



NEWS RELEASE

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Release of Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Report

An extraordinary opportunity to step forward toward change and mental health for all people in Canada says Canadian Mental Health Association

Vancouver, British Columbia – The Canadian Mental Health Association’s BC Division (CMHA BC) sees today’s historic release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report as an important step toward change, reconciliation, and mental health for *all* Canadians including First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The Canadian Mental Health Association in BC stands and recognizes the courage of each of the 7,000 witnesses who testified during the Commission’s six-year mandate and the hard work of Justice Sinclair, Commissioner Wilson, and Commissioner Littlechild.

“We must all read the survivors’ accounts in this report very closely,” says Bev Gutray, CEO at CMHA BC, “and we should think about the changes we all need to make to arrest the ongoing legacy of residential schools playing out in our child welfare system and our prison system.”

Aboriginal people in BC make up approximately 4.5% of the total population of the province. According to the BC Government, there are approximately 4,400 Aboriginal children in care, which is 53% of the caseload. Aboriginal people continue to be disproportionately represented in the BC corrections system compared to their proportion of the larger population. The percentage of Aboriginal people admitted into custody has risen faster than increases in the size of the BC Aboriginal population. We agree with Justice Sinclair’s comment made to press this morning, when he says “this is not an Aboriginal problem, it’s a Canadian problem.”

“The Commission’s report represents an extraordinary opportunity to step forward toward change,” says Gutray, “and presents an important question about why there is still an environment in place where Aboriginal people are more likely to become caught up in, rather than leave the child welfare and justice systems.”

“My organization is committed to doing better. We are committed to learning from Aboriginal communities and ensuring our programs and services are culturally safer. We are committed to having a stronger advocacy voice and speaking up for the changes needed to address the ongoing effects of the residential schools,” says Gutray.

The Canadian Mental Health Association stands alongside BC’s Aboriginal peoples and calls upon allied organizations to study the Commission’s report and to learn from and work with Aboriginal peoples in creating brighter futures and mental health for all.

About the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA):

Founded in 1918, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is one of Canada’s oldest not-for-profit organizations. With more than 10,000 staff and volunteers in hundreds of communities across Canada, CMHA provides vital services and support to well over half a million Canadians every year. As the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health, CMHA facilitates access to the resources people require to maintain and improve mental

health and community integration, build resilience and support recovery from mental illness. For mental health and mental illness information, resources and tools and to find a CMHA community location, please go to www.cmha.ca.

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To schedule interviews, contact:

Donna Panitow
Communications Coordinator
Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division
604-688-3234 or donna.panitow@cmha.bc.ca