

The John Howard Society of North Island RECONCILIATION FRAMEWORK

The John Howard Society of North Island seeks to promote the goals of reconciliation as identified in the 2015 Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The Commission defines reconciliation as an "...ongoing individual and collective process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships...".

The spirit of reconciliation fits well with the John Howard Society's vision to build safer and healthier communities. We strive to provide a safe and welcoming space where healing of harms can begin. A client focussed, respectful, and culturally responsive service is at the core of all the work undertaken by the society.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission stressed that words without action were insufficient. The John Howard Society can further the process of reconciliation in the following ways:

- ◆ Education: The Commission notes that "History plays an important role in reconciliation; to build for the future, Canadians must look to, and learn from, the past." The stories and the wisdom of Elders will be a vital component of this "Truth Telling". The John Howard Society will promote and support educational opportunities and events for staff, clients, and youth that seek to increase understanding of the harms and genocidal acts done to Indigenous people including the following:
 - ▶ Forcing children to attend residential schools where they were separated from family and culture and subject to medical experimentation and to physical, sexual and emotional abuse.
 - ▶ Deliberately exposing Indigenous people to fatal diseases through the distribution of infected blankets.
 - ▶ Cultural suppression through forced relocation of villages, appropriating cultural and spiritual artefacts, prohibiting potlatches, language, and other forms of Indigenous culture.
 - ▶ Other negative aspects of colonization and the ways in which these abuses have present consequences.

- ◆ Education will also emphasize the ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have created a rich collective culture that has been woven into the unique fabric that has become Canada. The sharing of traditional knowledge and skills allowed early settlers to survive. Indigenous people's words, relationship to the land, and ways of being are foundational to Canadian history, language, and culture. Significant Indigenous contributions to public service, the arts, sports, the environment, food sovereignty, law, the military, and every aspect of Canadian life have defined and enriched the nation.

- ◆ Culture: The John Howard Society of North Island accepts that there are unique Indigenous world views which are embedded through knowledge of culture, language and the land. We will work with Elders and traditional culture keepers to learn about Indigenous ancestors and sacred values for seven generations to come. Included in this learning will be recognizing and supporting the critical role that the revitalization of language plays in forming and maintaining cultural and personal identity. The sounds and experience of the natural world, particularly of the ocean and everything that lives in it, inform the context and creation of language and culture.
- ◆ Identity and Purpose: The John Howard Society of North Island recognizes that identity flows from the ability of Indigenous people to have relationships with all of life both seen and unseen and to inhabit and participate in the resources of their land. “When you have what rightly belongs to you, you have purpose.”¹ The John Howard Society promotes the aspirations of Indigenous people and supports the principles of justice and self-determination identified in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- ◆ Justice: The John Howard Society of North Island supports the revitalization of Indigenous conflict resolution practices including restorative justice, healing circles, and other traditions or alternatives to formal court which emphasize repairing harm and restoring relationships. This can be practised informally through existing John Howard programs and also formally through advocacy at provincial and federal levels by umbrella organizations.
- ◆ Health: The John Howard Society of North Island provides health and social services which promote holistic healing, respect all Indigenous teachings, and are strengths-based and welcoming.
- ◆ Inclusion: We will maintain the John Howard Society’s First Nations Elders’ Council, and work closely with all Indigenous organizations, community members, staff, and volunteers to ensure appropriate, respectful, and collaborative services are offered to clients.

¹Alberta Billy, We Wai Kai Nation, John Howard Society Elders’ Council