

Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

*An update to 'Meeting the Challenge of
Reconciliation: The Government of the Northwest
Territories Response to the Truth and
Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action'*

Message from the Premier

Achieving reconciliation is at least part of the answer to many of the challenges that we face in the Northwest Territories (NWT). The Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission offer ways to address the damage caused including intergenerational trauma, and move towards our vision of a territory where all our people, communities and regions share in the benefits of a healthy, just, sustainable and prosperous society. We want to see an NWT where our people can thrive and be healthy, where a well-managed environment contributes to our economic wellbeing and quality of life, and where a strong economy provides jobs and opportunities for our communities.

Truth and Reconciliation is about changing attitudes and addressing inequities. Government cannot achieve this alone, but we are committed to playing our part.

In September 2015, the 17th Legislative Assembly issued '*Meeting the Challenge of Reconciliation – The Government of the Northwest Territories response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action*'.

The 18th Legislative Assembly has further committed to support the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that fall within the jurisdiction of the territorial government, especially related to violence against indigenous women and girls.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) continues to move towards reconciliation, particularly through the actions outlined in '*Meeting the Challenge of Reconciliation*'. Many of the actions within that document are ongoing, but this update provides some highlights, organized by theme, of additional work done.

These actions are also not an exhaustive list – the GNWT has engaged in a variety of work, long before the calls to action were completed, to help achieve reconciliation. That said, we have more to do. 2017 is a commemorative year – 150 years of Canada, 50 years of the Government of the Northwest Territories – and it is a chance to further the work of reconciliation.

A. Child Welfare (TRC Recommendations 1- 5 and 55i)

GNWT Response:

The GNWT commits to working to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care, as described by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations through the ongoing implementation of the *Child and Family Services Act* and through 'Building Stronger Families', our action plan to transform child and family services in the direction of a more collaborative and family-centered approach to child protection services.

2016-17 Updates:

Monitoring Investigations

- A new Child and family services information system is being configured and tested. When operational, it will provide enhanced monitoring capabilities and data reliability;
- The 2015-2016 Director of Child and Family Services Annual Report has been tabled and is posted at www.hss.gov.nt.ca ;

Training Child Protection Workers

- Mandatory introductory training for all Child Protection Workers in the Northwest Territories (NWT) has been further expanded. Child Protection Workers are required to:
 - complete Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training;
 - identify and speak with local traditional knowledge holders to learn about the specific community/region that they will be working in; and
 - participate in a presentation on residential school and the links between residential school and the child welfare system from an Elder and survivor of residential school.
- In addition, mandatory training for Child Protection Worker Supervisors is in development as a companion to the mandatory introductory training. Improved supervision leads to better child protection practice.

Supporting Parents

- The Departments of Health and Social Services (HSS) and Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) continue to implement *Right from the Start – Early Childhood Development Framework*;
- In 2016, the Early Childhood Development Bridge Action Plan for 2016-2017 was released;
- The implementation of the first three years of *Right from the Start* was evaluated. The results of this evaluation have been used to guide the development of the Early Childhood Development Action Plan for 2017-2020, which will continue to expand on work to improve the healthy development of all children aged 0-5 and focus on culturally appropriate options for Aboriginal parents.
- As part of the Action Plan, HSS has created a ‘Made in the NWT’ Baby Bag. It contains useful resources for new parents and may include: a baby carrier, a nursing bra, baby wipes, a change pad, a digital thermometer, baby shampoo or soap, and receiving blankets. Resources are distributed in Inuvik to moms who stay at the Transient Centre; in Yellowknife to moms who stay at the Vital Abel Boarding Home; and, in Hay River and Fort Smith to families identified through wrap around service providers.
- In partnership with the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority, the Aboriginal Health and Community Wellness division has purchased “baby bags” from the University of Calgary Baby Box pilot project for sharing and training opportunities. These will be utilized for the programs in Hay River and Fort Smith.
- Vital Abel and Inuvik boarding homes continue to be supported through contribution for their pre-natal programming in 2016-2017. The program provides expectant mothers with education, tools and contacts to help with the arrival of their newborns,
- *Right from the Start* continues to support Aboriginal language learning. Ipad minis are distributed to new parents and primary care givers throughout the NWT, from the Inuvik Transient Centre, the Yellowknife Vital Abel Boarding Home and in Hay River and Fort Smith. Each of these sites also facilitates access to applications for the Ipad Mini Initiative for New Parents.
- There are 8 NWT Aboriginal language Apps included on the Ipad Minis that are distributed. During the pilot phase, the apps and additional resources

to support parenting and health were evaluated. Training sessions on the use of the items is conducted in a culturally sensitive and caring manner.

- In 2015-2016, program standards were developed to support the Healthy Family Program, a voluntary, intensive, early intervention home visiting program designed to improve the lives of young children by promoting nurturing parent-child relationships and knowledge of early childhood development.
- A 2014-2015 Child and Family Resource Programs and Services model pilot in N'dilo and Tulita by ECE, has resulted in an expansion of the Health Family Program in Tuktoyaktuk. The Healthy Family Program is now delivered in 16 communities across the NWT.
- Based on feedback received throughout the program standards development process, the need to review the Healthy Family Program was identified. Consultations with key early childhood development stakeholders and partners will be coordinated in the upcoming year. The discussions will inform the reframing of the Healthy Family Program to reach beyond home visitation. The goal is to move to a more encompassing approach that emphasizes partnerships and is more easily expandable to all communities, large and small. In addition, an evaluation framework is currently underway.

B. Education (TRC Recommendations 6-12 and 55ii and iii)

GNWT Response:

The GNWT commits to working actively to close the education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, and supports the objectives of the recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under this theme.

2016-17 Updates:

- In 2015 the overall graduation rate for the NWT was 67%. For Aboriginal students, the graduation rate was 56%. 2016 graduation rates will be available in January 2017. Efforts to improve student success continue through the NWT Education Renewal Initiative.
- NWT students continue to participate in Northern Studies 10. Teacher training for this course, including the module addressing the history and legacy of residential schools, was held in 2015.
- The History and Legacy of Residential Schools awareness training was also offered to all teachers new to the NWT in August 2015 and August 2016.
- The new 2016-2019 Education Renewal Action Plan and budget were recently approved. The areas for action continue to focus on initiatives focused on
 - 1) Language, Culture and Identity,
 - 2) Student and Educator Wellbeing,
 - 3) Teaching and Learning, and
 - 4) System Accountability.

This work encompasses the development of the Northern Studies 20 and 30 courses, legacy of residential schooling awareness in-servicing for all NWT educators and ECE staff, as well as a number of wellness related initiatives related to the TRC. Accountability processes include wellness indicators alongside more common education system success indicators, including around student achievement, attendance, and graduation rates.

- HSS and ECE formed a working group to move forward on the information sharing pieces necessary to develop an integrated early childhood services delivery model.

- ECE and HSS are participating in an interdepartmental working group to strengthen the departmental staffs' knowledge of different initiatives in the area of programs and services for children with developmental issues. To support earlier efforts to move forward on information sharing in a collaborative manner, this working group is now also focused on improved information sharing, including development of a common consent form to allow information to be shared between education authorities and health care professionals, as well as developing an integrated services delivery model that will provide a team of support to children with complex needs and their families in the early years as well as the Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system. The Department of Justice supported HSS and ECE in discussions around a common consent form and Information Sharing Agreement, in compliance with GNWT legislation.

Postsecondary Education

- NWT Student Financial Assistance provides eligible Aboriginal students with a Basic Grant to assist with the cost of tuition, books and living allowance, as well as a Supplementary Grant to assist with the cost of living expenses, based on the size of the student's family. Approximately 1,100 Aboriginal students are supported annually.

Working with Other Governments

- A new Federal-Provincial-Territorial-Indigenous Forum has been formed, and the negotiation of terms of reference and scope of discussion continue. Ontario and Canada are co-chairing this new forum.

C. Language and Culture (TRC Recommendations 13-17 and 62iii)

GNWT Response:

The GNWT commits to working actively to nurture and promote Aboriginal language use in partnership with Aboriginal governments and communities through the *Official Languages Act*, and supports the objectives of the recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under this theme. The GNWT encourages the federal government to take appropriate action to ensure that Aboriginal language programming is adequately funded.

2016-17 Updates:

- The GNWT is updating the *NWT Aboriginal Languages Plan – A Shared Responsibility (2010)*. The renewed Framework and Action Plan will include an accompanying Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan.
- Seven Aboriginal governments developed 5 year Regional Aboriginal Language Plans and hired Regional Aboriginal Language Coordinators to lead and manage the regional Aboriginal language revitalization initiatives. Currently, the plans are in the third year of implementation.
- The Aboriginal Languages and Learning Secretariat (ALLS) is working to enhance the protection, revitalization and promotion of Aboriginal languages throughout the NWT.
- Three priorities of the ALLS are to implement and monitor the following initiatives:
 - The renewed *NWT Aboriginal Languages Plan – A Shared Responsibility*;
 - the Aboriginal Languages and Culture Based Education (ALCBE) Directive; and
 - the 5-year Regional Aboriginal Language Plans.
- The ALCBE Directive was reviewed in 2014. The review found the Directive sound, but identified areas that required improvement. The Directive is currently undergoing renewal to address the recommendations of the review. The renewed ALCBE Directive and phased-in funding model and accountability structure will be implemented on a transitional basis in 2017-18, with full implementation taking place in the 2018/19 school year.

- Land-based learning opportunities and culture camps continue to be made available to Aurora College students.
- Delivery of the Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor Program through Aurora College in the Sahtu region is going well and it is anticipated that 6 students will graduate in the Spring of 2017.
- Legislative changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Change of Name Act* have been proposed to enable reclamation of single names, if desired, since legislation currently requires two names on a birth certificate. Once implemented, residents will be able to register their name in an Aboriginal language, as the restriction of roman alphabet-only names is removed. *The Vital Statistics Act* Bill was introduced to the Legislative Assembly on June 24, 2016.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is supportive of waiving the fee to file a change of name application to reclaim names changed by the residential school system and to issue a new birth certificate in that name without charge.
- The *General Identification Card Regulations* and the *Driver's Licence Regulations* under the *Motor Vehicles Act* have been amended to provide the Registrar of Motor Vehicles with the authority to waive the fee required for name changes, for clients wishing to reclaim names that were changed under the residential school system.

D. Health (TRC Recommendations 18-24 and 55iv)

GNWT Response:

The GNWT will continue to address the population health disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, in partnership with the federal government and with Aboriginal governments.

- On August 1, 2016 Bill 44: *An Act to Amend the Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act* came into force and put into place the Northwest territories Health and Social Services Authority (Territorial Authority). This new integrated system will improve care and services for NWT residents. Structures within the new system, including Regional Wellness Councils (RWCs) and the Territorial Board of Management will ensure residents in all regions of the NWT have better input on care delivery at the regional and territorial level. RWCs have been established for the following six regions:
 - Fort Smith,
 - Dehcho,
 - Yellowknife,
 - Sahtu,
 - Hay River, and
 - Beaufort Delta.

Stanton Territorial Hospital will not have a distinct RWC. As a territorial facility, it will be governed by the Territorial Board of Management.

The plans for bringing the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority into the public service will continue to be refined.

The proposed amalgamation of the Boards of Management will not include the TCSA. There will be no consequential amendment to the *Tłı̨cho Community Services Agency Act*.

- Members and chairs for Regional Wellness Councils were announced in June 2016. Selections of regional wellness councils, to the extent possible, reflect a balance in each region, including youth, elders, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, small community and regional centre.
- Standardization of processes, systems, and the removing of barriers in the system will help ensure consistent care and services for all NWT residents.
- The Territorial Authority has an excellent leadership team that has begun to focus on making changes in key priority areas including:

- Child and Family Services,
- Mental Health and Addictions, and
- Quality and Safety.
- The GNWT will have the opportunity to consolidate finance and procurement, setting the stage to achieve immediate efficiencies, and improve ability to track and maintain costs. Over the next three years the GNWT will see each of these areas addressed and changes made to help improve care and service delivery and make the system more efficient. Stakeholder outreach and communication, including Aboriginal and Community governments, will continue throughout the transition process.
- A Community Safety Strategy that was piloted by the Department of Justice is currently in the evaluation phase. Lessons learned from the strategy will be incorporated when implementing current and future Community Justice and Policing initiatives. The community engagement approach to the safety strategy proved to be successful in identifying and assessing existing resources in the community as well as health and safety issues that face these communities. Building community capacity to address these issues remains a priority.
- A decentralized team of Community Development and Wellness Planners support ongoing community wellness work. This work includes helping with 18 Community Healthy Living Fairs between July 2016 and February 2017 to raise awareness on healthy living, to focus on community wellness and expand health networks. These will be events for the whole community with focus on sharing health and wellness ideas, along with promotion of fitness, nutrition and traditional living, etc. The communities are: Ndilo, Lutsel K'e, Fort Resolution, Hay River Reserve, Enterprise, Kakisa, Fort Providence, Trout Lake, Wrigley, Nahanni Butte, Fort Liard, Jean Marie River, Tulita, Délı̄ne , Fort Good Hope, Colville Lake, Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson.
The work includes assisting communities with refreshing their Community Wellness Plans during the 5-year block funding agreement (2013-2018) with Health Canada. This began with facilitator training workshops held in Norman Wells, Inuvik, Yellowknife and Fort Simpson in the fall of 2016.
- The 2015 Public Performance Measures Report can be found at <http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/nwt-hss-public-performance-measures-report-2015.pdf> .
The 2016 report is expected to be available by early November 2016 at: <http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/publications>

Funding for Healing from the Harms Caused by Residential Schools

- An NWT On the Land Collaborative Fund has been established, and will ensure that approved projects serve multiple communities and provide direct mental wellness services, provide early warning crisis signals, and seek to blend or balance clinical approaches with traditional and cultural values and methodologies.

Partners in the Fund include the GNWT, Tides Canada, the PEW Indigenous Leadership Initiative, TNC Canada, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, Dominion Diamond Corporation, NWT Recreation and Parks Association, and community advisors from across the NWT.

The On the Land Healing Fund supports Aboriginal Governments to delivery land based healing programs for mental health and addictions. This is a key component of the overall continuum of services for mental health and addictions. The funding is ongoing with approximately \$1 million available to support programs.

HSS is working with on-the-land leaders to develop an evaluation framework to build upon evidence that on-the-land programs are an emerging best practice for healing.

- A consultant was hired to examine current Aboriginal wellness practices at Stanton hospital, best practices, and recommendations for a stand-alone Aboriginal wellness centre or within the hospital. Funding has not yet been identified for the construction of an Aboriginal wellness centre.

Aboriginal Healing

- A new Indigenous Advisory body is being established to replace the Stanton Elders' Council whose term ended in August 2016 when the Stanton Territorial Health Authority amalgamating into the Territorial Health and Social Services Authority. This group will be responsible for advising the GNWT on matters related to the planning of an Aboriginal wellness centre, finding ways to accommodate traditional healing and ensuring the health and social services system is culturally safe.
- All correctional facilities have traditional liaison officers who provide one-on-one counselling and cultural ceremonies such as feeding the fire ceremonies, smudging and sharing circles These officers also take offenders to traditional picking sites (i.e. sweet-grass and rat root). Offenders also have opportunities to participate in community sweats with elders and staff.

Health Care Professionals

- All GNWT employees are required to take the Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training which provides GNWT employees with information and context for the communities and regions we live in and residents we serve. Its content is northern specific and provides historical information on government and Aboriginal relationships.

The training is for GNWT employees and is also available for viewing by the general public (<https://my.hr.gov.nt.ca/courses/aboriginal-cultural-awareness-training>).

Diversity and inclusion are crucial aspects of a strong and stable public service. This training increases understanding about Aboriginal culture, enhances awareness, and promotes a spirit of inclusion. This training also reaffirms Aboriginal values and partnerships as a key foundation of the GNWT, based on respect, recognition and responsibility.

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, issued in 2015, called for all health systems to ensure cultural safety training – the NWT health and social services system was already on this path.

We have highlighted Indigenous health, the need to improve Indigenous health outcomes, and the importance of cultural safety and cultural competence since 2013. The Aboriginal Health and Community Wellness Division at the Department was also established in 2013 to dedicate resources and give focus to concerns about the care given to Indigenous patients and clients and to better address health outcome disparities that exist between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal populations of the NWT.

HSS has also sought advice from nationally recognized experts over the past three years. Department staff, leaders and elders have visited other jurisdictions that have developed best practices (Alaska, Yukon, Ontario). The Minister of HSS has written to the Chair of new NWT Health and Social Services Leadership Council directing that a culturally competent system be a priority. The Minister has also invited Aboriginal governments to designate staff to work with the Department on designing an Indigenous Advisory Council for the new NWT Health and Social Services Authority. Their input will be critical in ensuring we get it right. The Minister has kept Aboriginal leaders informed and sought their views at gatherings in April 2015 and May 2016, at Assemblies and at government-to-government meetings.

- The Department is receiving support from the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement to develop a five-year action plan.

E. Justice (TRC Recommendations 25-42 and 55v, vi and vii)

GNWT Response:

The GNWT is committed to continuing work towards reducing the number of Aboriginal people in custody, and will participate in national efforts to monitor and evaluate progress. This is a long-standing and complicated issue - addressing it requires the active collaboration of many entities including all GNWT social program departments, Aboriginal Governments, and communities at large.

The GNWT supports the TRC call for federal, provincial, and territorial governments to implement and evaluate community sanctions that provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders.

The GNWT continues to explore ways to best address the needs of offenders affected by addictions, mental illness, FASD and other cognitive impairments. This includes approaches which place a focus on the individual - and which aim to address their underlying issues - while identifying and building on their strengths.

The GNWT notes that it is important to recognize the independence of the judiciary in the consideration or implementation of the TRC recommendations.

- A Pan Territorial Project led by the GNWT has collected a significant amount of data in all three territories, and a preliminary report has been developed. The territories will now focus on connecting the data and each will develop an evidence based crime prevention project or initiative. The NWT has identified trauma informed approaches to future program development as the focus of their project.
- The “New Day” program was successfully piloted and evaluated with plans now being developed to implement the program in 2017.
- The Corrections service continues to work toward building a curriculum around the traditional first nations based addictions program that has been created and now facilitated at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre (SMCC). Once a curriculum is established and program manuals are

created, this program will be expanded and evaluated in other correctional facilities in the NWT.

- The Wellness Court and its supporting program are currently available in Yellowknife. Work continues on policy and program framework and establishment of linkages to supports and programming in the community. In 2016-17, the Wellness Court program added a second bed at the Bailey House facility in order to increase the ability to offer offenders housing to support their wellness plan.
- The Domestic Violence Treatment Option (DVTO) Court and its supporting PARTNER program are currently available in Yellowknife and Hay River. DVTO Court also sits in Behchokò, and residents can attend the PARTNER program in Yellowknife. Residents of K'atl'odeeche and Enterprise may also participate in the Hay River program. In 2016-17, the Department of Justice is examining the feasibility of further expanding the DVTO Court to other communities. Any decision to expand the DVTO Court would ultimately be made by the judiciary of the Territorial Court, and would need to take into consideration the availability of other supports and programming in any community being considered.
- An Integrated Case Management Pilot project has indicated that housing, and its associated issues, is the most common need for clients. A working group is analyzing the factors that contribute to housing needs and discussing options to holistically address the issue, as well as each department's role.
- In the NWT, 8 community organizations provide local/regional Victim Services programs. Program coordinators and volunteers provide victims of crime with information, assistance, support and referrals.
- The NWT Victim Services program recently received renewed funding from the Department of Justice Canada's Victims Fund for fiscal years 2016-2021 to continue delivering services to NWT residents affected by crime.
- Since the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* came into force on April 1, 2003, counts of youth in custody have decreased. In 2002-03, the average count in the NWT was approximately 45. As of April 25, 2016, there were 4. (Canadian Center for Justice Statistics *Beyond 20/20 – Youth correctional services, average counts of young persons in provincial and territorial correctional services, annual* – for NWT only.)

G. Royal Proclamation and Covenant of Reconciliation (TRC Recommendations 45-46)

GNWT Response:

The GNWT recognizes that a Royal Proclamation of Reconciliation could reaffirm the nation to nation relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown, and serve to further reconciliation. The GNWT appreciates that a Royal Proclamation would serve as a lasting testament to the importance of reconciliation and should be carefully considered.

- Ongoing – The GNWT continues to make the negotiation and implementation of Aboriginal rights agreements a priority. The GNWT is currently engaged in the negotiation of Aboriginal rights agreements, and participates along with its treaty partners in the implementation of five land, resources and self-government agreements.
- On September 1, 2016, the Délı̄ne Final Self-government Agreement came into effect, creating the first community-based Aboriginal public government in the NWT. The GNWT will work collaboratively with Canada and the Délı̄ne Got'ı̄ne Government on the implementation of the agreement.
- The leadership of many Aboriginal Governments and members of the Executive Council continue to meet bilaterally on a regular basis as a part of Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreements.
- The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations continues to implement 'Respect, Recognition and Responsibility'.

K. Professional Development and Training for Public Servants (TRC Recommendation 57)

GNWT Response:

The GNWT is already actively supporting this recommendation.

- All GNWT employees are required to take the Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training which provides GNWT employees with information and context for the communities and regions we live in and residents we serve. Its content is northern specific and provides historical information on government and Aboriginal relationships. The training is for GNWT employees and is also available for viewing by the general public (<https://my.hr.gov.nt.ca/courses/aboriginal-cultural-awareness-training>). Diversity and inclusion are crucial aspects of a strong and stable public service. This training increases understanding about Aboriginal culture, enhances awareness, and promotes a spirit of inclusion. This training also reaffirms Aboriginal values and partnerships as a key foundation of the GNWT, based on respect, recognition and responsibility.

M. Education for Reconciliation (TRC Recommendation 62-65)

GNWT Response:

The GNWT is already actively supporting this recommendation.

- The GNWT is working with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, the governments of Nunavut and the Yukon, the British Columbia Teachers Federation, and the Edmonton Catholic School Board, to develop teaching materials that address the issue of children who died at residential schools.
- Aboriginal governments contribute to the Skills 4 Success Initiative through the participation of their Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) managers who are members of the Skills 4 Success Advisory Group.
- The GNWT is participating in the renewal of all K-12 curriculum with Alberta, which has made the inclusion of indigenous perspectives and history, including the history and legacy of residential schools as a central mandate.
Teachers new to the Northwest Territories take part in a full day awareness course on the history and legacy of residential schools as part of a New to the North Teachers Conference.

P. Missing Children and Burial Information (TRC Recommendation 71-76)

GNWT Response:

GNWT is willing to work with Aboriginal partners, and the federal government to create a registry and maps of burial locations. The GNWT supports the objectives of these recommendations.

- The Cultural Places Program manages the NWT Aboriginal Graves Database, which compiles information on burial sites found outside cemeteries. Information related to residential school burial sites can be maintained securely in this database. When appropriate, burial sites found outside cemeteries can also be recorded as archaeological sites and protected from disturbance under the Archaeological Sites Regulations. The significant resources that would be required for a research project to systematically identify and document unrecorded residential school burial sites in the NWT are not currently available, but existing processes, as noted above, can be used to maintain information and protect sites as they come to light.