

Call to Action

- 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.

Aboriginal healing practices

Aboriginal health practices and beliefs, like Aboriginal peoples themselves, are diverse. However, an holistic approach to health is common to many Aboriginal cultures and has also been increasingly validated by ‘Western’ medicine. A belief shared among many Inuit, Métis, and First Nation people is that a sacred connection exists among people, the Earth, and everything above it, upon it, and within it. For purposes of healing, this means activities such as “on-the-land” or “bush” healing camps where participants can experience the healing power of the natural world. Traditional practices can also include sweat lodges, cedar baths, smudging, the lighting of the Qulliq (a stone lamp used by the Inuit for ceremonial purposes), and other spiritual ceremonies.¹¹⁷ Best practices for Aboriginal wellness involve a range of services from mainstream health care to traditional practices and medicines, all under community leadership and control. Such an integrated approach has the power to improve the lives of all community members.

Calls to Action

- 21) We call upon the federal government to provide sustainable funding for existing and new Aboriginal healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools, and to ensure that the funding of healing centres in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories is a priority.
- 22) We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.

Overcoming the health legacy of the residential schools will require a long-term investment in Aboriginal communities, so that communities can revive their capacity to heal themselves. One key investment will be the training of more Aboriginal health and social service professionals. The work that Health Canada’s community cultural and traditional knowledge healing team members did in support of this Commission and other