

Registrar's message: making the complaints process more accessible and culturally safe for Indigenous patients



In my last message to you here, I had promised to share more details about the [review of our formal complaints process](#) to make it more culturally sensitive and accessible for Indigenous Peoples. This multi-year review was conducted by the Castlemain Group, which specializes in research, engagement and collaboration with Indigenous people, communities and organizations. The key themes, which Castlemain identified as current gaps in the College's complaints process are:

- accessibility
- cultural safety
- formal versus soft complaints
- communication
- resolution and accountability
- self-identification and data collection

Castlemain has provided us with concrete recommendations to address these key themes, which have been fully endorsed by the Board. The College is currently reviewing the recommendations at an operational level and developing an implementation plan. The recommendations and full report are [available on the College website](#) and we are committed to reporting on our progress towards the recommendations as part of our implementation plan.

While it will take time and effort to revamp our complaints process, it is a necessary endeavour as the College continues to address the harmful impacts of racism towards Indigenous patients in the health system. Since signing the [Declaration of Commitment – Cultural Safety and Humility in the Regulation of Health Professionals](#) with the First Nations Health Authority in 2017, the College has worked with health partners to create a climate for change, to make the system more accessible and safer for Indigenous patients, and to review its own regulatory processes through a lens of cultural safety and humility with a goal of dismantling existing barriers.

The next steps we take in implementing the recommendations from the complaints review are an important part of the process that will take us closer to achieving those goals.

Cultural safety and humility is an ongoing journey and there is much more for us to learn and do. As such, the College will continue to focus on the following priorities:

- engaging in continuous learning, including providing education for staff, board and committee members in cultural safety and humility, unconscious bias, and trauma-informed care;
- continuing to live our new brand to demonstrate our values of accessibility and inclusivity for all British Columbians;
- increasing Indigenous membership on the College Board and committees;
- investing in supports to ensure a safer environment for Indigenous people engaging with the College;
- making our complaints process more accessible and safer for Indigenous people; and

- promoting awareness of the *Indigenous Cultural Safety, Cultural Humility and Anti-racism practice standard* and *learning resources*.

We are grateful for the work done by the the Castlemain Group and would also like to acknowledge our Indigenous advisory panelists, Janene Erickson, Dr. Kate Elliott, Namaste Marsden, Michelle Casavant and Kim Brooks. Finally, we want to thank Indigenous Elders, Sulksun (Shane Pointe) and Bryce Mercredi for their guidance throughout this review.

We acknowledge there are other recommendations that address challenges experienced by Indigenous patients in complaints processes, such as those put forward by the *In Plain Sight* report and Health Quality BC's report, *Sharing Concerns: Principles to Guide the Development of an Indigenous Patient Feedback Process*. We have reviewed those recommendations as part of the broader systemic context and will take them into consideration as we determine our next steps.

We are committed to dismantling the racism that is built into our colonial health-care system, and humbly look forward to having the review of our complaints process and the experiences that many shared with us guide this stage of our journey.

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.