



CANADIAN COUNSELLING AND
PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE
COUNSELING ET DE PSYCHOTHÉRAPIE

National Aboriginal Day: There's Hope that Mental Illness will be Prioritized

Ottawa – (June 21, 2016) Today marks the 20th anniversary of National Aboriginal Day in Canada. The Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) would like to take this opportunity to raise our hands and acknowledge this important national day. The CCPA recognizes the unique heritage, cultural diversity and achievements of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada. The association is pleased to learn that the government has announced its strategy on making improvements to the Indigenous mental health system. The CCPA is glad that the Liberal government has created a concrete strategy. The next steps will be to ensure that this strategy is culturally sensitive to the needs of Indigenous people—integrating Indigenous ways of knowing and beliefs about health, and traditional healing, with approaches from mainstream mental health care.

“In its present state, mental health services are seriously underfunded and inaccessible to many Indigenous communities,” said Dr. Natasha Caverley, President of CCPA. “Furthermore, when Indigenous people, especially in northern, rural and remote communities, receive mental health services, they often encounter practitioners who may have limited to no training in culturally safe mental health practices from an Indigenous perspective.”

The strategy was announced one week before National Aboriginal Day. The new funding, totalling about \$69 million, will go immediately to create more crisis response teams, mental wellness teams within communities, and the establishment of a 24-hour crisis response line. The Government also promises to roll-out a new three-year plan to create more support mechanisms.

Many Indigenous communities are facing a perpetual state of emergency because of the ongoing suicide and attempted suicide rates. In Nunavut, 27% of all deaths since 1999 have been suicides. This is one of the highest suicide rates in the world, and it continues to rise, especially among youth.¹ In Attawapiskat, a total of 101 people of all ages have tried to kill themselves since September. These communities are have made it clear to the government that they need help.²

“The impact of the residential schools, along with other forms of colonial trauma such as forced relocation and the Sixties Scoop, created unresolved grief, loss of cultural identity, high rates of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and suicide,” continued Caverley. “Coupled within the socio-economic context of poverty, lack of adequate housing and clean water, underfunded education, lack of employment, and environmental degradation, these mental health issues are even more challenging to address.”

¹ Saman Khan. (2008). Aboriginal Mental Health: The statistical reality. Via:

<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/visions/aboriginal-people-vol5/aboriginal-mental-health-the-statistical-reality>

² Kate Rutherford. CBC News. (April 9, 2016) via: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/attawapiskat-suicide-first-nations-emergency-1.3528747>

CCPA is committed to raising awareness on issues that affect Indigenous clients and families and providing mental health services that reflect their unique needs. For example, the Association's Indigenous Circle Chapter provides networking and professional development opportunities to CCPA members who provide counselling and psychotherapy services to Indigenous communities.

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The Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) is a national bilingual association providing professional counsellors and psychotherapists with access to exclusive educational programs, certification, professional development and direct contact with professional peers and specialty groups. CCPA promotes the profession and its contribution to the mental health and well-being of all Canadians. For more information on the counselling and psychotherapy profession, please visit www.ccpa-accp.ca or www.talkingcanhelp.ca.

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