



Crisis Point: Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association Calls on the Government to Address the Urgent Need for Improved Indigenous Mental Health Services

Ottawa, October 18, 2016 – It is with great sadness that the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) reflects on the deaths by suicide of three young Indigenous girls from the Lac la Ronge Indian Band over the last week. CCPA extends its deepest condolences to the families, friends, and communities of these youth who died too soon.

The Government has known for many years that high levels of mental health issues persist on reserves and in northern and remote communities. First Nations youth die by suicide about five to six times more often than non-Indigenous youth. Suicide rates for Inuit youth are among the highest in the world at 11 times the national average. Year after year, mental health advocates from across Canada have continued to lobby government to increase funding and supports for our country's most vulnerable groups. While commitments from the Government continue to take shape, we remain at a crisis point.

“For all populations, particularly vulnerable populations, it is never enough to only deploy mental health services after a crisis,” said Dr. Natasha Caverley, CCPA National President (a multiracial Canadian of Algonquin, Jamaican and Irish ancestry). “Suicide is preventable. The deleterious effects of mental health issues can be reduced or extinguished with prevention and early treatment. We need to take action and we need to take action now with our Indigenous, northern, and remote communities in Canada to address this mental health crisis.”

Key representatives of CCPA's Executive, Senate, and Indigenous community are at Parliament Hill in Ottawa this week to demand action on the government's June 2016 promise for a three-year plan addressing the Indigenous mental health crisis. CCPA will also advocate for their call to action, delivered in their [latest issue paper](#). In their paper “Call to Action: Urgent Need for Improved Indigenous Mental Health Services in Canada”, CCPA outlines three recommendations for the federal government. Their recommendations:

1. Provide sustainable funding for mental health and related counselling services for Indigenous peoples on and off-reserves and in northern, rural and remote communities;
2. Support a culturally safe mental health framework for Indigenous peoples which integrates Indigenous ways of knowing and beliefs about health, and traditional healing, with approaches from mainstream mental health care; and
3. Provide funding for education and related employment initiatives that increases the number of Indigenous learners becoming qualified to work in the mental health field.

“We urge the Government to consider our issue paper on Indigenous mental health and recognize the immediacy and importance of the current, dire situation and response needed. The critical next steps for the government are to ensure that its mental health strategy is culturally sensitive to the needs of Indigenous people” continued Dr. Caverley. “Culturally safe mental health support is essential in this crisis. Nothing less is acceptable. It is never enough to parachute mental health practitioners to these areas; they need to be trained in culturally safe mental health practice.”

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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, and professional development. The Canadian Certified Counsellor (CCC) designation identifies to the public those counsellors who CCPA recognizes as qualified to provide counselling services in Canada. Many CCCs, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous,

practice in the field of Indigenous mental health, working on the front lines in Indigenous communities throughout Canada.

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