream asks how we find the energy and inspiration to continue to work on social justice, decolonization and anti-oppression? How do we continue to build on the successes we were starting to have on these important struggles and what practices and analysis will we need in the turbulent times ahead?

This stream calls for papers that explore any aspect of the turbulent times and challenges facing social work and the communities we serve. We are also interested in analyses that advance real utopias: hopeful responses and visions for social equity and social justice at the level of the individual, family, community, region, country or planet. We especially welcome papers from Indigenous and/or postgraduate researchers.

Please send your abstracts (100-word max) to Donna Baines at donna.baines@ubc.ca or Neil Ballantyne at neil.ballantyne@openpolytechnic.ac.nz by August 15, 2025. Confirmations will be sent out in early September 2023.

Paper presentations will be 15 minutes each, with 5 minutes for questions. This conference will be entirely in-person, and all participants whose papers are accepted must register for the conference by 1 November 2025 at the latest. Presenters who register after this date will be included in the conference programme at the discretion of the conference convenors.

This our 6th critical social work stream at this conference, this year convened by Liz Beddoe, Neil Ballantyne, Eileen Joy and Donna Baines. Depending on the quality of the papers, we hope to publish a Special Issue in a social work journal. More details to follow.