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Racism in Health Care: An Apology to Indigenous People and a Pledge to Be Anti-Racist

Indigenous people (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) have waited far too long for their legal rights to be recognized. And they have waited too long for health-system leaders to dismantle the racism that was built into our colonial health-care system—racism that continues to cause harm to this day.

As the leaders of the four largest health regulatory colleges in British Columbia, we offer our apology to the Indigenous people and communities who have experienced racism while engaging with us and with the health professionals we regulate.

As regulators, we govern more than 90,000 professionals who provide the foundational health services that British Columbians rely on, including physicians and surgeons, nurses, midwives, dentists, and pharmacists.

Our job is to protect patients and the public by ensuring that the professionals we regulate provide ethical, safe, quality care. However, Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's report, [In Plain Sight](#), provided evidence of widespread fear and mistrust of the health-care system due to the prevalence of stereotypes, discrimination, racism and abuse experienced by Indigenous people. The report's findings illustrated how our current health-care system continues to limit access to medical treatment and negatively affects the health and wellness of Indigenous people—and that Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately impacted.

We must take specific actions, as individual leaders, within our organizations and as partners in the wider health system.

Our pledge now is to become anti-racist and to support the health professionals we regulate to do the same.

We will take this journey together, knowing that recognizing racism in ourselves and others will not be comfortable or easy. We will be guided by Indigenous elders and professionals, the recommendations contained in the *In Plain Sight* report, and by the legal and ethical requirements to provide respect, dignity and equitable health care for the Indigenous people of this province.

It is only through consistent concrete action to uphold Indigenous rights and eliminate racism within the health-care system that we can begin to slowly earn the trust of Indigenous people.

What you can expect from us

As leaders, we will:

- Apologize to Indigenous people for the harms suffered in a racist health-care system, of which we are a part
- Be anti-racist leaders who will foster a speak-up culture, where stereotypes, discrimination and racism are called out and eliminated
- Establish clear accountabilities for cultural safety and humility within our leadership teams

As health regulatory colleges, we will:

- Draw on Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and professionals to guide our work
- Provide education and develop practice standards to ensure Indigenous people receive culturally safe health care
- Invest in supports and remove barriers to ensure that Indigenous people do not feel isolated or unsafe when filing a complaint
- Ensure board, staff, and committee members are trained in cultural safety and humility, anti-racism, unconscious bias, and, as appropriate, trauma-informed care
- Broaden Indigenous participation on our boards and committees and staff teams
- Promote anti-racism and Indigenous cultural safety and humility as core competencies for current and future health-care providers

As part of the health-care system, we will:

- Build partnerships with Indigenous-led organizations to promote system change and dismantle racism
- Work with our fellow provincial health regulators to implement the recommendations of the *In Plain Sight* report
- Identify and support changes in legislation and bylaws to deconstruct colonialism, value Indigenous ways of knowing, and eliminate harm for Indigenous people

Cynthia Johansen
Registrar and Chief Executive Officer

British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives

Regulatory college for BC's 63,000 licensed practical nurses, registered midwives, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and registered psychiatric nurses

Dr. Chris Hacker
Registrar and Chief Executive Officer

College of Dental Surgeons of British Columbia

Regulatory college for BC's 10,000 certified dental assistants, dental therapists, and dentists

Bob Nakagawa
Registrar and Chief Executive Officer

College of Pharmacists of British Columbia

Regulatory college for BC's 9,000 pharmacists and pharmacy technicians

Dr. Heidi Oetter
Registrar and Chief Executive Officer

College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia

Regulatory college for BC's 14,000 physicians and surgeons