



CALTC POSITION STATEMENT ON LTC HOMES AND RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Canadians have a growing awareness of the historical bias and racism that Indigenous people have experienced. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its report in 2015, with ninety-four calls to action under specific themes that must be undertaken to initiate the journey of reconciliation and healing, nation to nation. As the Canadian public continues to learn about the historical experiences of Indigenous people, there is a sense of grief that is now part of our collective heritage. This has also left us to consider the current state of healthcare and specifically long term care and our responsibilities towards truth and reconciliation for the future.

With this knowledge comes responsibility for governments, citizens, organizations, and sectors to examine our own perspectives and areas of influence and consider our journey forward in reconciliation. The calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Report have been specifically considered in the development of this position statement and the action that long term care homes can take.

Position Statement of the Canadian Association for Long Term Care

The Canadian Association for Long Term Care acknowledges reconciliation between long term care homes and Indigenous people as critical to ensuring that health inequalities, bias, racism and discrimination are addressed. This requires the development of an inclusive culture that supports a safe place for Indigenous people to live as a resident in the home with respect and support for their cultural and spiritual needs, or for an Indigenous person to be employed as a staff member in the home. It is further recognized that reconciliation is a journey that is not tied to objectives being met within a specific timeframe, but rather based on relationship building that examines truths and fosters trust and understanding over time, leading to true reconciliation.

To achieve this, long term care homes need to be intentional in moving forward on a journey of reconciliation, that include the following pillars:

1. **Education and Engagement:** Provide opportunities for staff and board education, engagement of all residents and families, and relationship building with Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers.

2. **Organizational Cultural Competency:** A safe environment for care and quality of life is created in the home that is supported at the governance level, and those in leadership throughout the home. Boards and executive leadership in homes need to build trust to establish respectful relations that grow into partnerships and shared celebrations.
3. **Recognition and Support:** There is support for Indigenous cultural values of a resident that offers a place for ceremony, offers traditional foods, encourages connections with community, language, and the land. Indigenous representation in the long-term care workforce supports equality and representation.
4. **Sustaining Partnership:** Recognize that reconciliation with Indigenous people is a journey that requires on-going relationship development and knowledge building through engagement, and collaboration that is on-going.

Long term care homes are often not available to Indigenous people in their community, resulting in the Indigenous person moving to a long-term care home outside of their community and culture. In the provision of person-centered care, the historical experiences of being moved to live outside of their own culture and community requires consideration of unique care needs that may require a trauma informed approach. Long Term Care Homes who make a commitment to address Indigenous health inequalities, can consider the following:



Home policies: Policies of the home can be reviewed to consider through the lens of Indigenous health inequality and opportunities to introduce flexibility that enable cultural practices, such as spiritual ceremony and healing practices. As part of an engagement and relationship building plan, this work can be done with Indigenous partners to explore any issues of racism and cultural safety concerns that may not have been previously identified or considered.

Workforce representation: Indigenous representation within the home's workforce addresses the call to action to increase the number of Indigenous people working in health care related fields, but also important for Indigenous residents to have staff members they share culture with. Establishing data measures that captures a homes' efforts and success in recruiting Indigenous staff can be an important measure for homes to consider their engagement efforts to drive improvements. Job descriptions can also be considered to include cultural competency training, experience working with Indigenous people and lived experience. Staff should be supported to speak up on issues of racism and discrimination, and a process established that outlines options for remediation or other remedy as required.

Cultural care: It is important to support an Indigenous resident's connection to their community and the land. This includes accommodating culturally relevant food, artwork, and visiting Elders. This can also include providing a sacred space that is outdoors or indoors where traditional spirituality and healing practices can be conducted. The consideration of language, including potential language barriers for residents, is necessary to ensure that residents feel supported and heard in their long-term care journey.

Leadership considerations: As homes begin a reconciliation journey, the homes non-Indigenous residents and families, staff and medical director should be included in the reconciliation journey. Key considerations to support this work can include data regarding the Indigenous resident quality of life and care, cultural competency training, and the development of an Indigenous advisory circle through partnering or working directly with Indigenous communities whose members utilize the home. This needs to be supported by a Board of Directors and Senior Leadership with targeted responsibility to provide policy support and change management as needed, reporting back on the implementation and evaluation of reconciliation efforts.

Where to Start

As a place to start in what will be an on-going journey, it is essential to begin with governance engagement and a motion that makes a commitment to truth and reconciliation. This should be added to the home's strategic goals, and a plan for staff education initiated. Creating a forum for relationship building with Indigenous leaders, such as an advisory council, will be instrumental in exploring issues of racism and bias that may be present in policy. Supporting the development of a designated space, where spiritual ceremony can be conducted supports cultural safety. These actions can act as the beginning steps for homes to begin the journey of reconciliation.

As homes develop a culture that prioritizes cultural safety for all, that includes a zero-tolerance approach to racism and discrimination, it is reflected in the homes strategic plan, and supported with educational resources. This allows trust to develop and can be further developed through a standing advisory committee that further supports self-determination in the care of Elders in the home. Engaging all stakeholders in this journey, such as residents and families, staff and unions is essential to sustain support.

Homes beginning this journey are encouraged to utilize the various resources that have been developed to support reconciliation, cultural safety and humility, and address racism.



References:

- [National Community Engagement in Long Term Care and Continuing Care Report](#). May 9th, 2023. ONWAA.
- [A Journey We Walk Together-Strengthening Indigenous Cultural Competency in Health Organizations](#). Healthcare Excellence Canada
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act](#). 2021, Canadian Government.
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; Calls to Action](#). 2015
- [Accessing Indigenous Long Term Care](#). *Canadian Journal of Bioethics* (vol 4, number 1). 2021. Danielle Giannas, Andria Bianchi, Leonard Benoit and Kevin Rodrigues.
- [National Day for Truth & Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day](#). Article. Extendicare, 2021.
- [Ne likaanigaan Toolkit "All Our Relations Toolkit"- Guidance for Creating Safer Environments for Indigenous People](#).
- News Release. [HANS announces Partnership with Indigenous Treaty Partners](#). 2022.
- [Bringing Reconciliation to Healthcare in Canada- Wise Practices for Healthcare Leaders](#). HealthCareCan. 2018.
- [First Nations, Metis and Inuit Cultural Safety and Humility](#). HSO Standards. 2021.

Images used to highlight the Indigenous culture in Canada:

- Powwow, Smiths Falls, Ontario
- Inukshuk, Baffin Island, Nunavut
- Wild Plains Bison, Elk Island National Park, Alberta