



September 30 marks the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Today, we honour the children who never returned home, the survivors of residential schools, their families and communities, and the generations who continue to experience the impacts of colonial policies and systems.

For the Substance Use Health Network, truth and reconciliation require us to look at the systems in which we work. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action make clear that the health inequities experienced by Indigenous Peoples are inseparable from the history and continuing impacts of colonialism.

This has particular importance in substance use health. Indigenous people who use drugs experience the intersecting harms of colonialism, racism, stigma and criminalization within health and social systems.

As we build SUHN, we are committed to thinking through what reconciliation requires of us, not only today, but throughout our work. This includes working to:

- build sustained and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous-led organizations and communities;
- create meaningful, paid opportunities for First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, including Indigenous people who use drugs, to participate in and shape SUHN's leadership, priorities and activities;
- recognize the distinct experiences, priorities and knowledge of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples rather than treating Indigenous Peoples as a single population;
- challenge anti-Indigenous racism, stigma and discrimination in substance use health care and the broader systems affecting people who use drugs;
- respect and make space for Indigenous knowledge, teachings and approaches to health and healing alongside other forms of evidence;
- amplify Indigenous-led research, resources, advocacy and knowledge through SUHN's platforms; and
- continue examining our own practices: who is represented, who is heard, whose expertise is compensated, whose knowledge is valued, and who has power in the decisions we make.
- continuing to learn the truth about our colonial history and how colonialism shapes social systems and ways of thinking, and learn how we can honour those truths and envision other ways of working together, supporting each other, and building a healthier society.

Reconciliation is not a statement or a single day of reflection. It requires sustained relationships, accountability and action. As SUHN grows, we want these commitments to shape not only what we say, but how we build the network and how we work together.