

## **A Letter from Dr. Loh and Dr. Newton: The CFPC's ongoing commitment to Indigenous Health and Cultural Safety**

June is National Indigenous History Month and June 21st is National Indigenous Peoples Day. This is a time to celebrate and honour the rich cultures, histories, and resilience of Indigenous groups across Canada. In recognition of these commemorations, the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) is sharing an update on our recent work in Indigenous health and cultural safety and humility, as well as highlighting important culturally-focused work taking place across Canada.

In November 2022 the CFPC, in partnership with the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada (IPAC), made our [Declaration of Commitment](#) to cultural safety and humility in health service delivery for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in Canada.

The moving ceremony that took place during Family Medicine Forum (FMF) cemented the CFPC's commitment to promoting culturally safe care and working to address systemic racism experienced by Indigenous people in accessing health care in Canada. Since the signing the CFPC has been developing an action plan to guide the College to meet the goals outlined in the Declaration.

Some of the CFPC's work in Indigenous health since November includes:

- In November 2022 Dr. Leah Seaman and Dr. Sarah Funnell from the CFPC [Indigenous Health Committee](#) (IHC) co-presented with Indigenous health clinical educator Christy Anderson, CCFP, and patient/family partner Melinda Laboucan at FMF on the importance of cultural safety for family doctors
- In February 2023 Dr. Mandy Buss and Dr. Veronica McKinney from the IHC [co-hosted the CFP podcast](#) with Dr. Nick Pimlott to discuss the committee's work and the importance of the Declaration of Commitment
- In February 2023 the IHC began work toward a collaboration with the Foundation for Medical Practice Education on an Indigenous health learning module
- In April 2023 Dr. Sarah Funnell and Dr. Darlene Kitty (Chair) from the IHC presented at the Society for Rural Physicians of Canada on the Indigenous health supplement and strengths-based approaches to care
- In June 2023 the CFPC Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine awarded one Indigenous medical student and one Indigenous family medicine resident scholarships in recognition of their achievements
- On June 20 2023, the IHC is releasing the Indigenous Health Case Study Compendium, which offers narrative approaches to support learners to engage in culturally safe care

We want to express our gratitude to the members of the Indigenous Health Committee for their thoughtful guidance, for our meaningful collaboration, and for their extensive efforts to advance health equity for Indigenous patients, families, and communities across Canada.

June is not only a time to reflect on our commitment to reconciliation, but also to celebrate the accomplishments of Indigenous peoples across Canada. In celebration of this, we would like to recognize the importance of strengths-based approaches to care, which emphasize the strengths and resilience of Indigenous peoples to address challenges and support their well-being. With thanks to IHC members for sharing these resources, we would like to recognize some of the good work being done throughout the country, below.

Strong leadership and concrete actions at multiple levels are how the CFPC will demonstrate its commitment to embed cultural safety and humility to deliver improved quality of health care services to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals, families, and communities in Canada.

We are looking forward to sharing with you further accomplishments in the months to come.

Sincerely,

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President

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Executive Director and CEO

### **Strengths-based Programming Across Canada**

Strengths-based approaches to care emphasize the strengths and resilience of Indigenous peoples to address challenges and support well-being.

#### **West Coast:**

- In British Columbia, [Sheway](#), which is run by Vancouver Coastal Health, is a unique outreach and wraparound program providing comprehensive health and social services to women who are pregnant and newly parenting living with or in remission from substance use.
- Sheway is a Coast Salish word for 'Growth'. The program embeds cultural practices into services and takes a woman-centered, harm-reduction approach to care. Sheway is closely connected to FIR (Families in Recovery), an inpatient unit at BC Women's Hospital which has 13 beds for people who are pregnant and hoping to stabilize from substance use. [Dr. Elder Roberta Price](#) is one of the Elders who supports the patients on FIR and ensures patients are cared for in a culturally safe way.

#### **Prairies:**

- Knowledge Keeper [Leslie Spillett](#) is one of the founders of Ka Ni Kanichihk, which offers Indigenous-designed and led programs and services and has helped over 20,000 Indigenous people living in Winnipeg. At Ka Ni Kanichihk, ['the greatness and gifts of all peoples are seen and honoured.'](#)
  - [The Manitoba Mino Pimatisiwin Model of STBBI](#) (sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections) Care project is led by Ka Ni Kanichihk, which emphasizes systems

change, enabling health leaders to implement culturally safe care and effective prevention, testing, and treatment activities for Indigenous people in Manitoba

- Elder [Margaret Lavallee](#) has been the Elder in Residence at University of Manitoba for over 15 years. She has a strong connection to her community of Sakgeen and to ceremony, and offers teachings and support for Indigenous students in health profession studies.

#### East Coast:

- Led by Dr. Brent Young, CCFP and Academic Director for Indigenous Health at Dalhousie, the Indigenous Admissions Pathway was recently launched. The initiative will help minimize barriers that have prevented Indigenous applicants from entering medical school at Dalhousie. Indigenous people are vastly underrepresented in medicine—[read about how this program will help improve Indigenous health equity within Canada](#)

#### North:

- Health navigators support and provide information to patients and their families to navigate the health care system and overcome barriers
- Jennifer Picek, RN, is an Inuvialuit Health System Navigator in the Northwest Territories. [Read about Jenn's important role.](#)
- [Goba care](#) is a grassroots Indigenous non-profit run by Melinda Laboucan, who also co-presented with the CFPC IHC as a family/patient partner at FMF 2022
  - After the loss of her mother and sister, Melinda was driven to improve the experience of accessing care for individuals and families; when patients must travel to Edmonton to receive care, Goba helps them navigate the health system and supports them in their journey