



Clinical Nurse Specialist Association of Canada CNS-C

Association des infirmières et infirmiers cliniciens spécialisés du Canada ICS-C

Celebrating National Truth and Reconciliation Day

Message

September 30, 2023

As we prepare to honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, your executive wanted to share with you, that each of us has a responsibility to shine a light on practices entrenched in nursing practice which contribute to systemic racism for indigenous peoples. We will continue to explore ways of dismantling racist practices through updating policies and practices built within the colonial framework of healthcare and healthcare education. We are committed to continue to challenge ourselves and learn.

The full report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) can be found at <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>. There are 94 Calls to Action, of which 7 directly relate to nursing and health care:

- ▶ 18. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to acknowledge that the current state of Aboriginal health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian government policies, including residential schools, and to recognize and implement the health-care rights of Aboriginal people as identified in international law, constitutional law, and under the Treaties.
- ▶ 19. We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and to publish annual progress reports and assess long-term trends. Such efforts would focus on indicators such as: infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services.
- ▶ 20. In order to address the jurisdictional disputes concerning Aboriginal people who do not reside on reserves, we call upon the federal government to recognize, respect, and address the distinct health needs of the Métis, Inuit, and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples.
- ▶ 21. We call upon the federal government to provide sustainable funding for existing and new Aboriginal healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools, and to ensure that the funding of healing centres in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories is a priority.
- ▶ 22. We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders were requested by Aboriginal patients.

- ▶ 23. We call upon all levels of government to:
 - ▶ Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health-care field.
 - ▶ Ensure the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities.
 - ▶ Provide cultural competency training for all healthcare professionals.
- ▶ 24. We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

In my own practice, I have included content on these Calls to Action in my courses, assuring that my students are aware of the history as experienced by indigenous people and how nursing can work to promote healing. As CNSs, we are positioned as experts in nursing and have both the opportunity and responsibility to lead that work.

We hope you are also moving forward in implementing the recommendations contained in Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action.

Sincerely,

Elsabeth Jensen, RN, BA, PhD (nursing)

President, CNS-C / ICS-C

