



RNAO

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers
autorisés de l'Ontario

Indigenous health

Will you work to ensure that Ontario continues to implement recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada?

Do you support government partnering with Indigenous nations to address urgent health and social challenges such as the ongoing crisis of children and youth suicide?

After a six-year process of hearing from more than 6,750 survivors of residential schools,¹ the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released 94 calls to action in June 2015.^{2 3} On August 24, 2015, the Chiefs of Ontario⁴ and the Government of Ontario⁵ formally signed a historic political accord⁶ to guide the government-to-government relationship between First Nations and the province. Ontario's First Nations Health Action Plan was announced with funding on May 25, 2016 to address health inequities and improve access to services, including life promotion and crisis support.^{7 8} On May 30, 2016, the provincial government, with the support of the opposition parties, made a formal apology for the past and ongoing harm that generations of systemic abuse has caused to Indigenous communities, families, and individuals.⁹ At that time, the province released Ontario's response to the TRC, *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous People*.¹⁰

The legacy of intergenerational trauma from the residential school system, colonialism, and racism has resulted in Indigenous people experiencing tremendous inequities in health and social outcomes. One alarming example is that suicide rates are five to seven times higher for First Nations youth compared with non-Indigenous youth.¹¹ In February 2016, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Territory and the Sioux Lookout region declared a health and public health emergency.^{12 13 14} NAN reports there have been 562 suicides in their territories (49 communities in northern Ontario) since 1986.¹⁵ Of those lives lost since 1986, 87 were of children between the ages of 10 to 14 years, according to NAN's data.¹⁶

RNAO's INDIGENOUS HEALTH ASKS

RNAO is committed to advocating for and supporting Indigenous leadership in health in the spirit of reconciliation and urges:

- Ongoing commitment and action from all levels of government to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada;
- Action on the health and social challenges identified by Indigenous nations, such as the ongoing crisis of children and youth suicide.
- Encourage and support Indigenous people's rights to self governance and self determination.

References:

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- ¹⁶ Troian, Data reveals close to 600 suicides in northern Ontario since the mid-1980's.