

Position Statement

A Call to Action towards a zero tolerance of lateral violence

For thousands of years, our Nations have relied on our own Indigenous governance systems that were guided by the universe, and kinship systems that provided for social harmony and healthy relationships.

Traditionally, for all Nations, if a societal code was broken there were ways of restoring peace that would allow for reflection and renewal for the individual who was harmed, or who may have harmed another. Traditional teachings provided direction for dealing with hurtful differences among people because they stressed the importance of having power *with*, not power *over* one another. Coming from a place of respect and strength was seen as a natural part of the process.

Due to the traumatic effects of colonization, a foreign and polarizing problem known as “lateral violence” has become commonplace in communities and society today. Colonization and internalized racism are the true adversaries yet they are not confronted with due diligence. Meanwhile, they play out in displaced anger, threats and attacks in homes, schools and workplaces to the extent that lateral violence has become a significant public health issue for First Nations. Our traditional medicines, practices and teachings, based on a holistic model of health, give us original instructions to counter the destructive effects that lateral violence has on individuals, families and communities. Leaning on traditional medicines, practices and teachings based on a holistic model of health and wellness, these provide original instructions to counter the sources of lateral violence and its destructive effects on individuals, families and communities. Partnerships will uncover helpful roles and responsibilities for finding forward-looking and innovative strategies and solutions. Practical ideas, interests and perspectives, overlaid by a cultural lens, will need to be assessed, planned, implemented and evaluated.

The FNHDA issues a decree of the following 13 actions (*in remembrance of the phases of the moon*); it calls all those who share the same values, to take a stand against lateral violence; and, strive to ensure wellness in physical, spiritual, mental and emotional health on an individual and collective basis. The 13 recommended actions for zero tolerance of lateral violence are¹:

1. Support First Nations’ Health Centres and organizations to adopt a “zero tolerance of lateral violence” policy.
2. Use First Nations cultural values to promote equal power relations where people work, live, play and pray.
3. Model healthy behaviour and respond in compassion and solidarity without enabling or allowing the lateral violence to continue.
4. Promote the buy-in for cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness, cultural safety and cultural continuity by disseminating promotional materials.
5. Use First Nations cultural values to inform structural changes when addressing lateral violence.
6. Encourage self-knowledge about the harmful effects of colonization, historical injustices and violence including how to make these realities growth experiences.
7. Work with partners to provide accessible professional development opportunities, to learn how to deal with lateral violence in the work-place and on social media.
8. Work with partners to develop First Nations specific education materials to build awareness about how lateral violence affects our health and wellness.
9. Develop First Nations specific campaigns for identifying and addressing harmful contexts and conditions in homes and schools.
10. Build on existing community support networks (available to those who may have experienced lateral violence).
11. Work with partners to document the links to health and wellness and collate related First Nations education materials, which reflect First Nations customs, values and beliefs.
12. Work with partners to provide training opportunities to Health leads on non-violence and reconciliation.
13. Work with leaders, service providers and Health leads on prevention strategies while improving coordination and collaboration efforts in this regard.



First Nations Health
Directors Association

Sharing experience for community wellness

By fostering an environment based on our values of respect, discipline, relationships, culture, excellence and fairness, these above actions can fall on common ground. Promote the end to lateral violence in the name of peace, productivity and prosperity and take advantage of its readiness for remedial interventions. The FNHDA calls upon everyone to action, to get involved and be a part of finding and determining solutions, towards a zero tolerance of any form of lateral violence.

Approved by FNHDA Membership on September 16, 2014 - Nk'mip Resort, Okanagan Territory

¹ Please note the 13 recommendations have equal importance, urgency, and focus, and are listed in a non-hierarchical order.