The Indigenous Physical Activity & Cultural Circle
2023 National Declaration

BACKGROUND

The Indigenous Physical Activity & Cultural Circle ("IPACC") is a network for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people who are involved in traditional activities, fitness, recreation, and sports. IPACC is a dynamic non-profit national organization and network that provides leadership, guidance, and support for Indigenous peoples in Canada through the continual promotion of health and wellness opportunities.

The opportunity to participate in physical activity enhances connections to the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical components of wholistic health and wellness for Indigenous peoples. IPACC creates a culturally safe space for networking that increases opportunities in coaching, officiating, and volunteer leadership for Elders, women, 2SLGBTQI+, persons with a disability, and visible minorities. Additionally, establishing inclusive and culturally sensitive support for Indigenous youth in physical activity may further develop and encourage family aspirations.

Honouring the Nation's mandate to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, IPACC aims to ensure that all work reflects Indigenous shared values and that there is a culturally safe and supportive environment for all abilities, sex and genders to be champions in traditional fitness, recreation, and sports. IPACC must ensure that there are national policies to support accessible, affordable, culturally sensitive, safe, inclusive, fun, and fair physical activities for Indigenous peoples. IPACC also believes that the impacts of the Indian Residential School experience and our history are essential components in building awareness on how reconciliation today may be developed through opportunities to enhance participation in physical activity. Therefore, this National Declaration reflects IPACC's mission, vision, and purpose.

IPACC created the National Declaration "Show Us Your Active Spirit" (2012)[1] with feedback from the IPACC Board of Directors, Advisors, and Members. In 2023, IPACC updated the National Declaration to include the TRC Calls to Action (2015).[2]

The IPACC declaration was also developed by reviewing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2008),[3] the Maskwachee (ISCA, 2005),[4] the British Columbia Indigenous Youth at the Gathering Our Voices 2008 Declaration (FNHC),[5] and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (2014),[6] and the TRC Calls to Action (2015). Finally, the IPACC Declaration has been recently updated to include the TRC Calls to Action (2015).

PART I: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' PERSPECTIVES OF WHOLISTIC HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Indigenous peoples' concept of health and wellness is both a collective and individual inter-generational continuum encompassing a diverse wholistic perspective incorporating four distinct shared dimensions of life, based on community, cultures, traditions, and histories. These dimensions may encompass balancing of the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical components of wholistic health and wellness based on diverse and personal Indigenous ways of knowing.

The benefits of physical activity may also impact social determinants of health within a community, facilitate children's and youths' health and well-being, and foster stronger and increasingly engaged communities. These benefits are realized when physical activity includes traditional values and is accessible for all community members regardless of stage in the journey of life.

We Declare that:

- We, the Indigenous community of Canada, are committed to improving the health and wellness of all Indigenous peoples through traditional activities, fitness, recreation, and sports;
- We, as Indigenous peoples, hold self-respect, reverence to previous generations, and reciprocate to the future generations' well-being as the foundation of our culture to live healthy and active lives;
- We honour our past generations, communities, families, traditional territories, and culture through the traditional teachings and wisdom of our Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

PART 2: OUR RIGHTS AND INTERESTS AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CANADA

We, as representatives of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, Nations, Indigenous Peoples, and organizations committed to National Indigenous traditional activities, fitness, recreation, and sports, declare in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008), that:

- Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (Article 24, 2);
- Take effective measures to ensure, as needed, that programs for monitoring, maintaining, and restoring the health of Indigenous peoples, as developed and implemented by the peoples affected by such materials, are duly implemented (Article 29, 3); and
- Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect, and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies, and cultures, sports, traditional games, visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions (Article 31, 1).

We affirm the right to the highest attainable spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical wholistic health and wellness, commensurate with Indigenous peoples' definition of health and well-being.

- The Federal and Provincial Governments to work with the Indigenous peoples of Canada to implement the spirit of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples and the IPACC National Declaration;
- The Federal and Provincial Governments recognize the diverse systems of Indigenous knowledge and physical activity practices, including traditional activities, fitness, recreation, and sports.

PART 3: BROADER DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS WITHIN AN INDIGENOUS CONTEXT

Including Indigenous health and wellness and culturally safe strategies require meaningful and deliberate action on the part of governments and responsible agencies in the health of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Establishing ongoing and meaningful partnerships are required when working with Indigenous peoples, with all parties acting in good faith by being authentic and transparent in their dialogue with Indigenous peoples.

We will:

- Improve the health and wellness of Indigenous peoples by supporting our families and communities by engaging in traditional activities, fitness, recreation, and sports;
- Promote traditional and wholistic activities that enhance connections to our Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and nurture our spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical well-being;
- Create more opportunities for Indigenous peoples who self-identify as 2SLGBTQI+;
- Create more opportunities for Indigenous youth, girls and women, persons with disabilities, and families to participate in healthy and fun activities;
- Establish pathways for long-term Indigenous athletes and participant development, through culturally sensitive coaching, funding, networking, and community programs.

PART 4: POLICIES, STRATEGIES, AND CALLS TO ACTIONS

IThe unique dynamics of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and the diversity within Indigenous communities in Canada must be the foundation of all community centered programming. The first steps must include recognizing Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination and adhering to the principles of wholism, meaningful participation, mutual respect,reciprocityand reconciliation. To achieve our commitment toward the implementation of the IPACC National Declaration, policies and strategies with programs are needed in the following areas:

- Increase awareness, opportunities, capacity building and empowerment strategies for Indigenous peoples to have accessible physical activity programs at all levels that includes traditional activities, fitness, recreation, and sports.
- Increase intergenerational community-centered approach so that physical activity programs are inclusive of their family and relatives.
- Ensure there are Indigenous community-led and directed physical activity programs that are strength-based and have ties to culture and the promotion of wholistic health and wellness.
- Education programs and networking initiatives for Indigenous peoples involved in traditional activities, fitness, recreation, and sports.
- Increase culturally safe, relevant, and inclusive program delivery for Indigenous people living in urban, rural and remote areas.
- Increase funding and resources for Indigenous organizations, national bodies, and community programs that have a specific mandate to promote physical activity, wholistic health and wellness for Indigenous peoples by Indigenous people.
- Increase financial resources that include Indigenous community cultural centres, sports or recreation infrastructure, and equipment.

In accordance with the TRC Calls to Action, the following Sports and Recreation Calls to Action are all areas that IPACC supports within our mission (2015):
87. We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.
88. We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.
89. We call upon the federal government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples.
90. We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to, establishing:
i. In collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal peoples.
ii. An elite athlete development program for Aboriginal athletes.
iii. Programs for coaches, trainers, and sports officials that are culturally relevant for Aboriginal peoples.
iv. Anti-racism awareness and training programs.
91. We call upon the officials and host countries of international sporting events such as the Olympics, Pan Am, and Commonwealth games to ensure that Indigenous peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events.

IPACC also aspires to support the TRC Calls to Action that are related to health, wellness, and culture for all Indigenous people (2015):
14. We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that incorporates the following principles: iv. The preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities
19. We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes Calls to Action| 3 between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and to publish annual progress reports and assess long-term trends. Such efforts would focus on indicators such as infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services.
20. In order to address the jurisdictional disputes concerning Aboriginal people who do not reside on reserves, we call upon the federal government to recognize, respect, and address the distinct health needs of the Métis, Inuit, and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples.
23. We call upon all levels of government to:
i. Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the healthcare field.
24. We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.
43. We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.
44. We call upon the Government of Canada to develop a national action plan, strategies, and other concrete measures to achieve the goals of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
55. We call upon all levels of government to provide annual reports or any current data requested by the National Council for Reconciliation so that it can report on the progress towards reconciliation. The reports or data would include, but not be limited to:
iv. Progress on closing the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in a number of health indicators such as infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services.
66. We call upon the federal government to establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation, and establish a national network to share information and best practices.
84. We call upon the federal government to restore and increase funding to the CBC/Radio-Canada, to enable Canada's national public broadcaster to support reconciliation, and be properly reflective of the diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to:
iii. Continuing to provide dedicated news coverage and online public information resources on issues of concern to Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians.

The IPACC National Declaration is significant to the Indigenous community of Canada for it is an acknowledgment of the importance of traditional activities, fitness, recreation, and sports within these communities.

---

1. Show Us Your Active Spirit (2012)|https://iactive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Official-APACC-National-Declaration-2012.pdf
2. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015)| https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf
3. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008)| http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf
4. Indigenous Sports Council Alberta, Maskwachee Declaration (2005)| http://www.aboriginalsports.org/resources/articles/maskwachees-declaration.html
5. British Columbia Indigenous Youth at the Gathering Our Voices (2008)|Declaration|https://gatheringourvoices.ca/our-history/
6. Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (2014) Declaration: Getting to Zero| http://aboriginalaidsawareness.com/declaration-getting-to-zero/