

An Open Letter to all residents of the Cowichan Valley region from the Board Chairs of the Cowichan Valley Division of Family Practice, Executive Committee of Cowichan District Medical Society, First Nations Health Authority, and Island Health's Cowichan Valley leadership:

We are deeply disturbed by the reports of Indigenous-specific racism in our community following the recent announcement of a Shelter in Place Order by Cowichan Tribes leadership.

As leaders in health care in the Cowichan Valley Region, we respectfully acknowledge that we are privileged to live and work on the traditional and unceded territories of Cowichan Tribes, Malahat Nation, Halalt First Nation, Lyackson First Nation, Stz'uminus First Nation, Penelakut Tribes, Ditidaht First Nation, and Ts'uubaa-asatx First Nation. We also recognize that within the Cowichan Valley Region we are privileged to live and work alongside, and provide health care services to, Métis and Inuit peoples, and community members of the First Nations in the Coast Salish, Kwakwak'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth families.

We recognize and support the leadership of Indigenous Nations in the province and around the country, and specifically in our region, who have decided to enact Shelter in Place Orders during this pandemic. We know that such decisions are not taken lightly and are done with the desire to keep community members safe and healthy, especially the most vulnerable - elders, who are valued and respected knowledge keepers for all of us.

It is troubling, disheartening and extremely hurtful to see that some members of the public are taking these Shelter in Place Orders to justify racist ideologies, words and actions.

It is important for all of us to follow the directions of Dr. Bonnie Henry and our local public health leaders. We must continue to maintain our protective layers of hand hygiene, physical distancing, wearing a mask in public spaces, and greatly reducing our contacts outside of our households. If we do this, we know we can protect ourselves, and others. This is what First Nations who have put Shelter in Place Orders are doing for their community as a whole.

As leaders in health care for the Cowichan Valley Region, we stand behind the leadership and members of all Indigenous communities, including Métis and Inuit peoples, in this area. Since the release of the *In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-Specific Racism and Discrimination in BC Health Care* report, we are extremely aware of where we have collectively failed in caring for Indigenous, Métis and Inuit people in our health care system in a culturally safe way.

We pledge to be actively anti-racist in our actions and words. We will pledge to address any and all racially based discrimination that we see in any of our health care delivery areas. We pledge to elevate our standards in an effort to uphold and model the practice of cultural safety and humility in an effort to ensure that we provide excellent health and care for everyone, everywhere, every time.

We represent your family physicians, nurse practitioners, midwives, emergency room physicians, specialist physicians, Cowichan District Hospital, and community services staff.

Please be kind and supportive of one another. Together, we will get through this.

Dr. Bryan Bass and Dr Jan Malherbe, Board Co-chairs, Cowichan Valley Division of Family Practice

Dr. Tracey Stephenson, Dr. Brendan O'Malley, Dr. Christiaan Avenant, Dr. Susan Barr, Executive Committee of Cowichan District Medical Society

Brennan MacDonald, Regional Executive Director - Vancouver Island, First Nations Health Authority

Emma James and Dr. Maki Ikemura, Island Health Cowichan Valley Director and Medical Director

Alice Gelpke and Dr. David Robertson, Island Health Cowichan Valley Executive Director and Executive Medical Director

Dr. Shannon Waters, Island Health Medical Health Officer, Cowichan Region



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Division of Family Practice
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