



Witness Survey

Witness accounts of Indigenous-specific discrimination in healthcare in Ontario

Introduction

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) is an independent public organization responsible for taking action to prevent discrimination and to promote and advance respect for human rights in Ontario.

Indigenous-specific discrimination and racism in the delivery of healthcare services is longstanding and widespread in Ontario and is a direct result of the legacy of discriminatory governmental policy toward Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous partners have called on the OHRC to take urgent action to address this serious issue.

The OHRC acknowledges that, for years, Indigenous organizations and communities have documented the many ways Indigenous-specific discrimination manifests in healthcare delivery – see, for example, the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health and Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition Share Your Story Project. The OHRC is grateful for the invaluable work that has already been done and, together with Indigenous partners, seeks to build on it by applying a human rights lens.

Healthcare providers in Ontario have an obligation under the *Human Rights Code* (Code) to prevent and address Indigenous-specific discrimination. The OHRC is committed to developing practical guidance setting out what healthcare providers should do to meet these legal obligations. The guidance will also help First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban Indigenous people understand how they are protected by the Code when seeking healthcare and provide a tool Indigenous organizations and communities can use to hold healthcare providers accountable.

The accounts of Indigenous-specific discrimination shared in this survey will help the OHRC to develop human rights guidance grounded in the experiences of Indigenous people. In addition, the OHRC will meet with Indigenous healthcare workers, organizations, and communities to learn more about systemic problems in healthcare. Following these engagements, the OHRC plans to publish a report summarizing what we have heard.

About this survey

The OHRC welcomes family members, caregivers, service providers and other people who have witnessed Indigenous-specific discrimination in healthcare to complete this survey.

The OHRC understands that sharing experiences of discrimination can be traumatic and painful. If you need to take a break at any time you can exit the survey and return to complete it if you feel ready. If you want to talk to someone, there is a list of resources that may help at the end of this document.

This survey is anonymous. Your device IP address, location data and contact information are not recorded. The OHRC will take all reasonable steps to make sure any personal information you provide is treated confidentially and is only used for the intended purpose. If the OHRC refers to the experience you share in its engagement report, human rights guidance, or public education activities, it will take all reasonable steps to make sure the identities of everyone involved are concealed.

If you have technical difficulties, or need help completing this survey, contact the OHRC by email to indigenous.health@ohrc.on.ca or phone 437 775 4741

Notice of collection of information

Purpose

The purpose of collecting information in this survey is to inform the OHRC's development of human rights guidance addressing Indigenous-specific discrimination in healthcare service delivery.

Collecting personal information

The OHRC complies with all relevant laws that relate to handling personal information. As a provincial public institution, the OHRC must abide by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). Section 38(2) of the FIPPA allows the OHRC to collect personal information as part of the functions of the Commission pursuant to section 29(d) of the *Human Rights Code*.

Limiting use and disclosure of personal information

The OHRC recognizes the importance of protecting personal information, protecting human dignity, and maintaining public trust and confidence. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure your personal information is treated confidentially and is only used for the purpose it was collected for. We will also take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorized access, use or disclosure of your personal information as directed by the FIPPA.

Consent

1. The OHRC requires your express consent to collect the information in this survey for the purpose described above.

- I agree to the use of my survey information for the purpose described above.
- I do NOT agree to the use of my survey information for the purpose described above and understand this means any information I share in this document will not be considered by the OHRC.

For information: Indigenous-specific discrimination in healthcare happens when healthcare service provider(s) treat someone negatively because they are, or are perceived to be, Indigenous. For example, Indigenous-specific discrimination can involve name calling and racial slurs, ignoring or refusing to serve an Indigenous person, withholding tests, procedures or medications that are available to non-Indigenous people, creating barriers to service that are not placed on non-Indigenous patients, and other types of negative treatment.

2. Does the following statement apply to you?

I have witnessed a person who identifies as, or who is perceived to be, First Nations, Inuit or Métis experience discrimination when accessing healthcare services in Ontario and I want to share what happened.

- Yes
- No - If you answer No, please do not continue to complete this survey. If you have personally experienced Indigenous-specific discrimination in healthcare in Ontario and would like to share your experience, please complete the Personal Experience Survey found on the OHRC website.

What you witnessed

3. Please tell us about the Indigenous-specific discrimination you witnessed. Try to include as much detail as possible such as:

- **Which part of the healthcare system was involved?**
 - For example, did the discrimination happen in a hospital, community health centre, clinic, family health team, mental health service, addictions centre, pharmacy, medical examination centre, dental clinic, paramedic service, long-term care home, or other healthcare provider?
- **Where?** – where was the health service located?
- **Who?** – what type of healthcare staff were involved?
 - For example, doctor, nurse, technician, administrator, receptionist, etc.?
- **What was the negative treatment?** – For example, did you witness: name calling; threats; blaming; being ignored; being refused tests, procedures, or medications; being treated differently than non-Indigenous people - if so, how were they treated differently; etc.?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the student to provide a response or drawing.

Please use separate sheets of paper if you need more space.

More details

The next questions may ask about information you have already provided. We apologise if this happens and thank you for your patience. We want to make sure we have all the details.

4. How do you think the healthcare staff member knew the person is Indigenous?

- Explain how you think they knew:

- Do not know
 Prefer to not say

5. Do you think the negative treatment received by the Indigenous person may have also been influenced by other part(s) of their identity, for example, a disability, their age, gender, or sexual orientation?

- Yes, explain if you wish:

- No
 Prefer to not say

6. What town or city was the health service that discriminated located in?

Your response will help the OHRC understand whether Indigenous people are treated differently in different parts of Ontario. The OHRC will keep all responses confidential and will not refer to an experience happening in a specific town or city in its reporting.

- Town or City:

- Prefer to not say

7. After witnessing this discriminatory treatment, would you go back to the same health service provider?

- Yes, I would return
- No, I would not return

Explain your response if you wish:

8. Do you have any recommendations on what should be done to prevent this discrimination from happening in the future?

- Yes, here are my recommendations:

- No, I do not have any recommendations
- Prefer to not say

Overall experience of discrimination

9. How often have you witnessed Indigenous-specific discrimination in the healthcare system?

- Very frequently
- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely

Personal characteristics

Before finishing, we would like to ask a question to understand the diversity of the people completing the survey. Your responses will be kept confidential and not attributed to you in any way without your consent.

10. Do you identify as Indigenous?

- No
- Yes – if yes, how do you identify? (choose as many as apply)
 - Mushkegowuk (Cree)
 - Oji-Cree
 - Mohawk (Haudenosaunee - Onkwehonwe)
 - Seneca (Haudenosaunee - Onkwehonwe)
 - Cayuga (Haudenosaunee - Onkwehonwe)
 - Oneida (Haudenosaunee - Onkwehonwe)
 - Onondaga (Haudenosaunee - Onkwehonwe)
 - Tuscarora (Haudenosaunee - Onkwehonwe)
 - Delaware (Anishinaabe)
 - Mississauga (Anishinaabe)
 - Chippewa (Anishinaabe)
 - Pottawotami (Anishinaabe)
 - Algonquin (Anishinaabe)
 - Odawa (Anishinaabe)
 - Lenape
 - Inuk / Inuit
 - Métis
 - Prefer to self-describe / self-identify: _____
 - Prefer not to say

Consent to follow-up contact

11. Finally, do you agree to have an OHRC staff member contact you if we have any follow-up questions about the information you have shared?

As a reminder, all your responses to this survey, and any follow-up with the OHRC is confidential. Providing your contact information is voluntary and there is no obligation to provide it.

- Yes, I agree to having an OHRC staff member contact me to follow-up, if necessary. Here is my email address and/or phone number:

- No, I do not agree to having an OHRC staff member contact me to follow-up.

Thank you for sharing what you witnessed with the Ontario Human Rights Commission. We appreciate your courage and generosity. The OHRC commits to carrying the information you have shared forward in a good way.

The OHRC understands that witnessing discrimination can be traumatic and painful. If you want to talk to someone, the list of resources at the end of this document may help.

Please return your completed survey to the OHRC

- **by mail to:** Rita Samson, Ontario Human Rights Commission, 180 Dundas St W, Suite 900, Toronto, ON M7A 2G5
- **by email to:** indigenous.health@ohrc.on.ca

The OHRC understands that sharing experiences of discrimination can be traumatic and painful. Below is a list of support resources and services available to Indigenous people in Ontario.

Indigenous-Specific Crisis Support Lines Available 24 Hours a Day:

[Hope for Wellness](#)

- Toll free help line: **1-855-242-3310** or by online chat at hopeforwellness.ca.
- Offers mental health counselling and crisis intervention to Indigenous people across Canada.

[Talk4Healing](#)

- Toll free: **1-855-554-HEAL (4325)**
- Offers culturally grounded, fully confidential helpline for Indigenous women available in 14 languages all across Ontario. (call, text and live chat available).

[InKamatsiaqtut Help Line](#)

- Toll free: **1-800-265-3333**
- Inuk Mental Health Support line

[Métis Crisis Line](#)

- Toll free: **1-877-767-7572**
- Métis Nation of Ontario's (MNO) 24 hour mental health and addiction support for adults, youth and families (services available in English and French).

The Native Youth Crisis Line

- Toll-free: **1-877-209-1266**
- Provides 24/7 crisis support for Indigenous Youth

Online Crisis Chat:

[ONTX – Ontario's Online Text and Crisis Service](#)

- Offers live chat and text with a trained empathetic responder that is safe, confidential and one-on-one. Responders are available for all issues related to distress, crisis and suicidal thoughts, prevention and intervention (Hours: 2pm to 2am).

Other Crisis Resources:

[Assaulted Women's Helpline](#)

- Toll free: **1-866-863-0511**

- Offers 24/7 telephone and TTY crisis line to all women who have experienced abuse. They provide counselling, emotional support, information and referrals.

Senior Safety Line

- Toll free: **1-866-299-1011**
- 24/7 confidential line providing crisis support, for seniors and people who are concerned for an older adult.

Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line

- Toll free: **1-888-687-9688**
- LGBT Youth Line is a queer, trans, two-spirited youth led-organization that offers anonymous peer support, referrals and resources for youth (29 and under) across Ontario. Services are available through phone, chat, and email.