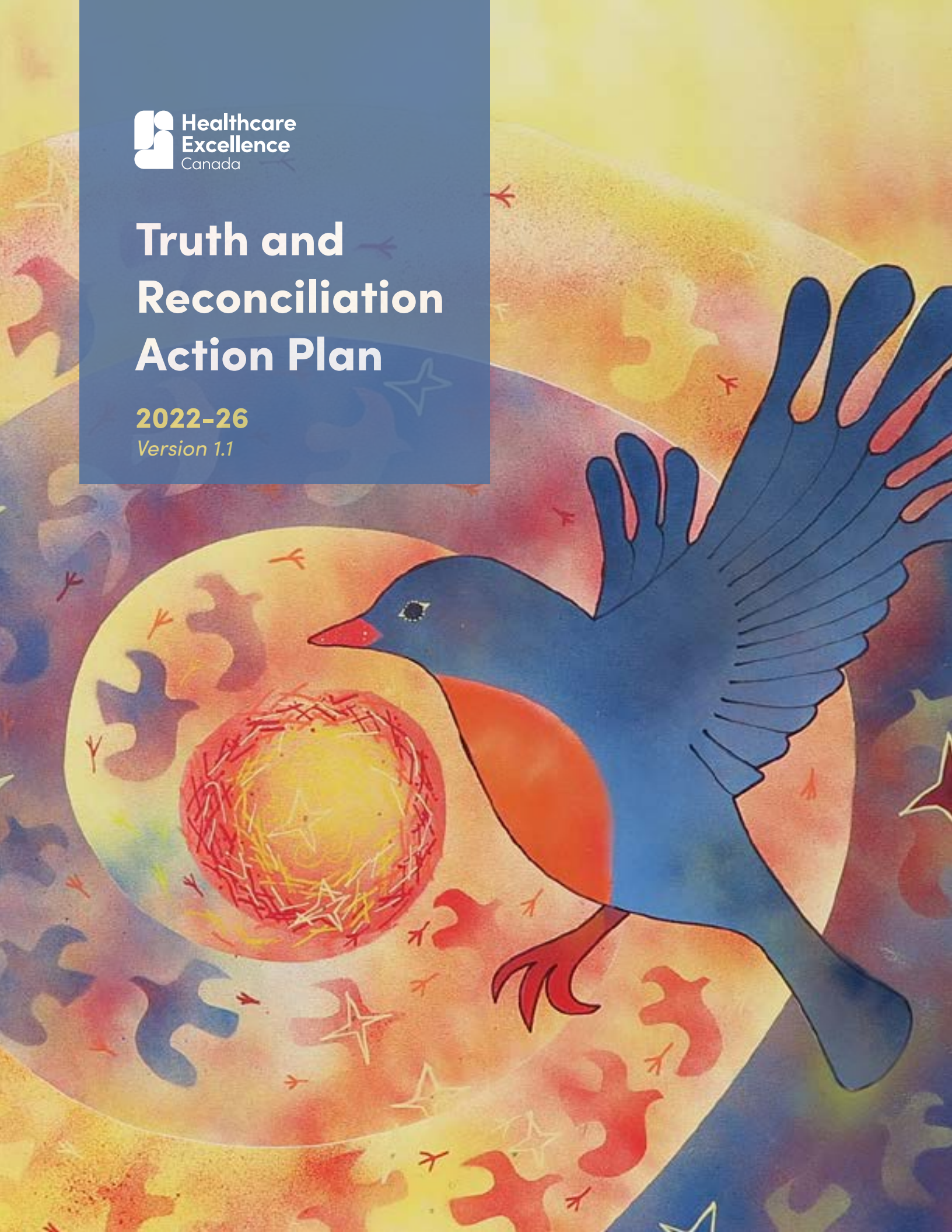




Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan

2022-26

Version 1.1



Cover artwork by

Simon Brascoupe

Anishinabeg/Haudenosaunee – Bear Clan

Simon is a member of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, Maniwaki, Quebec living in Algonquin territory in Ottawa. He has completed public art including an Algonquin Birch Bark Basket sculpture at Abinan Place based on Algonquin Elders collaborative voices. He completed large murals for the Heart Institute, Ottawa and at Ojigkwanong *Indigenous Student Centre*, Carleton University. He recently completed two large public artworks for the Pimisi Station: Mamawi – Together paddle installation painted by 100 Algonquin artists and Algonquin moose. His artistic vision is to have a significant presence in public art and institutions for Algonquin and Indigenous art and culture.

Simon's artistic vision is to communicate traditional teachings and values through the continuity of imagery and narrative. Simon's work has been exhibited in the United States, Canada, Europe, China, Japan and Cuba. He is represented in the collections at the Canadian Museum of History and the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. and major corporate and private collections. He is presently in an exhibit at the National Gallery of Canada's Canadian and Indigenous Art exhibition.

Simon Brascoupe's work reflects his respect for the Algonquin Territory and land. From his perspective, animals teach humans how to see the world through their eyes and actions. For example, Simon's father taught him that the bear, when it's wounded will use the sap from a pine or cedar tree as medicine. An Algonquin teaching is that even though the bear is large it lives lightly on the land. Aboriginal People traditionally have learned by listening and learning from the animal world and nature for their profound insight and knowledge. The ability to observe is central to the artist's vision of living in harmony with nature.

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About Healthcare Excellence Canada

Healthcare Excellence Canada (HEC) works with partners to spread innovation, build capability, and catalyze policy change so that everyone in Canada has safe and high-quality healthcare. Through collaboration with patients, caregivers and people working in healthcare, we turn proven innovations into lasting improvements in all dimensions of healthcare excellence. Launched in 2021, HEC brings together the Canadian Patient Safety Institute and Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement. HEC is an independent, not-for-profit charity funded primarily by Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

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Healthcare Excellence Canada honours the traditional territories upon which our staff and partners live, work and play. We recognize that the stewardship of the original inhabitants of these territories provides for the standard of living that we enjoy today. [Learn more](#)

“... Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal¹ and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.”

**— Truth and Reconciliation
Commission of Canada, 2015**

¹A note on terminology: The term 'Aboriginal' has historically been used to refer to First Nations, Inuit and Métis collectively, as referenced in Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982. In this document, 'Aboriginal' is used only when referencing legislation or when directly quoting publications or individuals.

Introduction

In 2021, Healthcare Excellence Canada (HEC) launched its strategy to help get us closer to where we want to be: a future where everyone in Canada has safe and high-quality healthcare. As part of our strategy, we developed quality and safety perspectives to guide the development and implementation of HEC's work. The quality and safety perspectives of *culturally safe and equitable care* and *First Nations, Inuit and Métis priorities* also guide HEC in our continued journey towards reconciliation. This requires us to do the work internally to build capacity and ensure HEC's policies, processes and ways of working support truth and reconciliation. HEC has dedicated resources, including expertise and time, for everyone in the organization to meaningfully embark on this journey together.

This Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan (2022-2026) is intended to support HEC along our journey to create and maintain a supportive and culturally safe workplace, where First Nations, Inuit and Métis perspectives are sought, valued and respected. This action plan was developed by and for staff, leadership and the Board of Directors at HEC. Throughout the plan, the terms "we," "us" and "our" are used to refer to the organization of HEC, which includes all three groups: staff, leadership and the Board.

This plan is not intended to be a checklist or a set of deliverables, but rather a framework to guide HEC along its path of reconciliation. As we continue along our journey, we commit to holding ourselves accountable to the goals and actions outlined in this plan, and to adapting and adjusting where appropriate. We will create an annual workplan that identifies which actions outlined in this plan will be prioritized over the course of the year. We will also evaluate our progress annually to ensure the work being done moves HEC forward, and to prioritize actions for the upcoming year.



Version 1.1:

This report was last updated in May 2024. We made minor updates to ensure consistency with our updated style guide and to reflect changes to the organizational structure, team names and significant staffing updates. These changes were made in the spirit of ensuring accuracy and transparency for those accessing this Action Plan.

Reconciliation requires the work of all people living in Canada to learn and change in many ways, including in relation to policies and programs, education, how we do business, how we think and the way we talk to, and about, each other. The summary report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) states that reconciliation calls for action at many different levels, including personal action, group action, community action, government action and national action. The TRC Calls to Action are tools that guide our efforts at every level. At HEC, we recognize our responsibility to respond to the TRC Calls to Action and consider this work to contribute to the following:

#18 “We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to acknowledge that the current state of Aboriginal health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian government policies, including residential schools, and to recognize and implement the health-care rights of Aboriginal people as identified in international law, constitutional law, and under the Treaties.”

As an independent, not-for-profit charity funded primarily by Health Canada, HEC has a role to play in supporting recognition, across healthcare systems, of the ongoing impact of colonization on the health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis, as well as the need to implement their healthcare rights.

#92 “We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources.

This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.
- ii. Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.
- iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.”

HEC recognizes the need to build internal capacity to meaningfully engage with First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Capacity building includes learning and development for HEC staff, leadership and Board members, as well as a review of the policies, processes and structures outlined in this Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.

Our Inspiration

Story of Robins' Nest

A few spring seasons ago a couple of robins felt that the railing on the small balcony attached to the loft of my house was a good, safe place to build their nest. They brought straw, clay, and twigs from the forest to the area where the railing married with the gable of the roof. A ready-made shelter where the nest would be dry and protected from the harshest winds. Both male and female birds were dedicated to making sure the home they constructed for their family was as perfect as they could possibly make it.

In time, eggs were laid and eventually hatched. The robins had four mouths to feed. Perfect parents that they are, the robins carried food to their little ones many times over the course of the day. The chicks grew strong, the lessons taught to them by the spirit of the land and by their parents enabled them to leave the nest, to go into the world as healthy confident birds.

The nest which had served the robins so well years ago has since fallen into ruin. The straw which was once firmly attached to the nest by clay is falling free. Twigs lay nearby. The circle of the nest is no longer complete. The clay in one area of the circle has crumbled. The state of the nest as it is now comparable to the state today of Indigenous culture and identity. The story of the robin and how good life was for them can be used as an analogy to describe how the lives of the First Nations were before Europeans arrived on



our shores. The nest needs to be restored to the grandness it knew in the past, where traditional teachings and spiritual beliefs occurred, bringing emotional wellness to the Peoples. Where the young grew to become strong and confident in all things connected to their identities. Reconciliation means working together, the Indigenous Peoples, the settler communities, all Canadians, vowing to restore what was stolen from Canada's original inhabitants. The circle can be repaired!

Albert Dumont ©

Used with permission

Albert Dumont

Albert Dumont (“South Wind”) is a Poet, Storyteller, Speaker and Algonquin Traditional Teacher born in traditional Algonquin territory (Kitigan Zibi).

Albert has published six books of poetry and short stories and two children’s books, written in three languages. He writes to encourage healing; using the power of words for healing through poetry and storytelling; through words reflecting the wisdom of the forest, of the rivers and lakes, of the birds, animals, and fish and of Elders and of children. Albert is currently the English Poet Laureate for Ottawa, and his poetry is featured in several organizations including the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health and the Native Veterans Association.

Albert has worked as an Elder and Spiritual Advisor on various boards and committees, including but not limited to, the Ministry of the Attorney General, Health Canada, Elder Assisted Hearings, Millhaven Institution and Healthcare Excellence Canada. He is also passionate about bringing strength, pride and health back to people recovering from addictions through his own experiences and the healing spirits of his homeland.

Albert is a proud father and grandfather, and has dedicated his life to promoting Indigenous spirituality and healing and to protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly the young.



Message from Leadership

HEC's purpose is to shape a future where everyone in Canada has safe and high-quality healthcare. A goal this big and important can only come to life when many people and organizations work towards it, together.

Our commitment to reconciliation is rooted in the same spirit of togetherness. As stated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 2015 final report, "reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country." Given the historical and contemporary colonial context of Canada, reconciliation is the work of non-Indigenous governments, institutions, organizations and individuals. First Nations, Inuit and Métis have demonstrated leadership in holistic health and wellness, cultural strength, community resilience, respect-based relationships and sovereignty since time immemorial. Guided by this leadership, non-Indigenous people and entities are being called on to clarify how they will support reconciliation. HEC is continuously learning how to do this in a good and respectful way. We recognize that our work includes changing our understanding of the past and present, as well as acknowledging harm. Equally important is the action we take to address racism in the healthcare system and ensure First Nations, Inuit and Métis priorities drive quality and safety improvements.

This Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan reflects HEC's commitment to support cultural safety and humility in the healthcare system and enhance its capacity to meet the needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The plan provides a roadmap for the collective work that we, as HEC staff, leadership and Board members, are called on to undertake so we can live up to these commitments and continue developing our ability to help shape a future where everyone in Canada has safe and high-quality healthcare.

We are incredibly grateful to the First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals and organizations we work alongside for sharing their leadership, wisdom, stories and patience with us and others in Canada who are on this journey of reconciliation. We can and will do better. Together.

Erik Sande
Board Chair
Healthcare Excellence Canada

Jennifer Zelmer
President and CEO
Healthcare Excellence Canada

Our Process

In creating this plan, we began with a review of “Working Towards Reconciliation: Considerations for the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement [CFHI].” In 2021, CFHI and the Canadian Patient Safety Institute came together to form Healthcare Excellence Canada. The initial work by each of these organizations provided the foundation for HEC’s Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.

HEC recognizes that as a non-Indigenous organization we are responsible for the work of reconciliation within our own organization. For that reason, we sought to explore what other non-Indigenous organizations were doing in this regard by completing an environmental scan. We created a plan that we felt was responsive to the TRC Calls to Action and was appropriate for the scope of the work we do as an organization.

Guidance from First Nations, Inuit and Métis regarding health priorities and experiences in the healthcare system was identified through an environmental scan of existing foundational documents (e.g. the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report and Calls to Action) and existing organizational truth and reconciliation plans from a variety of organizations.

HEC engaged with Indigenous Mentor Denise McCuaig,¹ residing in British Columbia, and Spiritual Advisor Albert Dumont from Kitigan Zibi, an Algonquin First Nation, who have both provided ongoing support and guidance across many parts of the organization, including the development of this plan. HEC staff provided feedback through focus groups and surveys, helping determine HEC’s readiness for the work of developing and fostering cultural safety and humility.

In addition, HEC engaged with external key informants to receive feedback and guidance on developing this plan. Key informants included First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations and individuals that have collaborated and/or formally partnered with HEC on other projects. Other key informants included reconciliation leaders within non-Indigenous health organizations developing and implementing their own efforts towards reconciliation.

All of this feedback and guidance supported the creation of HEC’s Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan (a visual overview of our process is included in the appendix). This plan reflects our organizational values and respects our place as a non-Indigenous organization with our main office located on unceded, unsurrendered Algonquin Territory. Given this positioning in place and space, we have a responsibility to respect the guiding principles of the Algonquin People.

Algonquin Principles from the perspective of Algonquin Spiritual Advisor Albert Dumont²

- We recognize that we are People who honour the birth waters of mothers. And appreciate that water is life and connects all things touched by the love of Creator.
- We are taught to be kind, gracious and welcoming.
- We recognize that the ‘circle’ is a place for sharing and healing.
- We build on our identity and purpose through the messages in the stories and legends passed on to us by our ancestors.

1 Version 1.1 update: Métis Elder Denise McCuaig supported HEC from 2018—2023 as an Indigenous Mentor and subsequently as Truth and Reconciliation Coach. In March 2023, she joined the organization as the Executive Director of Healthcare Transformation and Capacity Building.

2 Used with permission from Albert Dumont

- We keep well our spiritual connection to the land.
- We honour 'all our relations' (birds, animals, fish, trees, etc.)
- We spiritually ponder the seasons of life. The springtime of our earth walk, the summer, the autumn and the winter of our years to that we can express proper gratitude for the blessings given us by Creator.

Based on these principles, implementation of this plan will be informed by the following ways of working:

- Take a distinctions-based approach: Recognizing the distinct perspectives and needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis.
- Focus on strengths: Identifying resources, resilience and positive qualities of individuals and communities instead of focusing on weaknesses or limitations.
- Act with humility: Understanding that no person or perspective has any more value than another.
- Create reciprocal relationships: Ensuring there is value for all parties and avoid being transactional.

- Use an anti-racism lens: Identifying and actively opposing racism.

HEC commits to reviewing our progress on this plan at regular intervals to allow us to be responsive to shifting priorities and emerging issues impacting the health and wellness experiences of First Nations, Inuit and Métis related to health and wellness. We believe that everyone in Canada wants and deserves excellence in healthcare. To work towards this goal, we commit to doing our part to rebuild the nest.

Our Actions

In alignment with our 2021-2026 Strategy, HEC will work towards reconciliation through the following actions:



Support commitment and accountability



1. Demonstrate leadership support and commitment to HEC's Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.
2. Create an annual workplan based on our Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan, and evaluate and share progress through annual progress reports.



Learning and development for staff, leadership and the Board



3. Embed truth and reconciliation learning objectives within HEC's Employee Professional Development Plan framework.
4. Continue to offer cultural safety training with check-in support for HEC staff, senior leadership and the Board of Directors.
5. Quarterly education sessions offered to staff and partners supporting HEC's work in the healthcare system.
6. HEC staff and leadership participate in First Nations, Inuit and Métis knowledge-sharing events/conferences.
7. Create an HEC lending library to support learning for both onsite and remote employees.
8. Create opportunities for HEC's Board of Directors to access learning opportunities and supports for self-reflection.

Elements of Reconciliation



Awareness



Acknowledgement



Atonement



Action



Internal processes and policies



9. Review and update all relevant HEC policies and processes to be reflective of First Nations, Inuit and Métis perspectives, data governance (e.g. Ownership, Control, Access and Possession/Ownership, Control, Access and Stewardship/ Inuit Research Principles) and the protection of Traditional Knowledge.
10. Develop relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis businesses and seek to include them in HEC's Vendors of Record list for goods and services.
11. Support the United Nations General Assembly's Call for Action to preserve, revitalize and promote First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages in the work of HEC.



Human resource initiatives



12. Collaborate with HEC's People and Culture team to develop recruitment strategies intended to encourage First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals to join HEC.



13. Develop, deliver and evaluate the truth and reconciliation content in HEC's onboarding process for new employees and determine their training needs in this area.



Build trusting relationships to support meaningful engagement



14. Explore opportunities to develop formal partnerships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations.
15. Develop informal partnerships with regional and local organizations to promote the work of HEC and collaborate to create engagement strategies.
16. Create a communication strategy for knowledge sharing and increase our reach, brand recognition and trust among First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners.
17. Develop and integrate guidance mechanisms into existing HEC program life cycle processes that support staff to include First Nations, Inuit and Métis priorities where appropriate.
18. Create and implement advisory mechanisms with representation from First Nations, Inuit and Métis when planning projects aligned with their priorities.



Coaching



19. Develop, deliver and evaluate truth and reconciliation content in training resources for coaches involved in HEC programming to improve their capacity to support teams to meaningfully engage with First Nations, Inuit and Métis.



20. Review and update the process for recruiting and onboarding coaches to ensure they reflect HEC's values, as well as the quality and safety perspectives of *culturally safe and equitable care* and *First Nations, Inuit and Métis priorities*.
21. Develop relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis coaches to support programs across HEC.



Support capacity development in the system



22. Create knowledge-sharing opportunities between and among First Nations, Inuit Métis and non-Indigenous health system partners.
23. Co-develop and co-design distinctions-based supports for leadership where aligned with the priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis health system leaders.
24. Share resources and learning opportunities with other organizations, including other pan-Canadian health organizations.

Reconciliation is an ongoing journey, not a destination.

The actions outlined in this plan are intended to guide HEC in our journey towards the following goals:

GOAL 1

Enhance the cultural humility and cultural safety of HEC staff and Board members through ongoing opportunities for learning and self-reflection.

GOAL 2

Develop supportive policies, processes and infrastructures to reflect our ongoing commitment to reconciliation.

GOAL 3

Develop relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders and organizations that enable partnerships and guidance that advance cultural safety and humility in (mainstream) health systems.

GOAL 4

Commit to knowledge sharing with our health system partners (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to foster mutual learning, enhance relationships and encourage knowledge exchange.

As a learning organization, HEC recognizes the need to continually learn, evolve and adapt along our journey towards reconciliation. Each year, HEC will develop a workplan which will outline the reconciliation-related actions that we will focus on for that year. At the end of each year, we will review our progress on completing these actions, identify opportunities for improvement and identify key priority areas for action over the next year.

Acknowledgements

HEC would like to recognize the significant contributions of the individuals and organizations who offered their knowledge and experience in the development of our Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan. We are grateful to both staff and key informants for their openness and willingness to share their perspectives with us. This collective document contains the stories and input of many people woven throughout, and will help to strengthen our path forward as an organization.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

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Sam Karami, Project Manager

First Peoples Wellness Circle

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Contributors and their respective titles/roles are listed as per the information available at the time of publication.

Appendix A:

Map of Development and Engagement Process for HEC's Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan

Explored reconciliation plan from the former Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement (Working Towards Reconciliation, 2019) and prior initiatives from CFHI and the former Canadian Patient Safety Institute.

Developed first draft of goals and actions, led by HEC's Northern and Indigenous Health team.

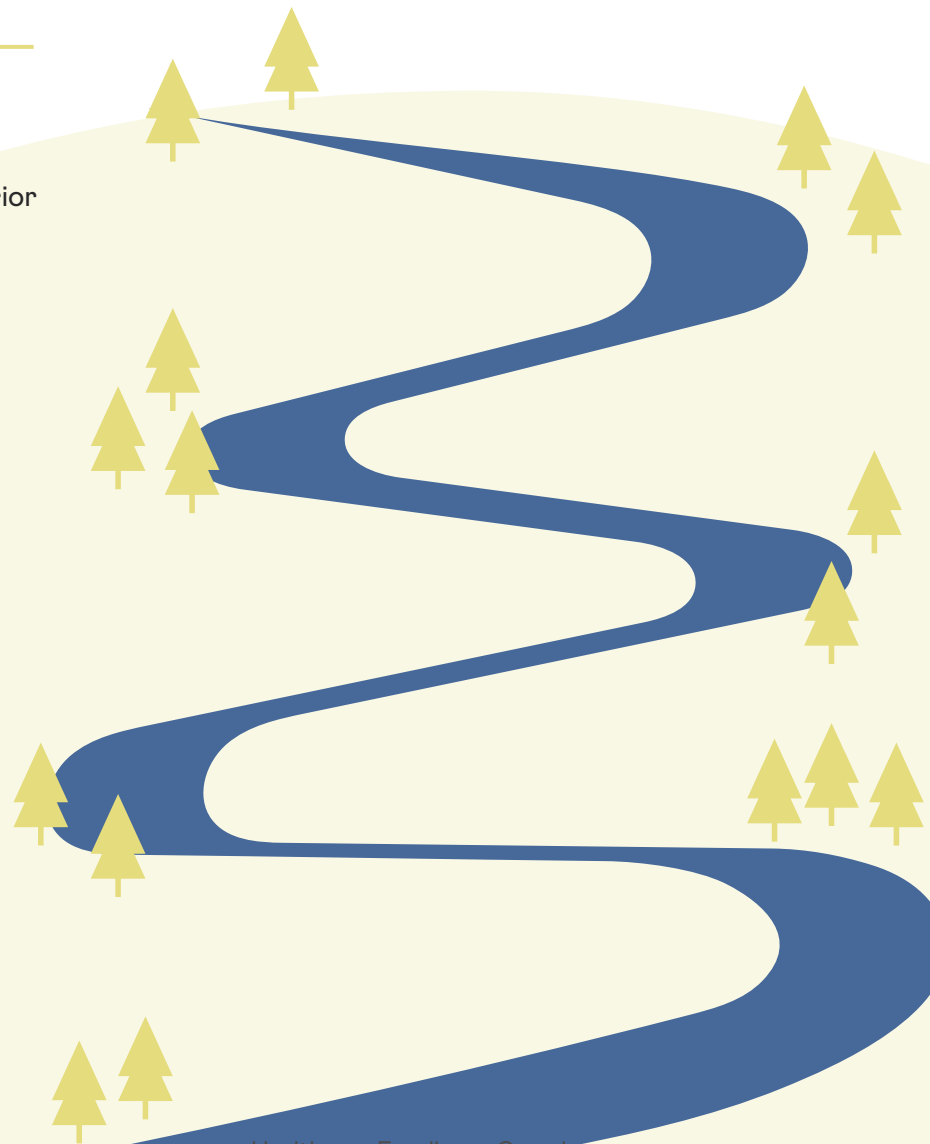
Engaged with Indigenous Mentor Denise McCuaig and Spiritual Advisor Albert Dumont for guidance and feedback.

Adjusted plan to reflect feedback and input received through the engagement process.

Completed environmental scan of existing truth and reconciliation action plans across Canada (health sector and other fields).

Explored staff needs and readiness using a survey and focus groups.

Hosted interviews with formal external partners and key informant organizations with existing action plans.





Healthcare Excellence Canada is an independent, not-for-profit charity funded primarily by Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.