

Reconciliation Action Plan

2023-24



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Territory Acknowledgment

HQC acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakoda, Lakota and the homeland of the Métis. As a provincial agency, we are dedicated to supporting Reconciliation and to honouring and respecting all people within the treaties of Saskatchewan.



Statement from the Chief Executive Officer

At Health Quality Council (HQC), our mission is to accelerate improvement in health and health care throughout the lands now known as Saskatchewan, with a vision for optimal health and health care for everyone. The history of colonization and its policies have had a lasting, intergenerational impact on the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan. To accelerate improvement in health and health care, HQC must take action toward reconciliation and cultural responsiveness.

The first step is acknowledging the truth of this history and its impacts, which continue today. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has described reconciliation as the “ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships.” As a change agent within the Saskatchewan health-care system, HQC can help to build these relationships and create the conditions that will lead to meaningful change.

This action plan outlines actions we will take during the 2023-24 fiscal year to address Calls to Action that are within our mandate. This is a long-term commitment—each year, we will report on our progress over the previous year and identify new actions we can take in the upcoming year.

We are grateful to all who helped to build this plan in a good way, including the HQC Cultural Advisory Committee, the board of directors, and HQC staff and leaders.

Vision of Reconciliation

HQC envisions a health-care system that is equitable and just for all, where the voices of First Nations and Métis peoples are not only heard but also seen in the spaces and practices. Through reconciliation, HQC hopes that the unique and vibrant cultures of Indigenous Peoples are amplified and celebrated. HQC envisions working in partnership with First Nations and Métis people to improve health and health care for the next generation of children with self-determination as the foundation of the partnership.

Introduction

First Nations and Métis have distinct and unique cultures and connections to the land, waters, animals and plants that has been passed on by their ancestors for thousands of years. Before the arrival of settlers to Turtle Island and colonization, Indigenous Peoples had their own ways of knowing, languages and concepts of wellness. In Saskatchewan, there is a wide diversity of First Nations including the Cree, Saulteaux, Dene, Dakota, Lakota and Nakoda. There are also many Métis who have distinct culture from that of the First Nations people and their own language known as Michif.

Colonization has had negative impacts on many aspects of Indigenous Peoples' lives which has affected their health and well-being greatly. Colonization created many systemic injustices such as dispossession of Indigenous People from their land to unsuitable locations, removal of children from their family's home and care against their will, banning cultural events and celebrations, and enforcement of laws that were built on racism and oppression, just to name a few. Most of these injustices are still happening today which is why it is crucial that organizations, individuals, and governments do their part to reconcile with Indigenous Peoples by addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and taking meaningful action.

In 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created to contribute to truth, healing, and reconciliation as part of the largest class action in Canadian history, sought after by Indian Residential School survivors against governments and churches who operated the schools. In 2015, the Working Group of the Commission came out with 94 Calls to Action that address all levels of government across all sectors of service in aims of advancing the process of reconciliation. In 2016, Canada also adopted the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which works in parallel with the Calls to Action. These calls are meant to be a starting point and a minimum standard that the government and service providers should be meeting to be an equitable and just country to all people of all ethnicities.

Process

Under the principle of “nothing about us, without us,” this action plan was co-created in collaboration with the HQC board of directors, leadership and the Cultural Advisory Committee. The Cultural Advisory Committee is a group of 10 First Nations and Métis individuals who bring their lived experience and the voices of Indigenous People into achieving HQC’s two strategic priorities of *enhancing the health and well-being of First Nations and Métis Peoples* and *social determinants of health with special focus on child and youth mental health and wellness*. This committee has been instrumental in helping HQC to do its work with First Nations and Métis people in a good way.

Action Plan

Prior to the development of this reconciliation action plan, HQC started working towards becoming a culturally responsive organization. HQC adopted a framework from British Columbia in 2018, however, due to the pandemic, the hard work did not start until 2020. HQC looked to community to find Cultural Advisors who could guide the beginning of this journey. The activities that have happened as part of the Culturally Responsive Framework development, and that also align with reconciliation are found in *Appendix A*. The on-going activities stated in last year’s plan are just that and will be carried forward in to the 2023-2024 plan.

The reconciliation action plan is a living document that is intended to grow and change in response to each step HQC takes towards reconciliation. HQC is committed to aligning with and fulfilling the Calls to Action that fit within the mandate of the organization over the coming years. The Calls to Action that closely align with HQC’s mandate are calls 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 43, 55, 57 and 80¹. These calls can be found in more detail in *Appendix B*. HQC recognizes that all the Calls to Action are important but are choosing to act in the areas that align most with HQC’s legislated mandate and current strategy and work plans. From April 2023 to March 2024, the themes of *honouring and respecting relationships, truth and humility, empowerment through data and measurement, and EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion)* are the areas identified for immediate action.

Theme 1- Honouring and Respecting Relationships

Establishing respectful relationships is fundamental to reconciliation efforts and the overall prosperity of First Nations and Métis People. As treaty people, it is our collective responsibility to establish and maintain respectful relationships with one another. Relationships are built on trust, honesty, humility, and respect for each other including bridging in knowledge, culture, language, values, and beliefs. It is important to remain open-minded and

flexible in timelines, communicate effectively, and not to push your priorities. Indigenous relationship-building allows for more impactful community development and provides opportunities to address social and economic barriers facing communities in a more collaborative way.

Calls to Action	Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
18, 23, and 57	Understanding and following proper protocol, language and traditions of each nation or organization that HQC partners with	Ongoing	All staff working with First Nations and Métis people and communities
18 and 80	Honouring days of importance for Indigenous Peoples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Indigenous History Month • National Indigenous Peoples’ Day • National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a statutory holiday • National Awareness Day for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls • Louis Riel Day • Métis Culture Days • Batoche Days 	Ongoing	CEO, leadership, First Nations and Métis health lead
18, 20, 22, 23 and 57	Continue to work with Indigenous Advisory Committee to consult, inform, and advise HQC on the direction of the work	Ongoing	First Nations and Métis health lead
18 and 57	Meet with Indigenous governments/communities to co-develop plan, scope, content, and implementation of each project we work on together.	Ongoing	All staff working in this space
18, 19 and 57	Engaging communities and nations to understand how HQC can support their needs and priorities – exploring different approaches.	Ongoing	All staff working in this space

Theme 2- Truth and Humility

Increased understanding of the colonial history and practices helps to build positive relationships with Indigenous people and support their goals to reclaim self-determination. Knowing the truth about Canada's history and how it impacts Indigenous Peoples to this day is paramount to moving towards reconciliation. This understanding will allow HQC to provide more culturally appropriate and safe environments and services for all staff and clients.

Calls to Action	Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
18 and 57	Quality Improvement (QI) Power Hour- Indigenous speakers on various topics	1 to 2 times each year	Manager of learning programs
18 and 57	Staff learning series on various Indigenous topics related to history, current state, achievements, politics etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and community members to teach • Invite Indigenous Organizations 	Quarterly	First Nations and Métis health lead
18, 23, and 57	Cultural humility training for all staff- colonization, racism, inequities, respect and understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four Seasons of Reconciliation 	Once per hire	CEO and human resources
18, 23, and 57	Bring more Indigenous practices, protocols, and ways of knowing in the workplace and services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning session on protocol • Cree words of the day • Cultural Insights at huddles 	Ongoing	First Nations and Métis health lead, all staff
18, 23, and 57	Actively seek out sponsorship of Indigenous cultural events and attend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural and urban 	Ongoing	CEO, Communications
	Promote Indigenous organizations, programs, research, and initiatives on HQC's platforms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Health Clips 	On-going	Leadership, First Nations and Métis Health Lead, Communications

18 and 57	Apply trauma-informed and equity lens on work where possible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying an equity assessment to all projects • Learning about trauma-informed thinking 	Ongoing	CEO, leadership, all staff
18, 23, 43, and 57	Incorporate opportunities for HQC board of directors to learn in different ways, engage in cultural events and develop a deeper understanding of reconciliation as a standing agenda item	Ongoing	Board of directors, CEO, First Nations and Métis health lead

Theme 3- Empowerment through Data and Measurement

Indigenous Peoples have a history of being over-researched in a very dishonest and dehumanizing way, which has created many of the stereotypes and prejudices they face today. Due to laws like the Indian Act that don't allow for self-determination, the principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP®) may not be upheld at all levels of government. The colonial way is to present data in terms of deficits, when in fact, there are many strengths that could be highlighted about Indigenous People. However, Indigenous People do not control their own narrative as their nation's priorities and needs are rarely discussed with researchers or service providers. To improve health and wellness outcomes with First Nations and Métis people, it is crucial to collaborate early on to understand what their needs and priorities are and support them in successfully achieving their goals. It is also paramount to provide the knowledge, skills, and tools to build capacity so the work can be continued by community.

Calls to Action	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
19, 20 and 43	Creating space for cross government coordination of different sectors of health and social services to have a shared understanding of First Nations and Métis issues and to work towards a shared goal. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MN-S* • Drug Taskforce* • FSIN* 	Ongoing	Board, CEO and leadership
19 and 55	Implement learnings from OCAP® training: Co-create research agreements that uphold the principles of OCAP® and HQC obligations under data sharing agreements where possible.	Ongoing	CEO, leadership, researchers, data experts, First Nations and Métis health lead

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff awareness on how HQC upholds OCAP® 		
19 and 55	<p>Support nations in their journey to own, control, access, and possess their data by building data literacy and analytic capability. This should include youth mentorship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community QI Collective • 4 Winds Project - Healing Journey • Mentorship opportunities within current projects 	Ongoing	CEO, leadership, researchers, data experts

*See project charter or team lead for details

Theme 4- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Unfortunately, many stereotypes, biases, and prejudices still exist in Canada and are often targeted towards equity-deserving or marginalized groups. This discrimination shapes the society in which we live and normalizes this oppressive way of thinking and behaving. The legacy of colonization is a significant reason why Indigenous People face racism more often than non-Indigenous. Providing appropriate knowledge, skills, and tools to actively speak up when witnessing unfair treatment, racism, or violence will create safer and healthier environments to work and live. Cultural safety is an outcome that all people deserve to experience both at work and in society.

Calls to Action	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
18 and 23	<p>Review and revise HQC policies with an equity and reconciliation lens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 policy per quarter 	Until all policies are reviewed	CEO, human resources, First Nations and Métis health lead, Cultural Advisory Committee
18 and 23	Gather baseline data on cultural representativeness and staff experience as first step to develop a future state vision for supporting cultural diversity at HQC.	On-going	Human resources, First Nations and Metis health lead
18 and 23	<p>EDI sharing and learning lunches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 per quarter 	On-going	First Nations and Métis health lead, all staff
18 and 23	<p>Active member in community led EDI initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation Saskatoon • Anti-Racism Network • Stand-Up for Racial Justice 	On-going	First Nations and Métis health lead
18 and 23	Implement annual anti-racism training	On-going	Human resources, First Nations and Métis health lead, CEO

Accountability and Reporting

HQC is committed to achieving these actions and will be held accountable with on-going evaluation mechanisms throughout the year. These mechanisms include feedback from staff and the Cultural Advisory Committee which can be found in *Appendix C*, as well as transparency to the public on HQC's public platforms. A blog series is used to inform stakeholders and the public on the progress of the Reconciliation Action Plan. HQC will internally track the completion of the actions which will be reported in HQC's annual report. Additionally, future action plans will summarize all the completed and on-going actions from previous years. Reconciliation is a long journey which will evolve and grow in the years to come so no annual plan will look the same.

Appendix A- Completed Actions in Previous Years

Year 2022 to 2023

- Co-development of Honorariums and Expense for Cultural Advisors and Helpers Policy.
- Resource list related to Indigenous Peoples such as important documents, websites, books, movies, shows, podcasts etc. for staff to use in their learning journey.
- Cultural Advisors reviewed and revised two of HQC’s internal policies.
- Implementation of Anti-racism policy.
- Provided first annual training on anti-racism to staff.

Years 2020-2022

- Education for staff on the history of Métis in Canada, Indigenous data sovereignty, and allyship.
- Filling the position of the First Nations and Métis health lead.
- Recruitment of the Cultural Advisors from across the province to form the committee.
- Co-development of anti-racism policy with Advisors.
- Co-development of a policy on verifying Indigenous identity with Advisors.
- Reviewed and revised the bereavement leave policy with Advisors.
- Co-design a one-page communication material to better serve Indigenous partners.
- Reviewed and revised First Nations and Métis Knowledge Keeper/Elder Engagement Guide.
- Developed and implemented an action framework for the HQC board of directors.
- Had a guest speaker from National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation present to the HQC board of directors.

Appendix B- Calls to Action within HQC’s Mandate

#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
#19	We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes Calls to Action between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and to publish annual progress reports and assess long-term trends. Such efforts would focus on indicators such as: infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services

#20	In order to address the jurisdictional disputes concerning Aboriginal people who do not reside on reserves, we call upon the federal government to recognize, respect, and address the distinct health needs of the Métis, Inuit, and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples.
#22	We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.
#23	We 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 healthcare professionals
#43	We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation
#55	We call upon all levels of government to provide annual reports or any current data requested by the National Council for Reconciliation so that it can report on the progress towards reconciliation. The reports or data would include, but not be limited to: i. The number of Aboriginal children—including Métis and Inuit children—in care, compared with non-Aboriginal children, the reasons for apprehension, and the total spending on preventive and care services by child-welfare agencies. ii. Comparative funding for the education of First Nations children on and off reserves. iii. The educational and income attainments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada compared with non-Aboriginal people. iv. Progress on closing the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in a number of health indicators such as: infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services. v. Progress on eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in youth custody over the next decade. vi. Progress on reducing the rate of criminal victimization of Aboriginal people, including data related to homicide and family violence victimization and other crimes. vii. Progress on reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the justice and correctional systems
#57	We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants 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 skillsbased training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism
#80	We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and

	communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.
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Appendix C- Staff and Cultural Advisor Survey Response Results

Staff Results: Those who agreed or strongly agree.

Questions	Results (n=33)
I know why governments, organizations and people are working towards reconciliation	91%
I understand the actions HQC is taking towards Truth and Reconciliation	73%

Cultural Advisor Results: Those who agree or strongly agree (8 or higher on sliding scale).

Questions	Results (n=8)
I understand the actions HQC is doing towards Truth and Reconciliation	100%
I feel that HQC is taking genuine actions to reconcile relationships with Indigenous Peoples in Canada	100%
I feel HQC is on the right path when it comes to their Truth and Reconciliation journey	100%

References:

- 1.) Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. Accessed June 2022. Found at: https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- 2.) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Accessed June 2022. Found at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf
- 3.) Understanding OCAP. Accessed June 2022. Found at: <https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>