



COVID-19 and Racism Against Indigenous People

January 22, 2021

Recently Al Siebring, North Cowichan Mayor, spoke against instances of racism perpetuated against members of the Cowichan Tribes in Duncan, BC who reported cases of COVID-19 and subsequently issued a shelter in place order in effect until January 22, 2021¹. North Cowichan Mayor Siebring highlighted racist rhetoric that was posted online when the Cowichan Tribe released COVID-19 numbers. These cases were disclosed in the interest of public transparency and what resulted were unfounded and vile attacks against members of the community. Sadly, additional stories have emerged of members of the Tla'amin Nation being denied service at local grocery stores.

This fear-based response to transparency in reporting COVID-19 numbers and locations underscores the systemic racism highlighted by Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond in her report entitled "[In Plain Sight Addressing Indigenous specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care](#)". Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer, condemned these actions against Indigenous people due to fears of COVID-19 as racism.

NNPBC also condemns these actions as examples of entrenched and systemic racism. COVID-19 has changed our world and uncertainty and fear are common as we grapple with the impacts of the pandemic. While fear and uncertainty are understandable, racist rhetoric targeted against Indigenous peoples is unacceptable. As Mayor Siebring so aptly noted, "This virus is no respecter of persons or of "race." It does not discriminate. And neither should we."

Affecting change requires commitment, constant action and a mindfulness that ensures that we always consider the impact of our words and actions. NNPBC reaffirms our commitment to supporting lasting change in the nursing profession and in health and social policy.

- [NNPBC Board Statement re: In Plain Sight Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care](#)
- [NNPBC's Anti-Racism Statement](#)
- [NNPBC's Commitment to Indigenous Health](#)
- [Reporting Racism in Health Care](#)
- [An Apology on Behalf of Nursing](#)

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/mayoralsiebring/posts/3966683063356017>