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We need to address racism directed at Indigenous people as a national health crisis

It's time to recognize and treat racism directed at Indigenous people as a health crisis, says Dr. Margo Greenwood, Academic Leader for the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health. [*In Plain Sight*](#) by Dr. Mary-Ellen Turpel-Lafond, released this week by the BC government, highlights discrimination as a painful reality for both Indigenous people seeking health care and Indigenous health care workers in British Columbia. Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately impacted.

"This is a national issue. Our health systems reflect our society at large," Greenwood says. "Society continues to perpetuate racism against Indigenous peoples. So it should be no surprise that systemic racism is pervasive in health care systems across this country. The number of disturbing incidents in BC documented in this report is evidence of this. As is the shameful treatment of Joyce Echequan in a Quebec hospital."

Governments and health care organizations are urged to immediately support and implement the report's 24 recommendations. Turpel-Lafond anchors her recommendations in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The UNDRIP clearly asserts the right of Indigenous people to health care free of discrimination. Her report also reinforces Truth And Reconciliation Commission Calls To Action and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls For Justice. *In Plain Sight* recommends the federal government adopt Indigenous-specific health legislation, including cultural safety and anti-racism as principles of Canada's health care system. Indigenous right to health must be affirmed and Indigenous authority over our health services must be facilitated.

"We need to build and support respectful relationships between all people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The work that we do today is going to impact the lives of generations to come. It is for them that we have to do better," Greenwood emphasizes.

"This is a wake-up call for all Canadians. We must educate ourselves about First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and Canada's colonial history. This is not going to be easy. As organizations and individuals we must reckon today with the injustices of the past. We do not want to carry these injustices into the future. We know now the outcomes of systemic racism. Now is the time for action. We need our health care system to be accountable to ensure a healthier and more equitable society for all."

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The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH) is a national Indigenous organization established in 2005 by the Government of Canada and funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada to support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis public health renewal and health equity through knowledge translation and exchange. The University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George, BC, hosts the NCCIH.



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- *Health Humanities and Unsettling Colonial Medicine*  
[https://www.nccih.ca/495/Webinar\\_Health\\_Humanities\\_and\\_Unsettling\\_Colonial\\_Medicine.nccih?id=251](https://www.nccih.ca/495/Webinar_Health_Humanities_and_Unsettling_Colonial_Medicine.nccih?id=251)
- *What's new is really old: Trauma informed health practices through an understanding of historic trauma*  
[https://www.nccih.ca/495/Webinar\\_What\\_s\\_new\\_is\\_really\\_old\\_Trauma\\_informed\\_health\\_practices\\_through\\_an\\_understanding\\_of\\_historic\\_trauma.nccih?id=205](https://www.nccih.ca/495/Webinar_What_s_new_is_really_old_Trauma_informed_health_practices_through_an_understanding_of_historic_trauma.nccih?id=205)
- *Cultural safety for Indigenous Peoples: A determinant of health*  
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### Reports and Fact Sheets

- *Review of Core competencies for Public health: An Aboriginal Public Health Perspective*  
[https://www.nccih.ca/495/Review\\_of\\_Core\\_Competerencies\\_for\\_Public\\_Health\\_An\\_Aboriginal\\_Public\\_Health\\_Perspective.nccih?id=145](https://www.nccih.ca/495/Review_of_Core_Competerencies_for_Public_Health_An_Aboriginal_Public_Health_Perspective.nccih?id=145)
- Anti-Indigenous Racism fact sheet series
  - [https://www.nccih.ca/495/Indigenous\\_experiences\\_with\\_racism\\_and\\_its\\_impacts.nccih?id=131](https://www.nccih.ca/495/Indigenous_experiences_with_racism_and_its_impacts.nccih?id=131)
  - [https://www.nccih.ca/495/Policies\\_programs\\_and\\_strategies\\_to\\_address\\_anti-Indigenous\\_racism\\_A\\_Canadian\\_perspective.nccih?id=132](https://www.nccih.ca/495/Policies_programs_and_strategies_to_address_anti-Indigenous_racism_A_Canadian_perspective.nccih?id=132)
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