



June 21, 2012

Aboriginal Day 2012: Working with Aboriginal health professionals towards better health.

Dear Colleagues:

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) celebrates National Aboriginal Day 2012 by honouring the contributions of Aboriginal nurses to health care in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities across Canada.

In particular, we acknowledge the important work of the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada (A.N.A.C.), an affiliate member of CNA, for its support of Aboriginal nurses and Aboriginal nursing through research and education, among other activities. A.N.A.C.'s work on cultural safety benefits all nurses' understanding of social justice and equity.

The marked gap between the health of Aboriginal Peoples and the health of the general population in Canada is well-documented. Among the Inuit, suicide rates are 11 times higher; tuberculosis rates are 174 times higher; infant mortality is 3 times higher; and life expectancy is 15 years shorter. Health Canada reports that diabetes rates for Aboriginal Peoples are 4 times the Canadian average, while HIV rates are 2.8 times higher.

Yet, more illness care services for Aboriginal Peoples alone will not turn the tide. It is recognized that there are unique social determinants of health for Aboriginal Peoples, which are associated with such factors as culture, colonization, racism, residential schools and their current situations. Through culturally appropriate research, developed jointly with aboriginal health professionals and peoples, and through greater understanding of the impact of social determinants of health, we can develop new models of health care and achieve better health outcomes for Aboriginal Peoples.

On this National Aboriginal Day, we celebrate the contributions of all Aboriginal nurses and health professionals across Canada, who are seeking to reduce disparities and inequities in the health of Aboriginal Peoples while building a healthy future for Canadians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith Shamian".

Judith Shamian, RN, PhD, LLD (hon), D.Sci. (hon), FAAN
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