



DECLARATION: TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

As part of the Strategic Plan priority, *Everyone Included*, the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) launched a four-year Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression (ARAO) Action Plan in 2022 to challenge systemic racism, build infrastructure and integrate anti-racism and anti-oppression practices into every level of ONA. Priority 1, Reconciliation, of the ARAO Action Plan assists ONA in challenging anti-Indigenous racism, building cultural competency, and cultural safety, as well as supporting Indigenous members, elected leaders, and staff.

As part of Priority 1, Reconciliation, this Declaration is unanimously approved by the Board of Directors. It reflects ONA's core social justice values and establishes reconciliation as an organizational priority.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was created through a legal settlement between Residential Schools Survivors, national Indigenous organizations, the federal government and the church bodies responsible for the creation and operation of the residential schools. It consists of 10 principles and 94 calls to action.

[*Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.*](#)

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 37(1) (UNDRIP)

Indigenous peoples have the right to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements concluded with States or their successors and have States honour and respect such treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements.

[*Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.*](#)

The realization and implementation of the TRC Calls to Action and the articles of UNDRIP are essential to the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples. These documents provide the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.

Canada has a deep-rooted history with racism and colonialism. This history has been taught to many Canadians through a Eurocentric narrative with little mention

of slavery, racist government policies and the dark history of the colonization of Indigenous peoples by European settlers, including residential schools. Today, Canada is still grappling with the impacts of colonization, including unmarked graves.

We know that inequities for Indigenous peoples continue. The inquest into the death of Joyce Echaquan, as well as other reports, clearly reveal blatant racism against Indigenous peoples within and across the Canadian health-care sector.

As an organization we realize we have much to learn and do. Creating space for and listening to Indigenous voices as we commit to and work towards reconciliation and engagement is of the utmost importance.

ONA is committed to fulfilling its responsibility to reconciliation. This will entail a process of unlearning, and reimagining how power, personal privilege, and worldview inform/shape one's professional life, decision making and use of discretion.

In so doing, ONA has created the position of ARAO Specialist, Reconciliation, within the ARAO Team to assist with advancing these commitments and move towards action. This key organizational position will work closely with other teams, including but not limited to ONA's two Provincial Committees, the Anti-Racism Advisory Team and Human Rights and Equity Team, along with ONA staff.

This position will assist in developing and working towards the implementation of Priority 1, Reconciliation, of the ARAO Action Plan. This position will help ONA engage in discussion internally, to learn together, and to support engagement and partnerships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, governments, organizations, and communities. This work will ultimately shape ONA's reconciliation journey and path forward.

INTENT OF DECLARATION

- Establish a pathway that advances ONA's goals and commitment to reconciliation that is meaningfully incorporated in all aspects and activities of its organization, including Bargaining Unit membership, Bargaining Unit leadership, ONA staff, and ONA's Board of Directors.
- Establish guiding principles to advance achievement of the goal of reconciliation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.

- Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.
- Reconciliation requires settlers to do personal reflection and take constructive action when addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have destructive impacts on Indigenous peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.
- All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.
- Health is a basic human right. Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians.
- Indigenous peoples are essential actors in the health and wellbeing in Indigenous communities. Indigenous employees and leaders who choose to work in the mainstream health-care sector in Ontario deserve all the support to succeed, including culturally safe workplaces.
- The perspectives and understandings of Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge-Keepers about the ethics, concepts, and practices of reconciliation are central to long-term reconciliation.

ONA's COMMITMENT AND ACTION

Support TRC Calls to Action

- ONA will advocate for the 94 Calls to Action identified in the TRC, including the explicit health-related Calls to Action (18-24 and 55) and the Calls that support the social and ecological determinants of health. Regarding Calls to Action 23 and 24, ONA will:
 - #23.** Call upon all levels of government to:
 - I. Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health-care field.
 - II. Ensure the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities.
 - III. Provide cultural competency training for all health-care professionals.
 - #24.** Call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the

Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

- ONA will issue an apology letter to Indigenous peoples for the racism and discrimination they experienced at the hands of nurses and the profession of nursing in the residential and day school system, and in the current health-care system.

Build Cultural Humility, Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety

- Provide support and education to Bargaining Unit members and leaders regarding their obligation to provide culturally competent and safe care to patients, clients and residents and within ONA’s Bargaining Units.
- Establish the concepts of a safe and culturally competent workplace across all aspects of the organization for its staff and Board.

Develop Meaningful Partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples

- Actively seek and build on the advice from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. ONA acknowledges the work it must do to build relationships, trust, and partnership with Indigenous peoples.

Contribute to the Wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples

- As allies we will find ways to change and improve health systems to improve the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples, with willing health partners.

On behalf of the Ontario Nurses’ Association, we thank the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for their hard work and those who shared their stories, memories, and heartbreak with Canadians. We are learning and unlearning; we will do better, and we will take action.



**Signed by Erin Ariss, RN
Provincial President**



**Signed by Andrea Kay, RN
Chief Executive Officer**