

Reconciliation Action Plan for Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia

Key Points

- **Commitment to Reconciliation:** Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) aims to build trust and improve services for Indigenous communities, particularly the Mi'kmaq, through a structured Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).
- **Community-Driven Approach:** The plan emphasizes collaboration with Indigenous partners to ensure services are culturally safe and accessible, addressing historical mistrust and systemic barriers.
- **Four Pillars:** The RAP focuses on Governance & Accountability, Relationships & Engagement, Culture & Education, and Economic & Social Opportunities, with measurable goals and timelines.
- **Long-Term Journey:** Reconciliation is recognized as a complex, ongoing process requiring sustained effort, resources, and community input, with no quick fixes.

Overview

HSNS is dedicated to fostering Reconciliation with Indigenous communities in Nova Scotia, particularly the Mi'kmaq, by addressing barriers to accessing hearing and speech services. The RAP is informed by interviews with staff, management, board members, and an Indigenous community liaison, as well as frameworks like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. It aims to create culturally safe, accessible services through a collaborative, community-driven approach.

What the Plan Includes

The RAP is built around four pillars:

- **Governance & Accountability:** Creating policies and leadership roles to ensure transparency and accountability.
- **Relationships & Engagement:** Building partnerships with Indigenous communities to co-design services.
- **Culture & Education:** Promoting cultural awareness through training and events.
- **Economic & Social Opportunities:** Supporting Indigenous hiring, procurement, and community projects.

Each pillar includes specific actions, timelines, and metrics to track progress, ensuring HSNS's efforts are practical and measurable.

Why It Matters

Historical trauma and mistrust of healthcare systems have created barriers for Indigenous communities. By implementing this RAP, HSNS seeks to improve access to services, respect Mi'kmaq rights and culture, and contribute to broader Reconciliation efforts in Canada. The plan acknowledges the complexity of this work and commits to long-term, respectful collaboration.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Executive Summary

Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) is committed to advancing Reconciliation with Indigenous communities, particularly the Mi'kmaq, through a comprehensive Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This plan is informed by engagements with HSNS staff, management, board members, and an Indigenous community liaison, as well as international best practices and Canadian legal frameworks, including [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#), the [Truth & Reconciliation Calls to action](#), and OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) principles ([OCAP](#)). The RAP addresses systemic barriers faced by Indigenous communities in accessing hearing and speech services, fostering cultural safety, trust, and mutual benefit.

Structured around four pillars: Governance & Accountability, Relationships & Engagement, Culture & Education, and Economic & Social Opportunities, the RAP outlines specific, time-bound actions with measurable outcomes. HSNS recognizes Reconciliation as a long-term journey requiring sustained commitment, resources, and community collaboration. This plan represents the first steps toward meaningful change, with regular reporting to ensure accountability and adaptability.

1. Governance & Accountability

Objective

To establish a robust governance framework that ensures accountability, transparency, and integration of Reconciliation principles into HSNS's operations and strategic planning.

Actions/Initiatives

1. Assign Leadership Responsibilities

- By **TBD**, designate a senior leadership position (e.g., Reconciliation Lead) to oversee RAP implementation.
- Establish a Reconciliation Committee with representation from staff, board, and Indigenous community members.

2. Create Reporting Mechanisms

- By **TBD**, develop a bi-annual reporting system to track progress on RAP initiatives, including metrics on cultural safety training, community engagement, and service utilization by Indigenous clients.

3. Develop and Implement Reconciliation Policies

- By **TBD**, draft and adopt policies incorporating UNDRIP and TRC Calls to Action.
- Include policies on cultural safety, Indigenous data sovereignty, and community engagement protocols.

4. Integrate Reconciliation into Strategic Planning

- By **TBD**, ensure the next strategic plan includes specific Reconciliation goals with measurable outcomes.

Success Metrics

Metric	Target
Leadership roles established	Reconciliation Lead and Committee by TBD
Bi-annual reports	2 reports per year starting TBD
Adoption of Reconciliation policies	Approved by board by TBD
Strategic plan integration	Reconciliation goals included by TBD

Reporting Frequency

- Bi-annual reports to the board and Indigenous community partners.

Resource Needs

- **Budget:** Policy development, legal consultation.
- **Personnel:** Reconciliation Lead.
- **External Partners:** Legal advisors, Indigenous consultants.

Risk Factors and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Lack of leadership/staff buy-in	Regular communication, training, and inclusive planning
Insufficient resources	Secure grants, prioritize high-impact initiatives

2. Relationships & Engagement

Objective

To foster respectful, ongoing collaborations with Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous communities, ensuring their voices are central to HSNS's service delivery and practices.

Actions/Initiatives

1. **Create Community Advisory Groups**

- By **TBD**, establish advisory groups in regions with significant Indigenous populations (e.g., Eskasoni, Sipekne'katik).

2. **Enhance Community Presence**

- By **TBD**, increase community clinics to bi-monthly visits in key communities.

3. **Establish Community Partnerships**

- By **TBD**, sign Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with organizations like the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and Tajikeyimik.
- Develop protocols for regular engagement and feedback.

4. **Develop Communication Protocols**

- By **TBD**, create culturally appropriate communication materials, including Mi'kmaq language options.

Success Metrics

Metric	Target
Advisory groups	2 groups established by TBD
Clinic visits	Bi-monthly visits by TBD
MOUs signed	3 partnerships by TBD
Communication feedback	80% positive feedback by TBD

Reporting Frequency

- Semi-annual reports on partnership activities and feedback.

Resource Needs

- **Budget:** Travel, engagement activities.
- **Personnel:** Community liaisons.
- **External Partners:** Indigenous organizations for co-development.

Risk Factors and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Low community participation	Tailor strategies based on feedback, clarify benefits
Cultural misunderstandings	Ongoing cultural training, consult community leaders

3. Culture & Education

Objective

To promote cultural awareness, education, and integration of Indigenous knowledge within HSNS.

Actions/Initiatives

1. Implement Cultural Safety Training

- By **TBD**, mandate cultural safety training for all staff via platforms like [Balsam Learning](#).
- Include Mi'kmaq history, culture, and trauma-informed care.

2. Develop Land Acknowledgements

- By **TBD**, adopt a land acknowledgement statement for all events and communications.

3. Organize Cultural Events

- By **TBD**, host two annual cultural events (e.g., smudging ceremonies, storytelling) with Indigenous partners.

4. Incorporate Indigenous Perspectives in Education

- By **TBD**, update educational materials to include Indigenous perspectives.

Success Metrics

Metric	Target
Training completion	100% staff trained by TBD
Land acknowledgements	Adopted by TBD
Cultural events	2 events per year by TBD
Updated materials	50% materials revised by TBD

Reporting Frequency

- Annual reports on training and event participation.

Resource Needs

- **Budget:** Training programs, event costs.
- **Personnel:** Trainers, event facilitators.
- **External Partners:** Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers.

Risk Factors and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Staff resistance to training	Link to professional development, make engaging
Tokenism in events	Ensure Indigenous-led, authentic events

4. Economic & Social Opportunities

Objective

To create economic and social opportunities for Indigenous individuals and communities through procurement and partnerships.

Actions/Initiatives

- Foster Community-Driven Partnerships**
 - By **TBD**, initiate two community-driven projects (e.g., health programs).
- Support Indigenous Students**
 - By **TBD**, establish scholarships for Indigenous students in audiology or speech-language pathology.
- Prioritize Indigenous Procurement**
 - By **TBD**, increase procurement from Indigenous businesses by 10% over three years.

Success Metrics

Metric	Target
Community projects	2 projects by TBD
Scholarships awarded	1 scholarship by TBD
Procurement increase	10% by TBD

Reporting Frequency

- Annual reports on procurement, and partnerships.

Resource Needs

- **Budget:** scholarships.
- **Personnel:** HR staff for support scholarship administration.
- **External Partners:** Indigenous businesses, educational institutions.

Risk Factors and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Lack of qualified candidates	Offer training, partner with institutions
Limited Indigenous businesses	Seek entrepreneurs, consider joint ventures

One-Page “At a Glance” Roadmap

Pillar	Key Actions	Timeline
Governance & Accountability	Develop policies; Assign leadership; Create reporting; Integrate into strategy	TBD
Relationships & Engagement	Establish partnerships; Create advisory groups; Enhance presence; Develop protocols	TBD
Culture & Education	Implement training; Develop acknowledgements; Organize events; Update materials	TBD
Economic & Social Opportunities	Prioritize procurement; Foster partnerships; Support students	TBD

Monitoring & Evaluation

- Quarterly progress reports
- Annual review with community partners

Insights from Consultations

The RAP is grounded in insights from:

- **Indigenous Community Liaison:** Emphasized building relationships, improving access through community hubs, cultural safety training, and reciprocal partnerships.
- **Staff:** Highlighted current initiatives (e.g., Eskasoni clinic), challenges like mistrust and access barriers, and the need for cultural training and flexible policies.
- **Board:** Stressed integrating Reconciliation into strategic planning, engaging communities, and diversifying board representation.
- **Needs Assessment:** Identified themes like cultural safety, equitable access, and Indigenous representation, recommending training, policy reviews, and partnerships.

Alignment with Frameworks

The RAP aligns with:

- **UNDRIP:** Recognizing Indigenous rights to self-determination and culturally appropriate services.
- **TRC Calls to Action:** Addressing health disparities and cultural competency (Calls 18–24).
- **OCAP Principles:** Ensuring Indigenous control over data and research.

Conclusion

This RAP is a living document, designed to evolve with community feedback and changing needs. HSNS is committed to fostering trust, improving service access, and contributing to Reconciliation through sustained, respectful collaboration with Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous communities.

