



ya:yəstəl

As we approach the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we want to share more about the work of Doctors of BC's Indigenous Guiding Circle and reflect on what this journey has meant to us as individuals, health care leaders, and physicians committed to improving health care for Indigenous Peoples.

The Indigenous Guiding Circle was established by Doctors of BC's Board in March 2025 to guide the association in its commitment to truth and reconciliation and Indigenous-specific anti-racism. The Guiding Circle brings together five First Nations and Métis physicians, five First Nations and Métis community members from across the province, and the president of Doctors of BC.

The members of this group bring a deep knowledge of Indigenous health and the impacts of both colonization and Indigenous-specific racism in health care contexts. They also offer an understanding of Indigenous cultural safety and humility, as well as First Nations and Métis ways of knowing, cultural traditions, ceremonies, protocols, and traditional wellness practices. Their collective wisdom is helping shape Doctors of BC's Truth and Reconciliation Plan while encouraging thoughtful reflection on the association's history and the medical profession's role in the health care experiences of Indigenous Peoples.

Earlier this summer, the Guiding Circle was gifted the name ya:yəstəl by x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam) Elders and cultural teachers, which means "working together" in the hənqəminəm (Coast Salish) language. The

name reflects both the spirit of the Guiding Circle and our shared commitment to moving this work forward in partnership, grounded in humility, mutual respect, and learning from one another. Guided by ya:yəstəl, we continue to review publicly available records and Doctors of BC

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archives as we look to understand the past to develop our Truth and Reconciliation Plan. Looking honestly at our history is not always easy, but it is necessary to help us better understand where we have come from, acknowledge the profession's role in past harms, and identify meaningful opportunities to build a different future together.

One of the greatest gifts of the Guiding Circle has been the opportunity to listen. Some of the most meaningful moments have come not from formal presentations or strategic discussions but from shared stories of lived experience, resilience, and hope. Those conversations have challenged assumptions, broadened perspectives, and reminded us that reconciliation is not a

destination but an ongoing commitment to listening, learning, and being open to seeing the world through a different lens.

Our conversations have also reinforced that health is far more than the absence of illness. It is rooted in relationships—with family, community, culture, and the land—and in the understanding that the well-being of individuals cannot be separated from the well-being of the communities to which they belong. These teachings have guided Indigenous Peoples for generations and offer valuable lessons as we work to build a more compassionate, culturally safe, and patient-centred health care system. They also invite all of us to think differently about health, not only as clinicians but also as members of communities with shared responsibilities to one another and to future generations.

As physicians, we know that meaningful change happens through relationships. The same holds true for reconciliation. It requires openness, humility, accountability, and a willingness to keep learning, even when the conversations are difficult. While there is still much work ahead, we are grateful to be walking this path together with ya:yəstəl, in the spirit of *working together*. We remain committed to advancing truth and reconciliation, addressing anti-Indigenous racism, and helping build a health care system where Indigenous Peoples feel respected, safe, heard, and valued. ■

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