

Registrar's message: learn to listen, listen to learn



Keegan Combes of Skwah First Nation was a high school graduate, a grade 10 pianist and a chess champion enrolled in college at the time of his death. Keegan also lived with disabilities and was non-verbal by choice. He passed away on September 26, 2015, from a delayed diagnosis following an accidental poisoning. He was 29 years old.

Keegan's life was honoured on February 21, 2022, at a virtual reflection event where I and other health leaders were welcomed as witnesses. We were offered gifts and blanketed to publicly acknowledge our commitment to system-wide education and action to end Indigenous-specific racism. At this event, the [First Nations Health Authority \(FNHA\)](#) released and gifted a case study, [Remembering Keegan: a BC First Nations Case Study Reflection](#), which is a unique report that incorporates both western and Indigenous writing and storytelling.

The case study documents the tragic end to Keegan's life, shared by his family and caregiver, and is intended to help health professionals learn from and reflect on personal and systemic biases. Keegan is remembered as a transformer stone for the health system to help shape culturally safe,

quality care for Indigenous people.

One of the key messages during the event, learn to listen and listen to learn, is something I reflect on and attempt to integrate into my daily practice as a leader and as an individual. Everyone has a story to share that has shaped who they are and how they interact with the world. Honouring these stories, especially as we become more aware of the impact of one's past on present-day circumstances, will inevitably lead to better care for patients.

The importance of listening is one of the core themes in the College's new practice standard, *Indigenous Cultural Safety, Cultural Humility, and Anti-racism*, which was developed collaboratively with the BC College of Nurses and Midwives and approved by the Board in February.

The practice standard responds to the findings and recommendations in Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's report, *In Plain Sight*, by setting clear expectations and principles for registrants to follow when caring for Indigenous patients. Providing culturally safe care to Indigenous patients is an expected competency of all registrants.

During the development phase, the two colleges engaged in an extensive 18-month consultation with Indigenous patients, registrants, the FNHA, and other health partners. We are especially grateful to the Indigenous advisors who guided us in this work: aḿmaḗot (Davis McKenzie) of Tla'amin Nation, k'unem'n (Joe Gallagher) of Tla'amin Nation, Tlesla II (Dr. Evan Adams) and Sulksun (Shane Pointe) of Musqueam Nation; and to our Indigenous registrants who took the time to participate in a virtual discussion circle to share their perspectives on early drafts of the practice standard.

We have learned so much from you.

Heidi M. Oetter, MD
Registrar and CEO

Other resources

To accompany the practice standard, the College has published [learning resources](#) for registrants providing more context for all six of the core concepts, including a series of videos, which will be available in early summer.

- [What to expect](#) – a patient guide
- [Frequently asked questions](#)

Learn more about the development of the practice standard [here](#).

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