

## Statement on National Indigenous Peoples Day

National Indigenous Peoples Day, celebrated each year on June 21<sup>st</sup>, is an important opportunity to recognize and celebrate the rich cultures, histories, knowledge systems, traditions, and enduring contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples across Canada. It is also a meaningful time to reflect on the ongoing impacts of colonialism, including the significant health inequities and barriers to care that continue to affect many Indigenous individuals, families, and communities.

Healthcare systems in Canada have not always been safe, equitable, or accessible for Indigenous peoples. Advancing reconciliation within healthcare requires continued reflection, humility, listening, relationship-building, and a willingness to acknowledge both historical and ongoing harms. It also requires meaningful action to improve access to respectful, culturally safe, trauma-informed care.

Across British Columbia, naturopathic doctors work with Indigenous patients and communities in a variety of clinical and community settings, including urban, rural, remote, and underserved areas. Naturopathic doctors often provide ongoing primary care support, chronic disease management, mental health support, preventive care, lifestyle counselling, and whole-person care that takes into account the broader social, emotional, cultural, and environmental factors influencing health and well-being.

At the core of naturopathic medicine is a patient-centred approach that emphasizes listening, individualized care, prevention, education, and supporting patients in ways that respect their experiences, values, and goals. While there is always more work to do, many naturopathic doctors are actively working to strengthen their understanding of cultural safety, cultural humility, trauma-informed practice, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action as they relate to healthcare.

National Indigenous Peoples Day is also a celebration. It is an opportunity to honour Indigenous leadership, resilience, innovation, healing traditions, languages, and the deep connections to community and land that have existed for generations.

We encourage all to take time to learn, listen, participate in local events, and support Indigenous communities and organizations, not only on June 21, but throughout the year

Dr. Vanessa Lindsay, ND

*On behalf of the Board of Directors*