



## *Let's acknowledge and take action against racism and intolerance*

**Dear AHS staff, physicians and volunteers,**

The events of the past week south of the border have been a sobering reminder of what can happen when systemic racism, intolerance and inequality are left unchecked. In Canada, we can watch the current scenes of violence from a distance. Yet we know racism and intolerance exist everywhere around the world, including in Canada, in Alberta and, yes, within Alberta Health Services. So for us to be mere bystanders during this moment of history would represent a failure of morality and leadership, as well as a lost opportunity. For this is not a time for us to simply look at what's happening in the U.S. This is a time for us to look in the mirror.

Racism comes in many forms — and you don't need to search to find it here in Canada. Ask people of colour, including our Indigenous Peoples, and they will surely have stories of facing the acts and language of racism and intolerance, both explicit and subtle. Recently, people of Asian heritage, here at home and around the world, have been targeted with racist language and deeds during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some acts of racism and discrimination are overt: conscious hate and the vile acts it inspires. Racism is insidious and can manifest itself in other ways. Through privilege. Apathy. Ignorance. Believing racism doesn't happen here — or worse, turning a blind eye to it — creates time and space for intolerance to take root and grow until it overwhelms us. Let's take this opportunity to tend to our garden.

First, let us acknowledge that racism, discrimination and unconscious bias exists in our healthcare system. We have been made aware of unacceptable acts and language in the past and, as an organization, we have apologized to the people and groups affected, taken steps to make amends and vowed to do better. We know, for instance, ignorance is fertile ground for intolerance and unconscious bias. In response, AHS has developed a wide array of educational materials for staff and physicians to help them recognize — in themselves and others — words and actions that are hurtful to others, purposely or unintentionally.

I encourage all of you:

- To visit the [Diversity & Inclusion webpages](#) on Insite where you will find educational resources.
- To learn how to create inclusive and respectful workplaces by visiting the [Change the Conversation webpage](#). There, you will find resources on **being an ally, cultural appropriation, English in the workplace, unconscious bias, understanding multiculturalism and xenophobia**.

- To consider volunteering for the new Ethnic Minorities Workforce Resource Group (WRG), either as an ethnic minority or as an ally. Learn about this new WRG, or existing ones for EMS Women in Leadership and LGBTQ2S+, by emailing [diversityandinclusion@ahs.ca](mailto:diversityandinclusion@ahs.ca). You can also visit the [WRG webpage](#).

As healthcare workers, we pride ourselves on being vigilant and proactive, and allies for those who need help to drive out what makes them unwell and unsafe. That includes racism and intolerance. Let's redouble our efforts to stamp them out at AHS and in our communities.

Thank you for reading. Let's stand together.

**Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President and CEO



Healthy Albertans.  
Healthy Communities.  
**Together.**

