Truth and Reconciliation in Canada

Indian Residential Schools (IRS) are part of Canada’s history that is not well known or understood by many. Indian Residential Schools were created to separate Aboriginal children from their families in order to minimize and weaken family ties and cultural linkages, and to indoctrinate children into Euro-Christian Canadian society. The schools were government-funded and Church-run for well over 100 years, the last one closing in 1996. As a result of the IRS system and the abuses suffered by generations of Aboriginal children, Canada’s relationship with Aboriginal people has suffered and healing and reparation is needed.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was constituted as part of the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) Settlement Agreement implemented in 2007, which settled the largest class-action lawsuit in Canada’s history launched by several thousand survivors of IRS. The mandate of the TRC was to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools. To this end, the Commission spent six years travelling to all parts of Canada documenting the truth of survivors, families, communities and anyone personally affected by the IRS experience. One of the key findings was that IRS facilitated cultural genocide.

On December 15, 2015, the TRC released its 6-volume final report, a comprehensive record of the policies and operations of the schools, what the TRC did, what was heard from more than 6,000 witnesses, and what was concluded about the schools. The report includes 94 calls to action (recommendations) to advance the process of reconciliation in Canada. The calls to action are in a range of categories including; child welfare, education, language and culture, health, and justice.

On December 8, 2015, the Prime Minister outlined a 5-point plan towards a new relationship with Indigenous people in Canada, which involves immediate action to:

• implement all 94 recommendations from the TRC,
• make significant investments in First Nations education,
• lift the 2% cap on funding for First Nations programs,
• launch a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, and
• repeal all legislation unilaterally imposed on Indigenous people by the previous government.
National inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls announced

On December 8, 2015, the Government of Canada announced a national inquiry into the high number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across the country. Although Indigenous women make up 4 per cent of the female population in Canada, 16 per cent of all women murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012 were Indigenous. For many years, Indigenous families, communities and organizations, as well as non-governmental and international organizations have urged the Government of Canada to take action and lead a national inquiry.

The inquiry will unfold in two-stages, beginning immediately with engagement of survivors, family members and loved ones of victims, as well as National Aboriginal, provincial, and territorial representatives to seek input on the design and scope of the inquiry. An online survey is available for stakeholders to submit responses to questions that will guide the inquiry design process. As well, in-person gatherings will be held across the country. The BC Provincial Family Gathering will take place in Prince George January 31 to February 2, 2016.

After the engagement stage, the Government will report back on what has been learned from participants, which will inform the development of the inquiry, including the mandate, terms of reference, format, and time line.

New funding from the province towards Highway of Tears transportation safety

In northern BC, Highway 16 from Prince George to Prince Rupert is known as the Highway of Tears because of the high number of women, mostly Indigenous, who have gone missing along it. An RCMP investigation identified 18 women and girls who went missing or were murdered along Highway 16 and the nearby highways 97 and 5 since 1969.

On November 24, 2015, a transportation symposium was held in Smithers, BC, hosted by the First Nations Health Authority and BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. The symposium included representatives from 23 First Nations communities along the Prince Rupert to Prince George Highway 16 corridor, the provincial government, municipal government organizations, Northern Health and the First Nations Health Authority. The focus of the symposium was on finding safe and sustainable transportation options for people travelling this highway for both medical and non-medical reasons.

Following this symposium, on December 14, the BC government announced a $3 million plan to enhance transportation safety along this infamous stretch of road. A new ten-member advisory group made of local First Nations and municipal leaders will oversee the implementation of the plan in the coming months. The five-point action plan includes funding for:

- transit expansion on a cost-shared basis with local communities;
- a community transportation grant program to purchase and operate vehicles;
- First Nations driver education program to increase the number of Class 4 and Class 5 drivers in First Nations communities;
- highway infrastructure including webcams and transit shelters; and
- increased coordination of existing transportation services.
Spotlight on your health

**SmartMom** prenatal text messaging project coming to northern BC

*SmartMom* is an initiative for pregnant women and their families that provides information on healthy pregnancies by text message. By communicating with women throughout their pregnancy, the project hopes to provide relevant and timely information about how to have a healthy pregnancy, prepare for birth, and connect with local resources.

*SmartMom* will start in the Omineca region of northern BC (Vanderhoof, Fort St. James, Fraser Lake and surrounding First Nations communities) at the end of February 2016.

**If you are expecting and would like to connect with this project, speak with your care provider at your prenatal appointment.**

To learn more, watch this **short promotional video** or email Vanessa.Salmons@northernhealth.ca.

New documents from Aboriginal Health

**Sharing patient information with health care staff in First Nations communities**

This fact sheet provides clarification about how and why to share patient information with health care providers in First Nations communities.

**All AHIC Gathering 2015**

This report provides a summary of the gathering of Aboriginal Health Improvement Committees that took place in September 2015.

Aboriginal Health survey results

The Aboriginal Health department was excited to launch a survey on December 1, 2015 to learn about what we can do to support Northern Health employees provide quality, culturally safe health care for First Nations and Aboriginal people and families.

In the two weeks the survey was open we received 1,294 responses. This information will provide valuable feedback on our work and will inform our future directions. Almost immediately we started hearing from respondents that they were previously unaware of the Aboriginal Health department and the support we offer. We also noted an increase in subscribers to the Aboriginal Health newsletter and direct email/phone inquiries about Aboriginal health-related topics.

We are working on compiling the responses we received. Preliminary findings suggest a desire for more information on Aboriginal health generally, as well as resources for Aboriginal patients. Employees also want cultural safety training in addition to the online course offered by the Provincial Health Services Authority.

We received suggestions for specific information on:

- the available services for Aboriginal people and how to contact those services
- skills development for meaningful communication and building relationships
- the First Nations communities in the Northern Health region
- cultural practices and protocols
- culturally inclusive resources

Congratulations to Yvonne DeBoer who won the draw for a Fitbit Charge HR and to the winners of Tim Hortons gift cards: Marina Meldrum, Jennifer Platzer, and Adele Bachand.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to fill out our survey! The survey is now closed. We look forward to taking action on the feedback we received.
Featured Indigenous language: Tse’khene

Aboriginal Health would like to highlight the many Indigenous languages in the north. This issue we are featuring Tse’khene (Sekani) spoken in northeastern BC starting north of Prince George around Williston Lake and westward across the northern reaches of Takla Lake. Tse’khene is part of the Dene (Athabaskan) language family.

To learn more about Tse’khene language and to hear recordings of words, phrases, stories and songs, visit the First Voices website and the First Peoples’ Language Map of British Columbia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dékunt’ea? (Dékant’ea?)</td>
<td>How are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuzii’ déêóyea?</td>
<td>What is your name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shòwast’e.</td>
<td>I’m fine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shówâ’ nuk’ununustą.</td>
<td>It’s nice to see you again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tazowe dèkuwiht’ea?</td>
<td>How is it outside?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upcoming events

View our online events calendar for all upcoming events.

Métis history, identity and the Métis Nation today
January 27, 2016  Free Webinar

The Early Years Conference 2016
January 28-30, 2016 Vancouver, BC

Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada National Training Forum
February 15-17, 2016 Montreal, QC

Aboriginal Disability and Wellness Gathering
February 22-24, 2016 Victoria, BC

Indigenous Graduate Student Symposium
March 4-5, 2016 Vancouver, BC

Gathering Our Voices Aboriginal Youth Conference
March 21-24, 2016 Victoria, BC

Resources

View additional resources from external sources on our Resources and Documents page.

Aboriginal peoples: Fact sheet for Canada (Government of Canada)

Wellness in Early Onset Familial Alzheimer Disease: Experiences of the Tahltan First Nation (UBC)

First Nations Child Poverty: A Literature Review and Analysis (FNCARES)

Recruitment corner

Are you interested in a health career or know someone who is? Check out the FNHA Health Careers Guidebook to learn about different health career options. There are scholarships available for First Nations and Aboriginal students, many of which go unused each year. It is well worth the effort to apply. If you spent one regular work day on your applications and are awarded $1000 that is equal to making $142/hour!

Community corner

The Prince George Métis Housing Society has a new name: the Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George. The change is to reflect “an inclusive approach to services being delivered to all Aboriginal people in the Prince George region,” said society president Barry Seymour. The organization has provided safe, healthy, and affordable housing to Aboriginal people of all incomes, ages and capabilities in the city and surrounding area since the 1980s.

Aboriginal Health, Suite 600 - 299 Victoria Street, Prince George, BC V2L 5B8 • T 250-649-7226 • F 250-565-2640 • aboriginal.health@northernhealth.ca