

## Upholding the Truth and Reconciliation Recommendations

April 2016

### Background

Aboriginal Health Nursing is a key policy priority for the Association of Registered Nurses of BC. As such, we continue to develop policy and programs around topics such as Aboriginal Nursing Leadership, Jordan's Principle and Improving Health Outcomes for Aboriginal Women and Children. In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released a report *"Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future."* Among this report was a "call to action" which set out 94 recommendations directed to the various institutions and government to work towards healing. Among these recommendations, seven were specific to the healthcare sector.

### Health Recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Report

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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 where requested by Aboriginal patients.
6. We call upon all levels of government to:
  1. Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health-care field.
  - ii. Ensure the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities.
  - iii. Provide cultural competency training for all health- care professionals.



# Issues Brief

7. 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

## Key Messages:

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has allowed Canadians to gain understanding into how the health of Canada's Aboriginal People has been compromised by years of disenfranchisement and abuse, and provides opportunities for ongoing dialogue and solutions-oriented responses.
- Nurses are often the most frequent point of contact into the healthcare system for many Aboriginal peoples. They are well positioned to ensure that these recommendations are upheld, and that they remain on the political agenda of nursing and government.
- Nurses have an opportunity to take a strong stance in favor of change that will make significant inroads into improving Aboriginal health outcomes.
- Government and all stakeholders must Respect the findings of the Commission and take appropriate action to respond in a proactive, solutions-oriented way to the seven health recommendations.
- Reducing inequities for Aboriginal health must be a priority.

## Questions for Nurses:

1. What are some promising practices or initiatives that you have come across in your practice that can further improve the health outcomes of Aboriginal peoples in B.C? What can be learned from them?
2. How can nursing in B.C work towards upholding the recommendations set out by the TRC?
3. What suggestions do you have that can help further shape Aboriginal health and Aboriginal health nursing policy at ARNBC?

## Further Reading

- [Aboriginal health nursing and aboriginal health: Charting policy direction for nursing in Canada](#)
- [Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety in Nursing Education](#) - Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada
- [Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#)

