



MEDIA RELEASE | September 16, 2018

'A Way to Cope: Exploring Non-Suicidal Self-Injury in B.C. Youth'

tkwəlniwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory: The Syilx Okanagan Nation Chief's Executive Council acknowledge *A Way to Cope: Exploring Non-Suicidal Self-Injury in BC Youth* released today by BC's Representative for Children and Youth (RCY). The RCY had identified non-suicidal self-injury as a trend requiring closer examination. This report hits home highlighting many long standing, critical issues and gaps in service for BC's youth with the intention of informing decision-makers, service providers and the public.

Serious concerns with BC's system of care for children and youth with mental health support needs is not new and the Province must recognize the urgency of finding the path forward as outlined in their commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The RCY has released many reports calling for vast changes within the service delivery system and the reports are clear, the system is not effectively supporting our youth and as a result, they are left disconnected and in crises, some resulting in death.

Article 21.2 of the UN Declaration Indigenous Peoples outlines that "states shall take effective measure and where appropriate, special measures to ensure the continuing improvement of economic and social conditions. With particular attention to rights and special needs of indigenous youth, children and persons with disabilities."

It is reprehensible to learn that cultural connections were viewed as secondary considerations or less, ignoring how cultural connections could serve as a protective factor while multiple reports and best practice research has shown that culturally appropriate care is connected to better outcomes. The blatant disregard of cultural considerations is unacceptable, our people been calling for the very implementation of cultural ways that have been developed and implemented since time immemorial.

There is a dire need for a fulsome transformation of the mental health system supporting the needs of our children and youth. One of the report findings is that support is identifying children and youth as unwilling to engage, however it is likely that practitioners do not know how to support and our children and youth are left without critical resources.

Our children and youth are the core of our families and communities; it will take determined action by all people to ensure their proper support, safety and healing. Syilx families, communities and Nation remain committed to addressing the issues, there is a requirement for partnership, collaboration and acknowledgement that it cannot be done alone. The work must continue.

We appreciate the work of the RCY, continuing to bring light to these issues and advocating on behalf of children and youth in BC. We uphold our duty and obligation to fully protect, defend, uphold and advance the protection, health and wellbeing of our children and families, as such,

we immediately call on the Provincial and Federal Governments to ensure adequate funding to fully transform the mental health system serving children and youth

To read the full report visit:

https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/RCY_NSSI_Report.FINAL_.pdf

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