

Doctoral Student Researcher Opportunity
**The puzzle of discretion: Interrogating change with public sector
workers in white settler colonial institutions.**

Position start date: June 30, 2025

Hours: Average 6-8 hours per week (flexible schedule)

Term: 1 year, renewable

Overview: Dr. Nisha Nath and Dr. Willow-Samara Allen are looking for a Doctoral Student Researcher to join our research team for a Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)-funded 5-year project examining how discretion can impede or support change and accountability in public sector institutions underpinned by white settler colonial logics and marked by systemic racism and inequity. Through intertextual document analysis and qualitative interviews with approximately 60 provincial public sector workers in health, education, and child welfare in BC, AB and ON, this research examines how public sector workers are learning to witness, conceptualize, and use discretion in their work, the relationship between discretion and public sector commitments to change, and patterns of discretionary power. The study findings are intended to support impacts for everyday learning and application, spotlight change practices and highlight the voices and knowledge of Indigenous and racialized public sector workers.

The Graduate Student Researcher will work primarily with the core research team, composed of the two Co-Principal Investigators (Dr. Nath and Dr. Allen), and another Graduate Student Researcher. They will also communicate with other people central to this project, namely the web designer and the Research Advisory Group members. Dr. Allen and Dr. Nath will provide supportive mentorship and training opportunities to ensure the candidate can successfully complete their project responsibilities. This assistantship is renewable after the one-year term is up. Depending on a range of factors, our hope is to fund a GRA to stay and grow with the project over multiple years.

Primary activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Co-leading participant recruitment
2. Co-leading comprehensive document scan
3. Collaborating on data transcription and possibly coding
4. Supporting project literature reviews as needed
5. Attend regularly scheduled virtual meetings with co-PIs and the other project student researcher

Qualifications:

- Currently enrolled in a PhD program at RRU, AU, or UVic in interdisciplinary studies, education, Indigenous governance, health, settlement, political science, sociology, labour studies, gender studies, child and youth studies, or other related discipline
- Have demonstrated research interests in any of the following: settler colonialism; the politics of race/racism and analyses of white supremacy; decolonization; anti-racism and anti-colonial praxis; critical education; social leadership change; critical policy studies and/or critical public administration; Indigenous rights and governance; abolition in “helping” sectors
- We are especially interested in applicants who have experience organizing or engaging in activism in community-based contexts.

Skills & Abilities:

- Effective time and project management skills
- Collaborative and relational working approach
- Thoughtful written and verbal communication skills
- Ability to work independently and navigate institutional
- processes/seek out information as needed

Exceptions to this credentialing will be made in cases where the applicant's educational, work, and lived background provide a significant combination of experience and knowledge.

Work for this position will largely be remote.

How to apply:

Athabasca University and the researchers are committed and seek to support equity in employment and research opportunities. We strongly encourage applications from Indigenous people, people of colour, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ people, women, and other historically marginalized groups. Applicants are welcome, but not required, to self-identify in their letter of application.

Qualified individuals are encouraged to submit their application by email to both Dr. Allen at willowsamara.allen@royalroads.ca and Dr. Nath at nath@athabascau.ca. In your application please include a brief cover letter that summarizes your skills, interests, experience, and suitability for the position; a current resume or curriculum vitae; and the contact information for 1-2 references. Examples of your work in web design and knowledge translation are an asset. Please submit your application documents as a single PDF file.



For more information on this Student Researcher Opportunity, please contact Dr. Willow-Samara Allen at willowsamara.allen@royalroads.ca. Evaluation of applications will begin immediately and applications received by June 15, 2025 will be prioritized, although applications will be accepted until a suitable candidate is found. Please note that while we thank everyone in advance for applying to this role, only candidates selected for an interview will be contacted.

