

Declaration of Commitment to Indigenous Peoples

We, the Board of Directors, acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands and territory of the Anishinabe, home to Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. From time immemorial, this region was and continues to be a special gathering place for Anishinabek from all directions who gathered for ceremony, trade and kinship. Today, the land we call Thunder Bay is home to many Indigenous peoples.

Prior to contact, the Anishinabek were an independent sovereign nation with its own customs, language, trade (economic) practices, child rearing and kinship networks, governance system, spirituality, world view, traditions and healing ways; a thriving culture within the larger population of diverse Indigenous nations through Turtle Island (North America). The Anishinabek lived in harmony with creation - the land, water and animals.

Canada's complex relationship with Indigenous peoples, the original people of this land, was originally set within the context of European expansionism. This time in history saw competing colonies form commercial and military alliances with First Nations in order to harvest wealth from what the settlers referred to as the "new world". Growing demand for land resulting from expansionism caused us to ignore our original relationship agreements with First Nations people and to adopt the colonizer's belief that First Nations people are an inferior race, which needed to be civilized and assimilated into the dominant culture. These colonizer beliefs then became the foundation of legislated public policy in Canada.

The theft of land, residential schools, the criminalizing of culture, and the sixties scoop were instruments of genocide, which underpins the challenges we face today. These challenges include but are not limited to racism, discrimination, violence and the inequitable access to key resources that support positive social determinants of health. These failings have been well documented in reports such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) National Inquiry and Jordan's Principle.

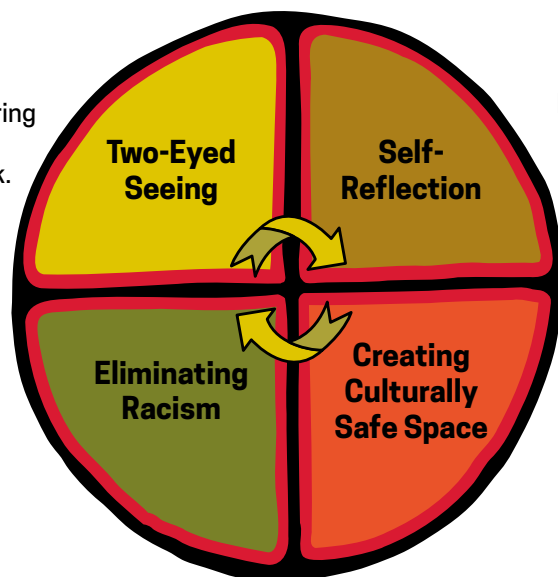
Indigenous peoples are the experts of their own realities and histories. We cannot assume we know about another's experiences and how that frames their knowing, engagement with health care providers, and healing methods. These facts have been recognized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Children's Centre, its Board and Staff have much to learn, to recognize and to do in support of creating both an organization and a service system that is safe to access, free of racism and respectful of individual cultural identity. Cultural safety is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address barriers, power imbalances, biases that are embedded in our health systems at the political, governance, administrative, and individual levels.

With this in mind, we as individuals and as an organization are committed to:

Adopting a "Two-Eyed Seeing" (1) approach of recognizing and honouring the strengths of Indigenous and Western ways of informing our work.

Eliminating Indigenous-specific racism and the systems, power structures and unconscious biases that support it.



Embarking on a self-reflective journey of humility, openness and learning.

Creating a culturally safe space as defined by Indigenous people to heal, grow and evolve.

1. Mikmaw Elder Albert Marshal, 2004 from <http://www.integrativescience.ca>