

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa
19 June 2017 / 19 juin 2017**

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Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2017-OPH-CP-0003

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC HEALTH SUPPORT FOR ACTIONS THAT PROMOTE
RECONCILIATION AND ADVANCE INDIGENOUS HEALTH EQUITY:
UPDATE**

**OBJET: APPUI DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE CONCERNANT LES MESURES VISANT
À FAVORISER LA RÉCONCILIATION ET L'ÉQUITÉ EN SANTÉ POUR
LES AUTOCHTONES : MISE À JOUR**

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit receive this report for information.

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Health with an update on Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) commitment to, and support for, public health actions that promote reconciliation and advance Indigenous health equity

In November 2016, the Board of Health received a report on the "[*Health Inequities in Ottawa: Implications for Action by Ottawa Public Health*](#)".ⁱ This report highlighted OPH's commitment to address Indigenous health inequities through ongoing collaboration with Indigenous health service providers and the community. In response to a request from Indigenous community partners, priorities for a focus on Indigenous health in the City have been solicited from elders, youth, community members and Indigenous health service providers. There is interest in an alliance of designated leaders from several local Indigenous agencies and Ottawa-based health service organizations to act, in a coordinated way, on the priorities identified, with a strategy that continues to be responsive to the identified health and wellness priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples in Ottawa.

Discussions surrounding this initiative corresponded with the December 2015 release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) final [*report*](#)ⁱⁱ on Canada's Indian Residential Schools. According to the Commission, reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining respectful and reciprocal relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, "a process that will only occur once there is an awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour."ⁱⁱⁱ In order to redress the legacy of Residential Schools and advance reconciliation, the TRC issued 94 calls to action.^{iv}

In response to these calls to action, there have been several key initiatives at various levels of government that are intended to build momentum towards reconciliation. For example, Canada's official support of the [*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*](#)^v (UNDRIP); Ontario's commitment to reconciliation as stated in [*The Journey Together*](#)^{vi}, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' pledges in their [*Pathways to Reconciliation*](#)^{vii} report.

Responding to the TRC calls to action is consistent with public health practice as they aim to address the root causes of Indigenous health and social inequities, including by addressing societal attitudes and systemic racism. Expectations for collective public health action related to reconciliation is reinforced in Ontario's revised [*Standards for Public Health Programs and Services: Consultation Document*](#), which recognizes that "relationships between boards of health and Indigenous communities and organizations

need to come from a place of trust, mutual respect, understanding, and reciprocity,^{”viii} and that there is a responsibility to ensure these relationships are fostered in a culturally safe and meaningful way. Similarly, various public health associations are advocating for collective responses to the TRC Calls to Action (e.g. the Association of Local Public Health Agencies and the Urban Public Health Network).

Action to promote reconciliation is also supported in [The Canadian Reconciliation Landscape](#),^{ix} a 2017 report on a national public opinion survey that measured the perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians on key aspects of reconciliation. The survey results demonstrate general agreement among both samples that the current relationship between these groups is much more negative than positive – i.e. there is a shared perception of discrimination and racism, negative stereotypes, social and economic disparities, an absence of dialogue, and mutual mistrust. Both samples are motivated to engage in personal actions to support reconciliation (e.g. time to reflect on perceptions and attitudes; participate in educational events; read relevant reconciliation material including UNDRIP and the TRC’s Calls to Action). According to this report, “while we have an incredible window of opportunity to create lasting change, maintaining the momentum will require a shared commitment by all peoples.”^x

DISCUSSION

Work to Date

OPH recognizes the impact and legacy of the Residential School System on the health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) peoples and has a long-standing organizational commitment to strategic partnerships that advance Indigenous health equity and support for professional development activities that enhance awareness and understanding of the historical context, local diversity, and contemporary lived experience of Indigenous community members.

In June 2017, OPH recommended that representatives at the alPHa conference vote in support of a proposed resolution related to the TRC Calls to Action. Additional examples of OPH actions that have, and continue to promote reconciliation, include:

- Creation of the OPH FNIM Outreach Network in 2012, an ongoing, inter-disciplinary community of practice designed to promote Indigenous cultural competence, cultural safety and cultural humility (e.g. through knowledge exchanges between OPH employees and Indigenous partners);

- Active membership on the City's Aboriginal Working Committee (AWC) and support for an inter-sectoral action plan based on a results-based accountability framework;
- Collaboration with Indigenous partners on several tailored initiatives including: Pregnancy and Parenting Circles; healthy eating/active living activities; resource adaptation; and more recently, the October 2016 launch of a full service, culturally safe [dental health clinic](#) located at the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health with preventative dental services extended into other community locations;
- Actions related to the development of a potential Indigenous Health Strategy for Ottawa – i.e. the completion of a community engagement process in 2016 involving FNIM Elders, youth and 12 Indigenous and non-Indigenous health service partners; the sharing of key findings took place at the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition Community Forum in February 2017 [Appendix 1].
- Participation in consultations related to the development of Ontario's Urban Indigenous Action Plan and the Champlain LHIN's Indigenous Health Equity and Wellness Framework;
- OPH communications (e.g. e-mails, Synergy articles) and an All-Staff meeting with FNIM Elders and partners to enhance understanding of individual/collective public health roles and resources to promote reconciliation and cultural safety;
- Co-facilitation of a workshop with other public health units and Indigenous partners at The Ontario Public Health Conference (2017) on "*Honouring the Two Row Wampum: Advancing Health Equity & Reconciliation through Cultural Safety in Public Health Practice*";
- Ongoing support for OPH employees to participate in multiple Indigenous Cultural Safety Training (ICST) learning opportunities such as: the City of Ottawa's Aboriginal Awareness Day activities; Ontario's online ICST; Wabano's 'Culture as Treatment' symposiums'; and an inter-sectoral Indigenous Agency Tour in June 2016 that included participation by three (3) Board of Health members; and
- Public acknowledgement of Algonquin territory and honouring of FNIM peoples, their ancestors, Elders and contributions to Canada, is increasingly taking place at public events.

These actions are intended to have a positive impact on reconciliation and Indigenous health outcomes, and to complement/advance the mandate of the Champlain LHIN's [Indigenous Health Circle Forum](#) (IHCF), the [Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition](#) (OAC), and the City's [Aboriginal Working Committee](#) (AWC) whose priority it is to seek Council approval for a Reconciliation Plan for Ottawa.

Next Steps

Currently, several reconciliation-related OPH initiatives are in progress. These include engaging Indigenous partners in the development/approval of:

- An OPH-specific Reconcili-ACTION Plan to formally respond to the health-related TRC Calls to Action;
- Cultural Guidelines for Engaging First Nations, Inuit and Métis Elders;
- Standardized Indigenous Cultural Safety Training activities for OPH employees;
- Guidelines to encourage the systematic recognition and respect for Algonquin territory and FNIM peoples at public meetings/events; and the
- Planning of the inaugural meeting of the Ottawa Indigenous Health Strategy Alliance.

Further input will be sought from Indigenous community members and elders as these products are developed.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

No public consultation was undertaken in preparing this information report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving this report for information.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

DISPOSITION

The Board of Health to receive this report for information purposes.

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- ⁱ Ottawa Public Health. (2016). *Health Inequities in Ottawa: Implications for Action by Ottawa Public Health*. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- ⁱⁱ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. [TRC]. (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf
- ⁱⁱⁱ TRC. (2015). *What we have learned: Principles of truth and reconciliation*. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Principles%20of%20Truth%20and%20Reconciliation.pdf>
- ^{iv} TRC. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to action*. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- ^v United Nations. (2008). *United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf
- ^{vi} Government of Ontario. (2016). *The journey together: Ontario's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples*. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from https://files.ontario.ca/trc_report_web_mar17_en_1.pdf
- ^{vii} Federation of Canadian Municipalities. (2016). *Pathways to reconciliation: Cities respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action*. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from http://www.fcm.ca/Documents/tools/BCMC/Pathways_to_reconciliation_EN.pdf
- ^{viii} Ontario Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care. (2017). *Standards for public health programs and services: Consultation document*. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from <http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/Portals/15/Documents/Council/Attachments/PHES%202017-04%20ATT%201%20Standards%20for%20Public%20Health%20Programs%20and%20Services%20Consultation%20Document.pdf>
- ^{ix} Reconciliation Canada. (2017). *The Canadian reconciliation landscape*. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from http://reconciliationcanada.ca/staging/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NationalNarrativeReport-ReconciliationCanada-ReleasedMay2017_2.pdf
- ^x IBID.