



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health  
Michael Clark, CEO (Interim)

DATE: 2021 January 21

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## MLHU COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION STATEMENT

### **Recommendation**

*It is recommended that the Board of Health:*

- 1) Receive Report No. 03-21 re: “MLHU Commitment to Reconciliation Statement” for information;*
- 2) Endorse the proposed MLHU reconciliation statement; and*
- 3) Direct staff to ensure MLHU’s priorities, decisions, and actions effectively and sustainably reflect its reconciliation statement.*

### **Key Points**

- The Board of Health has expressed strong support for Indigenous Reconciliation.
- Land acknowledgements are met with mixed reviews by Indigenous people, with many concern they are words often not accompanied by actions.
- It is recommended that MLHU shift from land acknowledgements to the endorsement and use of a “Commitment to Reconciliation” statement, including its use in a standardized employee email signature.

### **Background**

The Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) collaboratively developed and launched “Taking Action for Reconciliation: An Organizational Plan for the Middlesex-London Health Unit” in 2018 ([Report No. 052-18](#)).

Land acknowledgements have become the norm for many organizations as a means to acknowledge historical land stewardship by Indigenous peoples, demonstrate mindfulness of colonialism’s ongoing impacts in the present day, and recognize the work they do is on stolen land.

While some Indigenous people do support the use of such statements, there is a growing perception among Indigenous people that in many cases, the statements are mere words, often not accompanied by meaningful actions that contribute to improved health and other outcomes for Indigenous people. MLHU is striving to be action-oriented; it is important to ensure the organization’s words and actions are aligned.

### **Commitment to Reconciliation Statement**

The MLHU has been lauded for its leadership in the reconciliation space, and it is being recommended that leadership be demonstrated once again by shifting from the use of land acknowledgement to the endorsement and use of the following “Commitment to Reconciliation” statement:

“The Middlesex London Health Unit is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and communities. We acknowledge our role in improving the health and wellness outcomes of Indigenous people in our region, and in sharing what we have learned to effect greater change. We do this by building staff capacity to deliver culturally safe services, cultivating equitable and productive relationships with Indigenous partners, addressing racially-based health inequities by disrupting colonial practices within and outside our organization, and by building an organizational culture of humility and accountability through ongoing learning, thoughtful policy, and practice that is informed by multiple evidence sources. We continue to work towards full implementation of [Taking Action for Reconciliation: An Organizational Plan for the Middlesex-London Health Unit](#).

This proposed statement communicates MLHU’s intent, highlights areas of focus, reflects commitment to improve the health outcomes of Indigenous people, and helps ensure that MLHU takes action towards addressing oppression, racism, and inequities that have been inflicted on and experienced by Indigenous peoples in the area that is currently referred to as London and Middlesex County.

### Next Steps

Should the Board of Health endorse the proposed reconciliation statement and direct staff to ensure MLHU’s priorities, decisions, and actions effectively and sustainably reflect its reconciliation statement, the following next steps will be taken, at a minimum:

- 1) The approved statement will be communicated prominently on the MLHU website
- 2) All employees will be directed to standardize their email signatures with the following statement: *The Middlesex London Health Unit is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and communities. We acknowledge our obligation to improve the health and wellness of Indigenous people in our region and are committed to taking action to bring about change. For our full statement on our commitment to reconciliation and our action plan, visit [Indigenous Reconciliation](#).*
- 3) Planning and action to implement MLHU’s organizational plan for reconciliation will continue to be prioritized and enhanced wherever possible, and implications on positive progress towards reconciliation will be carefully considered during decision-making at all levels.

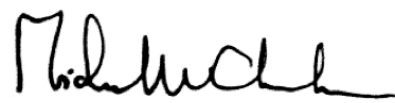
### Conclusion

MLHU fully acknowledges the health inequities experienced by Indigenous peoples, and its public health responsibility to understand, communicate, and collaboratively address these inequities. MLHU must continue to demonstrate and enhance its leadership and action in reconciliation efforts in London and Middlesex County. With the Board of Health’s approval of this report, MLHU has an opportunity to do just that.

This report was prepared by the Health Equity and Indigenous Reconciliation Team and the Communications Team.



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