

**For Immediate Release
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March 1,

All regulated health professions commit to a safer health system for First Nations and Aboriginal People



March 1, 2017 – Today 23 health regulatory bodies in B.C. declared their commitment to making the health system more culturally safe for First Nations and Aboriginal People. In signing the Declaration of Commitment to Cultural Safety and Humility, BC health professionals are the first in Canada to make the pledge.

Increasing the level of cultural safety in the health care system through approaches such as cultural safety, cultural humility, health literacy and relationship-based care will assist in improving the quality of health services for First Nations and Aboriginal people.

Unfortunately, systemic racism and discrimination towards First Nations people continues to be a major problem in many contemporary health care settings. Systemic racism, which includes personal biases and unintentional stereotyping, leads to inappropriate treatment and barriers to accessing health care.

Signing the Declaration of Commitment reflects the high priority placed on advancing cultural safety and humility for Indigenous people among regulated health professionals by committing to actions and processes which will ultimately embed culturally safe practices within all levels of health professional regulation.

The Declaration commits the 23 regulatory bodies to report on their progress via annual reports outlining strategic activities which demonstrate how they are meeting their commitment to cultural safety. The Declaration also opens the door to formally encouraging all health professionals to complete cultural safety training, such as the San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training offered by the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA).

The signing of the declaration was witnessed by over 230 delegates attending the 2017 Quality Forum 'Best of Both Worlds' conference, a forum focused on improving the quality of health care for Indigenous people.

The declaration is endorsed by the First Nations Health Authority and the Ministry of Health and was signed by their representatives and the members of the BC Health Regulators.

QUOTES:

Cynthia Johansen, Registrar/CEO of the College of Registered Nurses of BC (CRNBC):

"As the largest group of regulated health professionals in BC, nurses are in a unique position to be able to effect real change within the system. CRNBC is encouraging nurses to consider how their practice can help achieve positive health outcomes for Aboriginal Peoples, and to speak up and advocate for Aboriginal Peoples when they see discrimination or bias.

Dr. Heidi Oetter, Registrar and CEO, College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC:

"The College of Physicians and Surgeons is honoured to sign this declaration on behalf of all BC physicians, which demonstrates our profession's strong commitment to working with the First Nations Health Authority to improve the health and well-being of BC First Nations. The College is confident that physicians genuinely understand the need for, and the benefits of, Indigenous cultural safety training, and will continue to promote the value of this training to the medical profession."

Joe Gallagher Quote, CEO First Nations Health Authority:

"With today's commitment, the members of every regulated health profession in B.C. have permission to address prejudice and other problematic behaviours without fear of reprisal. This Declaration will ultimately make the health system safer not only for First Nations and Aboriginal people but for all British Columbians.

Health Minister Terry Lake:

"We've worked hard with our partners to make sure that our health-care system is inclusive and supports all patients. This commitment by health-care regulators will raise awareness of the importance of culturally respectful care and in doing so, help improve the quality of care for First Nations and Aboriginal people in B.C."

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Quick Facts

Cultural humility is a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and develop relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another's experience.

Cultural safety is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving and making decisions about their health care.

In July 2015, all Health Authority CEOs in BC signed the first ever Declaration of Commitment. That Commitment gave all their health professionals a mandate to advance cultural safety and humility and safety in their practices with First Nations and Aboriginal people in BC.

In June 2016, the FNHA launched the #itstartswithme campaign to further advance cultural safety and humility. The campaign is centered upon personal and systemic change for better health services for BC First Nations. Health care providers are encouraged to learn more about cultural safety and humility in healthcare. Make a personal pledge of commitment by visiting www.fnha.ca/culturalhumility.

The BC Health Regulators (BCHR) represents 23 regulatory colleges governed by the Health Professions Act and the Social Workers Act. They work together to make sure their licensed professionals are qualified, competent, and follow their standards of practice.

Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) Training is a unique, facilitated on-line training program designed to strengthen the skills of those who work with Aboriginal people. Participants will learn about terminology; diversity; aspects of colonial history such as Indian residential schools and Indian Hospitals, time line of historical events; and contexts for understanding social disparities and inequities. [Learn more here.](#)

