

# Mount Royal professor who questioned Indigenization policies, BLM movement has been removed from school staff

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Frances Widdowson confirmed on Wednesday that she had been fired by the school in December. She said that her case would be going to arbitration. PHOTO BY POSTMEDIA FILE

A Mount Royal professor who criticized the Black Lives Matter movement and claimed there were educational benefits to Canada's residential school system says she has been fired.

Frances Widdowson confirmed Wednesday that she had been dismissed by the school in December. She said her case would be going to arbitration.

Widdowson, a tenured professor, made headlines last year when she said BLM destroyed the university. She has publicly rejected the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's conclusion that Canada's residential school system was "genocidal," and has backed former journalist Wendy Mesley's use of the N-word while in a meeting at the CBC.

Those public statements led to people both inside and outside of the university calling for Widdowson to be removed from her position as an associate professor. She was hailed by others as a champion of free speech.

Widdowson said Wednesday that it was these views that led to a culture that allowed her to be fired.

"It created the climate where activists banded together. They felt emboldened," said Widdowson.

Widdowson argued that the university should be encouraging open and honest debate of ideas. She said it was becoming increasingly difficult for her to put out arguments and criticisms at the university.

A statement provided by Mount Royal University confirmed Widdowson was no longer a member of the school's staff, but would not provide specific details on what it called a personnel matter. The statement said MRU is committed to fostering expression and free speech, but does not justify harassment or discrimination.

"The university unequivocally supports academic debate and will always defend the rights of faculty related to academic freedom. However, academic freedom does not justify harassment or discrimination," read the statement.

An online petition started last year calling for Widdowson to be fired had garnered more than 6,000 signatures as of Wednesday.

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