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To: All BCEHS Employees/Ambulance Paramedics of BC CUPE Local 873 Members

From: Leanne Heppell, Chief Ambulance Officer, BCEHS and
Troy Clifford, Provincial President, APBC

RE: National Indigenous Peoples Day June 21, 2022

We are grateful to live, work and be in relationship with First Nations from across many traditional and unceded territories, covering all regions of British Columbia.

Tomorrow (June 21) we celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day, and recognize the unique heritage and diverse cultures of Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) people across our province and within BCEHS. We encourage all BCEHS staff to take the opportunity to learn more about Indigenous peoples and their history (see resources below), and to participate in local events to celebrate the day in your communities if possible. We also encourage you to wear your orange epaulettes or pins in support of Indigenous people and patients as you go about your workday.

Addressing Indigenous racism and discrimination is essential for BCEHS. We recognize inequities in care provided to First Nations and Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia. Through engagement with our partners, including the First Nations Health Authority and Indigenous community health leadership, BCEHS will provide interfacility transportation, emergency care, and community services with core principles of equity, cultural safety, and humility for Indigenous peoples in B.C. This work will build upon key foundational documents, which are listed below. We encourage all staff to spend some time with these important documents. We are also working with PHSA Indigenous Health to provide anti-Indigenous racism training for all employees, this course it currently being piloted, with plans for a provincial rollout.

We recognize that BCEHS has more to do to ensure each person who asks for care or services from BCEHS is treated with respect, dignity, and compassion. We are committed to taking tangible action to ensure that culturally appropriate care is provided to our Indigenous patients and their families and to become a more diverse and inclusive employer. More on this will be announced in the coming months.

We have many amazing people working at BCEHS and we would like to share a few stories from some of our Indigenous employees – thank you to Natalee, Stu, Kaoru, Andrea, and Dakota, for sharing your words with us and for your service to your patients and colleagues. If you are an Indigenous employee at BCEHS and would like to share your story, please email bulletin@bcehs.ca – we will be featuring employee profiles in coming issues of the BCEHS newsletter.

Sincerely,

Leanne Heppell
EVP and Chief Ambulance Officer
BC Emergency Health Services
Provincial Health Services Authority

Troy Clifford
Provincial President
Ambulance Paramedics of BC
CUPE Local 873

Featured profiles:

Natalee Dennis – Primary Care Paramedic and Indigenous Patient Navigator



I am a Primary Care Paramedic and an Indigenous Patient Navigator at BCEHS, based in Nanaimo. I am from the Ahousaht First Nation, and part of the Nuu-chah-nulth people of Vancouver Island. I have worked at BCEHS for about nine years.

Being an Indigenous paramedic allows me to advocate for those who can't always speak for themselves. As an Indigenous Patient Navigator, I can help bring awareness to my coworkers about Indigenous cultural safety. Helping people is part of my caring and giving nature as an Indigenous person.

June 21st is important to me as it brings awareness and allows for Indigenous voices to be heard. National Indigenous Peoples Day highlights and celebrates the many distinct Indigenous peoples from across Canada. The fact that this celebration takes place on the summer solstice is significant and meaningful to me personally. The solstice means salmon berries are out, it's time for salmon fishing and for families to come together and celebrate.

Stu Myers: Advanced Care Paramedic – APBC Indigenous & Cultural Relations Liaison



I am a Regional Vice President for 1 North and the *Indigenous and Cultural Relations Liaison* for the Ambulance Paramedics of BC. I have been with BCEHS since 1989, and I currently work as an Advanced Care Paramedic in Nanaimo.

I was not aware of my Indigenous background until after my father died in 2011. Over the years he had mentioned that we had history, but never revealed any information to me. He was estranged from his biological father, so I understand his reluctance to discuss the past. It was only through my genealogical research that I discovered my father's family was Metis (Scottish and Cree), originating from the Duck Lake region of Saskatchewan. I grew up in Salmo, on the lands of the Lower Kootenay, Yaqan Nukiy people. Although I had very little exposure to or understanding of Indigenous culture, I have always been drawn to Indigenous art, stories, traditions and beliefs, and perhaps this was why.

Kaoru Bracewell: Clinical Operations Manager

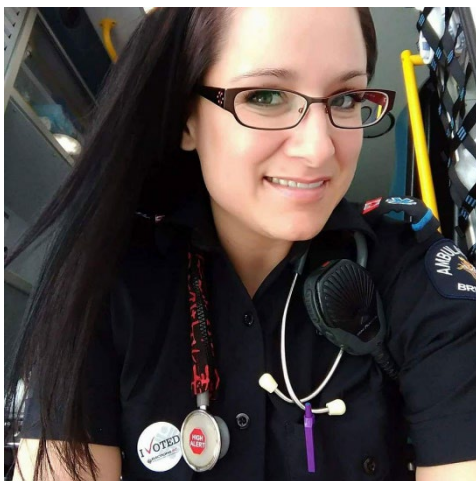


I am a Clinical Operations Manager for the Oceanside District, and I have been with BCEHS for almost 27 years. I am from Vancouver, and my biological family is from the Wolf Lake Métis Settlement in Northern Alberta. My ancestry is predominantly Métis and Scottish.

I was adopted as an infant in the 60s, and I did not grow up with traditional Indigenous cultural knowledge. My adoptive family always celebrated my heritage, but they didn't really know much about it. In my mid-twenties, I was blessed to meet my biological father and since then I have been slowly getting to know that side of my family.

To me June 21st is about connection, as well as reacquainting myself with my lost Indigenous roots and growing in the love and understanding of my heritage. This day is important to acknowledge the truths of our shared history, make space to sit with those hardships and work to cultivate a healthier world. I am blessed to walk in peace in both worlds.

Andrea Seymour: Primary Care Paramedic



I am a Primary Care Paramedic, and I am proud to be Indigenous. I've worked for BCEHS for 26 years, and I am currently based in Campbell River.

I am from the Tkemlups te Secwepemc Reserve in Kamloops B.C. We were the first Indigenous people to expose horrors suffered by our ancestors with the discovery of 215 unmarked graves on the site of the former residential school. This discovery hit me hard for a number of reasons. When I was a child, family members had told me that there were bodies buried on the site. At the time I did not believe them, then I felt ashamed I was not more supportive. The whole thing is just horrific. My

band has been amazing at helping the band members with the healing process. I am incredibly proud of my Chief for leading us into healing.

Dakota Stone: Emergency Dispatcher & Primary Care Paramedic



I am a Metis paramedic and dispatcher in Kamloops, and I have been with BCEHS for 12 years. I am proud to serve my community, it's especially rewarding when I get to help Indigenous peoples. Being able to relate my knowledge of traditional Indigenous dynamics and teachings to my work, helps me provide a safe space for our patients.

In my role as a dispatcher, I am an advocate for remote Indigenous communities. I ensure these patients are provided with the same level of care as those in more urban areas. Patient wellbeing is always at the forefront of my decision-making. I won't hesitate to call in air transport for remote patients if I feel it will help them get more timely care for their urgent medical issues.

I encourage my fellow paramedics and dispatchers to reach out to our Indigenous Patient Navigators to learn more about the communities they serve. Also consider taking the [San'Yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Course](#) through the LearningHub.

Key Foundational Documents:

- [Indigenous History Month Toolkit on POD](#)
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#)
- [BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(BC DRIPA\)](#)
- [BC DRIPA Action Plan](#)
- [Remembering Keegan: A BC First Nations Case Study Reflection](#)
- [Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia's relationship with Indigenous Peoples \(BC Principles\)](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada \(TRC\) – Summary of the Final Report](#)
- [Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls \(MMIWG\)](#)
- [BC In Plain Sight Full Report: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care \(IPS\)](#)
- [2022 BC Government Speech from the Throne](#)