

Registrar's message: lessons learned from a challenging year—working together for positive change



The recent discovery of the remains of 215 children at a former residential school in Kamloops is a tragedy that once again spotlights the violence and racism experienced by Indigenous people in Canada. This was not an isolated historic event. Indigenous people have been systematically discriminated against throughout our colonial history and are to this day. We cannot stay silent.

On May 11, the registrars of four of the biggest health regulatory colleges in the province issued a [joint apology](#) to Indigenous people and communities who have experienced racism through our colonial systems and by the health professionals that we regulate, specifically those professions named in Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's [In Plain Sight](#) report.

Our apology acknowledges that our regulatory systems, structures and practices have not been inclusive or accessible to Indigenous people and reaffirms our commitment to do more—not just in words but in concrete actions.

Since signing the [Declaration of Commitment – Cultural Safety and Humility in the Regulation of Health Professionals](#) in 2017, the College has been on a journey to learn the truth about the experiences of First Nations and other Indigenous people living in the province, and to critically examine how we conduct our regulatory work through a new lens in order to remove structural barriers.

This is a shared journey across all levels and all departments of the College. At its annual retreat last year, the Board resolved to include cultural safety and humility as a core pillar in its [2021–2024 Strategic Plan](#). A significant action item aligned with this pillar is a comprehensive review of the College’s current complaints process, with a goal of making it culturally safe and appropriate. This includes developing restorative justice and early dispute resolution pathways for Indigenous people who prefer to take that approach. We will also invest in supports to assist Indigenous people and ensure they do not feel isolated when navigating the complaints process.

Since its adoption in 1886, the College crest has been the official stamp used on all of our communication and documentation. The College crest is a distinctively colonial symbol with a lion wearing a crown on its head while sitting on top of another crown, reflecting the royal coat of arms of the British monarchy and all of its rights. This year we will be undertaking a significant rebranding process, which includes replacing the crest with a new identifier that reflects our current-day values of inclusivity and accessibility to all British Columbians.

The College recently sought feedback from registrants on a number of cultural safety and humility principles, which will form the basis of a new practice standard for registrants. The comments and questions posed during the consultation underscore the need to provide further clarification on specific principles and terms used, and the importance of continuing to support registrant education and awareness on cultural safety and humility.

The new standard is being developed in partnership with the BC College of Nurses and Midwives, with guidance provided by the First Nations Health Authority, First Nations consultants and knowledge

keepers. A significant step in the consultation process is to obtain insight and feedback on the principles directly from Indigenous patients to ensure the standard is created with input from those it is meant to serve. We will also seek input from Indigenous registrants through a facilitated online discussion.

Though several steps remain in the development process for the *Cultural Safety and Humility* practice standard, the College is confident that real progress is being made towards a clear, comprehensive, and relevant standard. We extend a sincere thank you to those who have shared their thoughts so far.

We are asking College registrants to take this journey with us—to break down barriers that enable systemic racism, to reflect on their own practices, and to be anti-racist leaders who foster a speak-up culture, where stereotypes, discrimination and racism are called out and eliminated.

Together we can take meaningful action to care for and honour BC's Indigenous people.

Heidi M. Oetter, MD
Registrar and CEO

Comments on this or any other article published in the College Connector can be submitted to the communications and public affairs department at communications@cpsbc.ca.