

**WALLS DOWN COLLECTIVE
JANUARY 28 2025**

WDC VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

"And if I know anything at all, it's that a wall is just a wall and nothing more at all. It can be broken down." - Assata Shakur

WHO WE ARE

The Walls Down Collective is a group of abolitionists dedicated to creating networks of care and resistance, focusing on freedom from oppression and liberation for all beings. We reside on the stolen lands of so-called Canada, with most of us and our work focused in Moh'kinstsis (Calgary). We recognize our interdependency with all beings, including the Land, and challenge ourselves on tendencies of hyper-individualism, practicing radical forms of care. Together, we continue to work on kicking down the walls blocking us from our liberation.

OUR VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our values ground us. They are a stabilizing force as we organize and practice ways of being together that embody our vision for the world.

Our principles guide our actions. Our actions bring life to the world we believe in. We practice for that world today.

We honour the Land we live on, whether our people have lived here since time immemorial, we are settlers, or we are members of the diaspora who were forced here without our consent. We acknowledge that much of what we were taught is false and fractured. White supremacy requires disconnection from the Land in order to maintain its power.

We take responsibility to develop a relationship with the Land.

We reject the belief that we can use Land as a non-living place of extraction.

We take responsibility to learn about the true history of this Land, the Indigenous Peoples who are its stewards, and the impact that settler colonialism continues to have on it.

We vigorously support Land Back to Indigenous Peoples in actuality, not simply symbolically.

We recognize Black, Brown, and many other racialized people are Indigenous to the lands they were taken from and cannot return to. We acknowledge “Indigenous” has different meanings across various cultures.

History is present. We, each in our own way, are affected by the history and the current reality of settler colonialism, white supremacy and racial capitalism. We understand we live on stolen Indigenous land, and recognize that colonization is an ongoing project. We recognize the direct line from chattel slavery, colonization and genocide to today’s carceral systems. We understand that anti-Blackness is the primary tool of white supremacy, and is intrinsically interwoven within all systems of oppression including ableism, patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. We do not debate these facts.

Abolition is the future, and we practice it in our present. We believe abolition is about dismantling oppressive systems and mindsets of all kinds, and creating viable, long-lasting, liberatory solutions. This means dismantling carceral institutions, and the way we uphold policing and policing practices in our own lives. It means getting to the root of violence in our communities. The structures and practices we build centre the belief that everyone inherently deserves to live free from oppression, in dignity, with all of their needs met. We understand this is multi-generational work, and that modern abolitionist movements are a continuation of chattel slavery abolition that started centuries ago.

We choose care, not cops. As practicing Abolitionists, we respect individual autonomy, and we commit to using methods of care for one another in times of crisis. We understand that all cops are agents of the State and their job is to uphold colonial violence. We imagine a world without police or prisons and work towards it by opposing criminalization through processes of Transformative Justice within our communities. We also recognize the ways people have been abandoned within this hyper-individualistic society where they feel their only option is to call the police.

We know systems of oppression live in all of us, and we are all responsible for resisting those systems. We recognize anti-Blackness is at the root and intersection of every form of oppression we see today, and that systems are most violent against Black people. We actively work to abolish internalized racism, anti-Blackness, white supremacy, ableism, patriarchy, homophobia and transphobia. We acknowledge our personal privilege and use our resources accordingly. We discern and discard our habits of coercion.

The struggle for freedom is global. We know these oppressive systems are not confined to our own state-sanctioned “borders.” While our immediate struggle and most of our work is here in Moh'kintsis/Calgary, we recognize ourselves as part of a deeply complex web of oppression and exploitation in which many of us exist both as victim and beneficiary. We stand in solidarity with all who resist such harm and struggle for liberation worldwide.

Accountability is crucial for the work we are doing, and for any restorative and transformative spaces. We are disciplined in how we each take responsibility for our intentions, words and actions. This includes knowing that good intentions alone are insufficient for true accountability—we must ensure our words and actions align with our intent. We explore processes of accountability as a Collective. We acknowledge the advantages and disadvantages we each have in this system based on our race, socio-economic status, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and relationship to the State through citizenship, criminalization, etc. We are accountable to these truths.

We are not a volunteer organization where we engage when it is convenient. We acknowledge that it is a privilege to disengage from this work, and members must leverage their privilege to do the work on an ongoing basis. According to our values, we must ensure the majority of this work does not fall to racialized people and we know from experience this will happen if we do nothing to prevent it. As a Collective, we support and

re-empower each other to grow, learn and show up ever more fully. We are explicit about the different levels of engagement that are possible. We do not expect every member to be involved in the same way or to the same degree. We are each clear about what we can do, and we do it with commitment and devotion to our shared values. We respect and lean on each other's strengths, while also challenging and supporting each other to build new ones. We each take on the responsibility to resource ourselves and each other so that we can be fully present for the long term.

Perfectionism and saviourism are aspects of white supremacy. We acknowledge that perfectionism is ableist and deters us from making progress. We recognize saviourism as a form of oppression. As individuals and as a Collective, we endeavour to move away from practices of saviourism, and instead are in community with those most affected by systemic oppression.

We know we all make mistakes, and that the Collective depends on us owning those mistakes. Our commitment involves being accountable to each other and to ourselves. We are all responsible for helping each other recognize and learn from the mistakes we make. We are all committed to consistently and continuously educating ourselves. When we cause harm or hurt, we acknowledge the harm done, figure out how to restore the relationship and do better, and follow through.

Education is intersectional and life-long. We ground ourselves through continual learning, unlearning, and teaching, and we always centre the lived experience and wisdom of those most marginalized. We know that not one of us holds all the answers, yet between us, we know a lot. As individuals and as a Collective, we are committed to learning from each other, even when it is uncomfortable, and we seek out teachers who have different lived experiences than we do. We do not expect perfection from each other. We ask members to be dedicated to doing the learning, and unlearning, necessary to align our actions with our values and principles.

SOURCES

The books, videos and articles listed below are among those that influenced the creation of these Values and Guiding Principles. **We honour and acknowledge the lineage of ideas that we build on.**

Elise Ahenkorah's article Safe and Brave Spaces Don't Work, and What You Can Do Instead
<https://medium.com/@elise.k.ahen/safe-and-brave-spaces-dont-work-and-what-you-can-do-instead-f265aa339aff>

Richard D. Bartlett's article 11 Practical Steps Towards Healthy Power Dynamics at Work
<https://medium.com/the-tuning-fork/11-practical-steps-towards-healthy-power-dynamics-at-work-fcc9bd82c7a2>

The Black Panther Party's Ten Point Program
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten-Point_Program_\(Black_Panther_Party\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten-Point_Program_(Black_Panther_Party))

Nikki Blak
https://www.instagram.com/p/C7SnxhZvHuU/?img_index=1

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Geographies of Racial Capitalism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CS627aKrJ>

Hammer and Hope's article We Are People of Resistance
<https://hammerandhope.org/article/brazil-mst-land-roundtable>

Indigenous Action Meida's zine Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the ally industrial complex
<https://www.indigenoussaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/>

Interrupting Criminalization's zine What About The Rapists? from the Abolitionist's FAQ Series
<https://www.interruptingcriminalization.com/what-about-the-rapists>

Jennifer Lee Koble's work
<https://jenniferleekoble.com/>

The Neutral Ground Discussion Guide: Tips and tools for facilitators regarding the American Documentary series
<https://www.amdoc.org/engage/resources/neutral-ground-discussion-guide/tips-tools-facillitators/>

Paula Serafini's book Creating Worlds Otherwise: Art, collective action and (post) Extractivism
<https://www.vanderbiltuniversitypress.com/9780826504555/creating-worlds-otherwise/>

Dean Spade's work, including the book Mutual Aid: Building solidarity during this crisis (and the next)

Rinaldo Walcott's book On Property: Policing, prisons, and the call for abolition
<https://www.biblioasis.com/shop/non-fiction/cultural-criticism/on-property/>

WDC members during various meetings