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## **Content Warning: Mention of Sexual Violence, Gender-Based Violence and Racism**

### **August 4, 2020: DSU Update on Council Decisions Regarding Recent Online Disclosure**

On behalf of the Dalhousie Student Union, we want to thank our membership for their time and patience during the last few months. During this time, we have worked to assess and formally review the sexual violence allegations made against the current Vice President Student Life. In order to deal with issues of sexual violence in an inclusive and intersectional manner, it is crucial we acknowledge the various ways that they impact members of our community. Incidents of sexual violence are unacceptable, and disproportionately impact women, queer and trans\*, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour on campus and within our communities. We recognize that this situation has caused harm to all those involved and seek to move forward in an equitable manner that aligns with the DSU's values of harm reduction.

In May 2020, the DSU Executives learned of an online disclosure which was occurring through a petition on Change.org. The petition accused the current VPSL of sexual assault and called for their removal from office. On May 7, 2020, the DSU Council voted to place the VPSL under a non-disciplinary suspension, and began the process of finding a third-party investigator to review the alleged incident. [For more information on the third-party investigation, please see here.](#) The investigator, Kelly McMillan, of Nijhawan McMillan Petrunia Barristers, reviewed the case and concluded that, based on a balance of probabilities, it is more likely than not that:

1. The Complainant is not Olivia Paige MacDonald, the Dalhousie student whose B00 Number was provided to the DSU by the Complainant;
2. The Respondent did not drug or sexually assault the Complainant at a party referred to as "JadFest" that took place on the weekend of March 6, 2020;
3. The incidents described in the Change.Org petition, subsequent updates, and related online comments did not occur as alleged;
4. The statements published by Jad Ghiz on May 2, 2020, May 14, 2020, and May 19, 2020, breached the Respondent's duty of loyalty to the DSU, as required by DSU Bylaws (s. 4.4(a)), Code of Conduct (s. 1.2 and 3.6.2), and Statement of Office (s. 1-2).

Upon receiving this report, DSU President petitioned the Judicial Board to review it and asked for recommendations on how to move forward. [On July 30<sup>th</sup>, the Judicial Board returned their report to the President, recommending that no disciplinary action be taken, allowing for the VPSL return to regular duties.](#) The Judicial Board further recommended that the DSU strike a committee to review complaint, investigation, and discipline procedures to provide greater clarity and implement more concrete tenets of a survivor-centric approach, should similar

situations arise in the future. Council adopted these recommendations and we will be moving with this in the coming future.

The DSU is committed to operating in a way that is survivor-centric and amplifies consent culture. The findings of the report have outlined how to move forward with this incident, but they are also a reminder of how incidents of sexual violence, when not managed with the appropriate policies, supports and resources, for all parties involved, can disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous and People of Colour.

We would like to formally thank staff at HRES, King's, and South House for the support they provided to the DSU Council and students on campus as we navigated this incident. We strongly encourage all community members to access support if needed; please see a list of resources below. We would like to remind survivors that their experiences and feelings around incidents of sexual violence are valid. We encourage you to access the supports you need, knowing that your voice matters, your experiences are valid, and you deserve to be believed.

If you have any questions in regards the matter, please contact [dsupres@dal.ca](mailto:dsupres@dal.ca). If you are looking for support, please contact one of the resources below.

Signed,

Madeleine Stinson, President  
Hanna Stewart, Vice President Internal  
Isa Wright, Vice President Finance and Operations  
Erica Seelemann, Vice President External and Academic

Survivor Support & Mental Health Resources  
Survivor Support Centre  
Email: [survivorsupport@dal.ca](mailto:survivorsupport@dal.ca) Phone: (902) 425-1066

South House Halifax  
Email: [outreach@southhousehalifax.ca](mailto:outreach@southhousehalifax.ca) Phone: (902) 494-2432

Dalhousie Human Rights and Equity Services (HRES)  
Email: [hres@dal.ca](mailto:hres@dal.ca) Phone: (902) 494-6672

Dal Student Health & Wellness  
Website: [dal.ca/campus\\_life/health-and-wellness](http://dal.ca/campus_life/health-and-wellness)  
Phone: (902) 494-2171

Dal Security  
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