

## National Aboriginal Day and the Need to Prioritize Mental Health

Ottawa – (June 21, 2017) Today, on the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of National Aboriginal Day in Canada, mental health awareness takes centre stage.

The Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) is pleased to participate in raising awareness of Indigenous peoples and the mental health issues that affect First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. CCPA acknowledges the historical struggle that Indigenous communities have faced, and welcomes new integrative strategies to ensure mental health care is prioritized. Innovative approaches and prevention models are opening doors for better opportunities for mental wellness specific to the needs of Indigenous populations.

“Indigenous communities across Canada experience difficulty connecting to mental health services and programs that are timely, accessible and appropriate,” said John Driscoll, CCPA National President. “Furthermore, when given the opportunity for treatment, some mental health care providers are underqualified and lack the necessary cultural competencies to ensure culturally safe and congruent service delivery.”

The rising suicide rates in Indigenous communities continually raise major concerns, especially for Indigenous youth. Statistics show that Aboriginal youth suicide rates are about seven times higher than non-Aboriginal youth.

“Within Indigenous communities, suicide can have a ripple effect impacting family members and other community members causing mental health issues such as trauma, stress, grief and anxiety,” continued Driscoll. “New movements towards understanding the specific needs of Indigenous populations are becoming more and more necessary.”

CCPA is continually committed to raising awareness on issues that affect Indigenous individuals, families and communities as a whole. The importance of providing mental health services that incorporate their unique needs is a priority. The Association’s Indigenous Circle Chapter provides networking and professional development opportunities to CCPA members who provide counselling and psychotherapy services to Indigenous communities. The Indigenous Director position on CCPA’s national Board of Directors ensures that Indigenous issues are addressed in national policy and program decisions. CCPA’s second issue paper is a call to action for improved Indigenous mental health services in Canada: <https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Issue-Paper-2-EN.pdf>.

If you are looking for therapeutic support, go to [www.ccpa-accp.ca](http://www.ccpa-accp.ca), where you can search for a Canadian Certified Counsellor in your region. Members of the public can also find authoritative information about the profession of counselling and psychotherapy by visiting CCPA’s public website, [www.talkingcanhelp.ca](http://www.talkingcanhelp.ca).

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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](http://www.ccpa-accp.ca) or [www.talkingcanhelp.ca](http://www.talkingcanhelp.ca).*

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