



Indigenous Health

Summer 2021



In Her Circle: The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indigenous women's health in BC

A new report from the [BC Women's Health Foundation](#) and [Reciprocal Consulting](#) details the barriers facing Indigenous women in accessing health care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[In Her Circle](#) studied the experiences of 43 Indigenous women and Two-Spirit individuals from all five health authorities in British Columbia. Interviews were conducted online and over the phone to better understand Indigenous women's health status and their health priorities during the pandemic.

The study authors acknowledge limitations relative to the report's language noting that the term "Indigenous women" is used for all participants including those individuals who identify as Two-Spirit

in order to protect confidentiality.

Indigenous women shared their stories of isolation, issues accessing health care, resilience, and community which informed recommendations to ensure Indigenous women have equitable access to high-quality health care when, where, and how they need it.

Findings highlighted health care inequities were amplified due to the pandemic. These included access to mental health services, long wait times to see specialists, and loss of community health programs. This publication follows and reflects findings from the [In Plain Sight](#) report which detailed findings of an independent investigation of allegations of anti-Indigenous racism in British Columbia's health care system. In February 2021, Turpel-Lafond released a [comprehensive data report](#) as an update to *In Plain Sight*. The updated report concluded that Indigenous people in BC are

Highlights

Pilot projects aim to increase access to cervical screenings in B.C.

Northern B.C. school districts collaborate to create Indigenous language curriculum

Prince George students, teachers produce film about the history of Métis in Canada

New video on vaccine confidence

Educating Medical Students' "Hearts and Minds"



75% more likely to access emergency rooms¹ when experiencing health crises due to lack of access to family doctors and other primary care services.

Recommendations

The report provides [twenty evidence-based recommendations](#) to help improve the health care system for Indigenous women in BC.

The evidence-based recommendations are organized into 6 categories:

- Health care inclusive of holistic health
- Cultural safety and anti-racism
- Mental health and addiction supports
- Models of care
- Community wellness
- Policy level

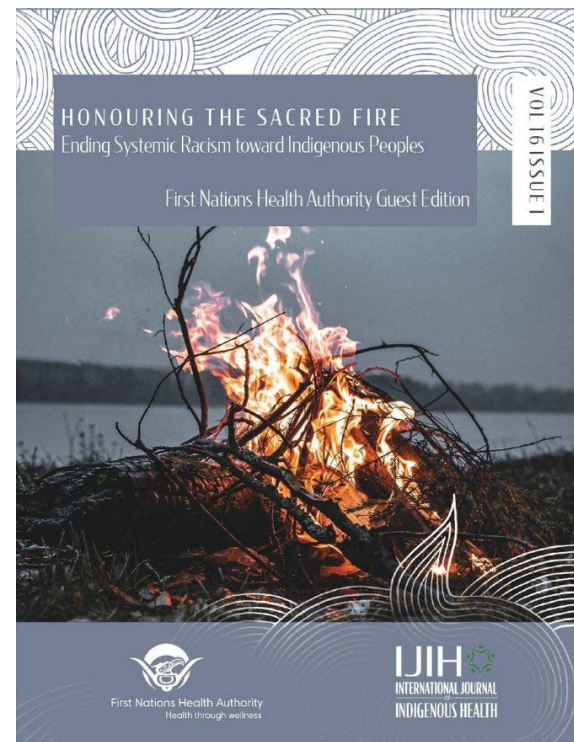
To read the detailed recommendations, you can access the [full report](#) on the BC Women's Health Foundation [website](#).

Educating Medical Students' 'Hearts and Minds': A Humanities-Informed Cultural Immersion Program in Indigenous Experiential Community Learning

The [First Nations Community Education Program](#) (FNCEP) is a partnered initiative designed to foster the development of cultural humility and capacities in cultural safety in medical students. The program was developed and implemented as a collaborative project within the [Northern Medical Program](#), the [First Nations Health Authority](#), and [Northern Health](#).

The FNCEP is an innovative humanities-informed Indigenous cultural immersion program which

emphasizes experiential learning. The program's goals are to promote opportunities for medical students to learn in a place-based way about Northern First Nations people and communities, understand these from a strength-based perspective, and enhance medical students' social accountability and responsibility.



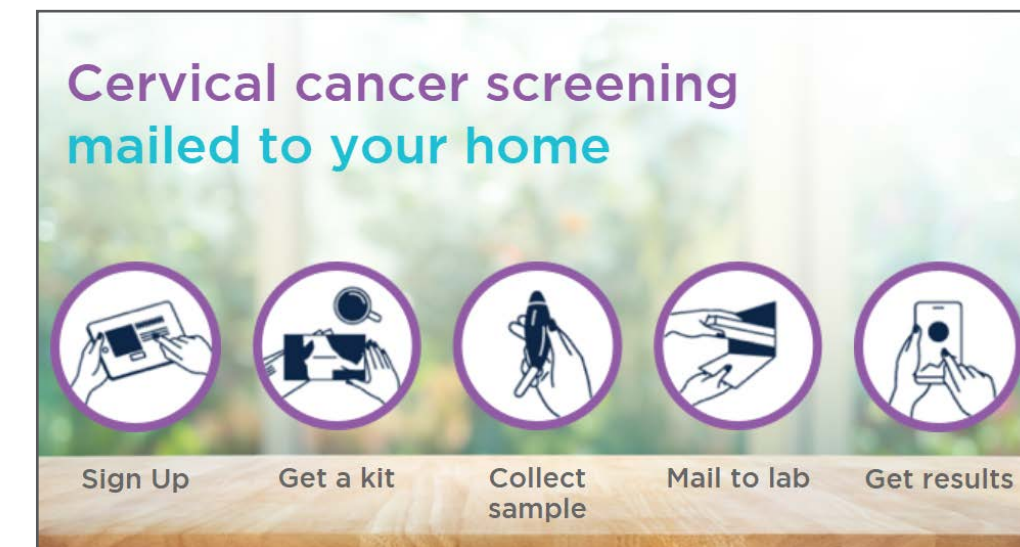
The recent publication [Educating Medical Students' 'Hearts and Minds': A Humanities-Informed Cultural Immersion Program in Indigenous Experiential Community Learning](#), describes the development and implementation of the FNCEP. You can access the full article through the [International Journal of Indigenous Health](#).

Pilot projects aim to increase access to cervical screenings in B.C.

Three new pilot projects aimed at making the cervical screening process for Indigenous women and girls more accessible have launched in Northern BC.

Two projects are being conducted in partnership with [Carrier Sekani Family Services](#) (CSFS) and [First Nations Health Authority](#) (FNHA) and will be in the Northern Interior and Northeastern regions of Northern Health. Individuals requiring cervical screening in these health service delivery areas can pick up kits free-of-cost from community health centres and complete a self-screening at home. The screening kits are then returned to the health centre and patients are contacted by a health care provider with results if they require a follow up.

The third project is in the Northwestern region and is being conducted in partnership with Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC). To receive a self-screening kit, log onto the [CervixCheck website](#) and order a kit which will be mailed to your home. Following self-screening, the kit is mailed back to the health centre and physician follow up occurs if needed.



What is cervical screening?

Cervical screenings, commonly known as Pap tests, can identify a range of health risks and problems including precancerous cells. The [BC Guidelines for clinical practice](#) suggest people with a uterus between the ages of 25-69 should get a cervical screening every three years.

Cervical cancer is almost always caused by long term infection by certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV) transmitted during sexual intercourse.

Virtual Events

International Self-Care Day

July 28, 2021

International Youth Day

August 12, 2021

World Humanitarian Day

August 19, 2021

International Overdose Awareness Day

August 31, 2021

Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

September 2021

World Alzheimer's Month

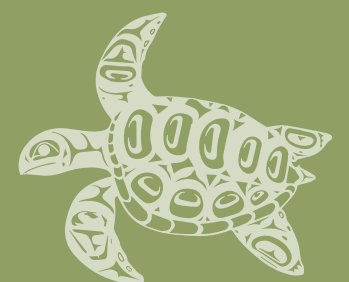
September 2021

World Suicide Prevention Day

September 10, 2021

Orange Shirt Day

September 30, 2021



¹Turpel-Lafond, M.E. (2021). In *Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care: Data Report*. p.112. Accessed on June 22, 2021 at: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/613/2020/11/In-Plain-Sight-FullReport.pdf>

The government of Canada estimates more than 70 per cent of sexually active Canadian men and women will have a sexually transmitted HPV infection at some point in their lives.

Alarming, Indigenous women are most likely at an even greater risk of developing cervical cancer.

Dr. Sheona Mitchell-Foster, an obstetrician-gynecologist and assistant professor at University of British Columbia's Northern Medical Program, says a [2017 study by the B.C. Cancer Agency and FNHA](#) found a 92 per cent higher incidence of cervical cancer among First Nations women in B.C. compared to non-First Nations women.

Barriers preventing screenings

Intergenerational trauma can play a part in Indigenous women's reluctance to get screened, like the forced sterilization of Indigenous women which is [reported to have happened as late as 2019](#)².

In the North, barriers to cervical screening can also be geographic. Depending on the time of year, the nearest health care centre may be hours away or entirely inaccessible depending on weather and road conditions.

Additional information

So far, the results of the pilot projects have been promising.

"We've had really incredible uptake. Women have been so excited to be able to access this option for screenings," Mitchell-Foster [said in an interview with APTN](#).

For information on the two pilot projects based in the Northern Interior and Northeastern regions, please contact your local community health centre.

For more information on the pilot project based in the Northwestern region, please visit cervixcheck.ca/

[Pages/default.aspx](#) or contact Katina Pollard (Métis Nation BC) at kpollard@mnbc.ca

New video on vaccine confidence

A new [video](#) from the National Collaborating Centres for [Indigenous Health](#) and [Infectious Diseases](#) intended to promote vaccine confidence for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples is now available.

Vaccines, also called immunizations, work to protect you, your family, and your community from preventable diseases like measles, chickenpox, and polio.

Immunizations are safe and have worked to eliminate many common illnesses. The more that you know about immunizations and how safe they are, the more confident you can be in your decision to get vaccinated.

Here are four vaccine facts to remember:

1. Vaccines reduce your risk of getting certain infectious diseases and reduce the spread of those infectious diseases to other people.
2. Vaccines are safe and carefully tested.
3. Side effects from vaccines are rare.
4. Vaccines help the body to fight off disease.

Making the choice to get vaccinated is the responsible thing to do for both yourself and your loved ones. Your vaccination also helps keep your community safe from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Related resources:

- [National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH) Fact sheet] [Vaccine Preventable Diseases in Canada: What are They?](#)
- [NCCIH Fact sheet] [Vaccines – the Facts](#)
- [NCCIH Report] [There is no vaccine for stigma:](#)

[A Rapid Evidence Review of stigma mitigation strategies during past outbreaks among Indigenous populations living in rural, remote and northern regions of Canada and what can be learned for COVID-19](#)

- [NCCIH Webinar] [Vaccine Hesitancy and First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations](#)

Want to learn more? Here are some trusted sources for vaccine information:

- [Northern Health](#) (NH)
- [BC Centres for Disease Control](#) (BCCDC)
- [National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases](#) (NCCID)
- [National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health](#) (NCCIH)

Northern B.C. school districts collaborate to create Indigenous language curriculum

Three school districts within the Northern Interior region are working together to add the Dakelh language to the provincial curriculum as a way for students to earn credits towards secondary school graduation.

The Dakelh language is spoken by members of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation in Prince George and by other First Nation communities in the Northern Interior and Northwestern areas of BC.

The Dakelh language is endangered with very few Dakelh speakers in the community who are certified to teach. However, with the help of Elders who are fluent in the language, school districts in Prince George, Nechako Lakes, and Quesnel are currently writing a curriculum that will be submitted for approval to the Ministry of Education. Once approved, these language classes could help revitalize the language.

In an interview with [CBC Daybreak North](#), Jennifer Pighin, District Vice Principal - Indigenous Education Department - Language and Culture at School District 57 said that to start building the number of Dakelh speakers, the curriculum will be taught to students in Grades 5 to 12³.

Pighin, who grew up in Prince George, said she had little exposure to the language and was only taught a few words when her mother was taking a course at the local college. Pighin says that language gives students a sense of belonging, connection to culture and community, and helps them understand the world around them.

"You can get deeper into the meanings behind the words and...understand the world a little bit differently than we do from the English language, where there's lots of binaries and...lots of black and white," said Pighin.

Currently, each school district is working on digitizing audio files, creating resources with activities, as well as lessons and games to help teachers who may not be Dakelh speakers. Once the Ministry of Education has approved the proposed curriculum it will be made available for use within the districts.

² Bartlett, J., & Boyer, Y. (Hosts). (April 2020). Uncovering the Forced and/or Coerced Sterilization of Indigenous Women (No. 9) [Audio Podcast Episode]. In *Voices from the Field*. National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health. https://www.nccih.ca/495/Podcast_Voices_from_the_Field_9_-_Uncovering_the_Forced_and_or_Coerced_Sterilization_of_Indigenous_Women.nccih?id=294

³ *Northern B.C. school districts collaborate to create for-credit Indigenous language curriculum*. (2021 April 24). CBC British Columbia. Retrieved June 25, 2021 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/dekelh-language-curriculum-pg-1.5989336>

Prince George students, teachers produce film about the history of Métis in Canada

A new 30-minute film telling the story of Métis in Canada is available on [YouTube](#).



The film, [Exploring Historical Perspectives Through Place-Based Theatre: The Story of the Metis in Canada](#), was made in 2020 with the help of Métis Elders, Indigenous Support Workers, students, teachers, administrators, and Spruce City Wildlife Association.

The project was completed in collaboration with students from several Prince George schools including Foothills Elementary, Spruceland Traditional Elementary, École College Heights Elementary, Heritage Elementary, and D.P. Todd Secondary schools.

The project engaged students in grades 4 – 9. Each grade level was responsible for portraying a different aspect of Métis history specific to their curriculum areas such as Social Studies, Arts Education and Applied Design, Skills and Technology.



Music teachers in the five schools taught students time-period songs including: Riel’s Farewell, Un Canadien Errant, My Paddle, Land of the Silver Birch

and Alouette and the D.P Todd band performed the film’s soundtrack.

The video features Leona Neilson, Author of “Niwechihaw-I Help” and “Nipehon- I Wait” - Cree/ English books describing the relationship of a grandmother with her grandchildren.

The project represents a unique learning opportunity for everyone.

“Because it’s tied to the curriculum, teachers can use the film as a teaching and assessment tool for really big themes that we’re looking at,” [said Jennifer Moroz](#), who came up with the idea at the beginning of the 2020 school year.



The film is [now available](#) as a resource for current and future classroom learning opportunities.



Featured Indigenous Language

You might have noticed that each newsletter features an Indigenous language from Northern British Columbia. But, did you know that there are also several apps available for download to your iOS or Android device? These apps have been developed in partnership with participating communities and First Peoples’ Cultural Council.

Language apps are great for learning on the go and can make learning more accessible for those who do not have access to in-person lessons. A full list of available language apps can be found on the [First Voices](#) website.

In addition to these language apps, First Voices also has a “keyboard” app that includes software for over 100 languages that will allow you to text and email using the necessary characters and letters that are not available in an English keyboard.



The [Nazko-Dakelh language app](#) is a media-rich bilingual dictionary and phrase collection comprised of words and phrases archived at the online Aboriginal language database FirstVoices.com.

Word and phrase definitions are illustrated with audio recordings, and images. Users can generate their own thematically organized flashcards and bookmark words or sentences to create their own lists.

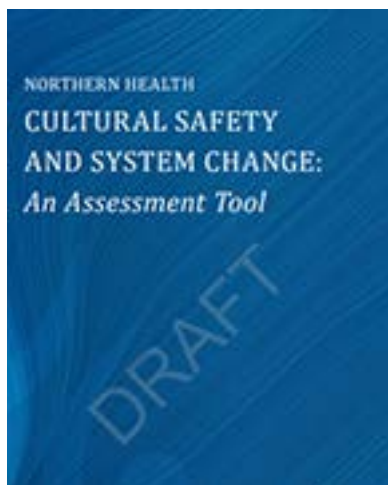
Here are some of the [phrases](#) you could learn using the app:

- a’ah, ‘uyoo chah ka’unuszun
yes, I would like some more.
- a’ah, dube ndusda.
yes, i am very sick
- bundada t’eh naih toonatesgus.
i am going to wash clothes tomorrow.
- ’aba buts’oh kw’uz’udai k’eyi’ai.
dad put his hat on the table.
- ’ama naih k’ununa’u’a.
mom is ironing the clothes.
- ’atsiyan kw’usuda k’ut ‘et usda.
grandfather is sitting on a chair.

Resources



Northern Health Cultural Safety And System Change: An Assessment Tool



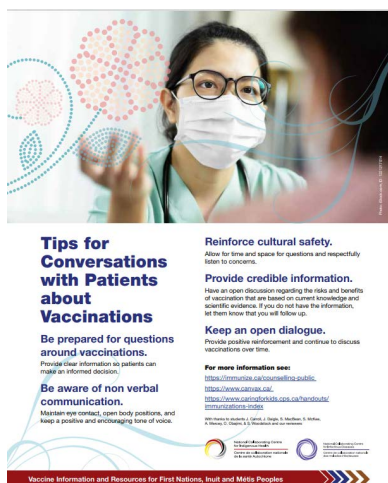
Supporting Vaccine Confidence in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Communities



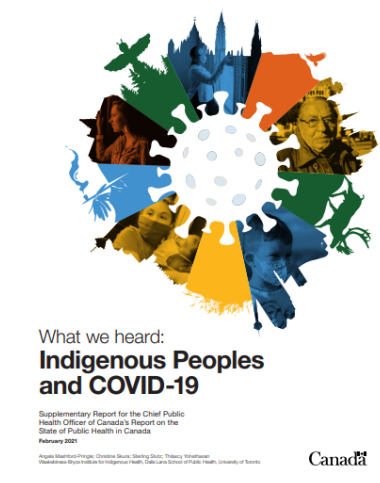
Planning for Food Security: A Toolkit for the COVID-19 Pandemic



Tips for Conversations with Patients About Vaccinations



What we heard: Indigenous Peoples and COVID-19



Practising Self-Compassion

