

# **Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal** British Columbia

## **Pathway to Reconciliation**

The Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal recognizes the importance of reconciliation with the Indigenous Peoples of British Columbia. In this light, the Tribunal recognizes that many Indigenous individuals come before the Tribunal as Appellants due to a history of colonization that has created a cycle of poverty.

The Tribunal has identified four areas where steps can be taken to foster reconciliation with the Indigenous Peoples of British Columbia. These areas are:

1. Tribunal Processes
2. Tribunal Staff
3. Tribunal Members
4. Tribunal Communications

Underlying these four areas is the need for meaningful and respectful consultation. Consultation must take place for our steps towards reconciliation to be most effective. Accordingly, this plan starts with a review of consultation as a predominant area of focus. After a review of consultation, each of the four areas enumerated above will be addressed in turn.

The Tribunal recognizes that to be meaningful reconciliation must be done in consultation with Indigenous peoples. As part of this consultation, the Tribunal will contact Indigenous representative groups to seek input on:

- i. Recruitment of Indigenous Tribunal Members
- ii. Hearing processes
- iii. Indigenous legal traditions
- iv. Suggestions generally for reconciliation

When consulting with Indigenous peoples the Tribunal commits to listen and not limit the information sought.

The Tribunal will contact the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation to discuss methods of reaching out to Indigenous representative groups on the issues enumerated herein and will foster relationships with Indigenous groups and individuals that take an interest in the work of the Tribunal.

Consultation with Indigenous peoples will inform all other areas of the Tribunal's pathway towards reconciliation.

## 1. Tribunal Processes

### HEARINGS

The Tribunal will include a respectful land acknowledgement at the commencement of each hearing, regardless of hearing format.

The Tribunal will investigate changing the physical structure of hearings to respect traditional legal processes and minimize trauma appellants may feel in a highly structured setting.

The Tribunal will consider ways of incorporating Indigenous legal traditions (e.g. ways of providing evidence, etc.) into the hearing process.

## 2. Tribunal Staff

Current staff will be required to take available BC Government training regarding Indigenous relations. The Tribunal commits to providing ongoing cultural competency training on an annual basis to ensure that all staff are regularly building and reviewing their skills. Other learning experiences have already taken place and future opportunities will be made available as they arise.

All Tribunal staff will be required to obtain training and certification on trauma informed practices.

When hiring future staff the Tribunal will include a preference for individuals who identify as Indigenous.

The Tribunal will consider hiring co-op students that have taken courses on Indigenous legal traditions and other culturally relevant topics to assist with implementation of this reconciliation plan. Hiring will include a preference for individuals who identify as Indigenous.

## 3. Tribunal Members

Tribunal members will receive training regarding Indigenous history and culture, and trauma informed practice. The Tribunal will investigate whether BC Government training modules can be made available for existing Members. If so, these training modules will become mandatory for all existing and new members. The justice sector course on Trauma Informed Practice presented by the Justice Institute of BC and the Canadian Police Knowledge Network, or subject to availability, a similar course, will also become mandatory. Tribunal Members will receive ongoing cultural competency training including training on implicit bias and trauma. Through consultation with Indigenous communities, the Tribunal will look to find appropriate training for Members on existing legal orders. Training in these areas will be ongoing.

Tribunal members will receive training regarding the importance of acknowledgements of colonial presence on Indigenous Land and will be provided with materials to assist in the respectful delivery of such land acknowledgments.

When recruiting and hiring members the Tribunal will seek to increase Indigenous representation in Members. To do this the Tribunal will actively advertise with Indigenous representative groups and will make member recruitment part of its consultation conversation.

#### 4. Tribunal Communications

The Tribunal will include acknowledgement of colonial presence on Indigenous Land on its website and all print material, including forms and letterhead. Tribunal staff will be encouraged to include an acknowledgement on their personal email communications.

The Tribunal will report on Indigenous reconciliation in its annual report.