



Indigenous
Physicians
Association
of Canada

Statement on the Death of Joyce Echaquan and Systemic Racism from the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada

September 30, 2020

It is with deep sadness, anger and disgust that we are responding to the tragic and horrific death yesterday of Joyce Echaquan, a 37 year-old mother of seven from the Atikamekw Nation in Quebec.

That her final few minutes of life were spent listening to racist slurs directed toward her as she pleaded for help is abhorrent but sadly not an isolated incident.

There is no denying that systemic racism exists – in our health, justice, education systems – and in Canada generally.

We cannot begin to address systemic racism if major leaders, including the Premier of Quebec, continue to reject its existence.

As Indigenous physicians collectively, who work in various settings including on reserve, in small communities, in large urban hospitals, we know the realities of Indigenous people who are reluctant to access the health system in part because they fear for how they will be treated. It is telling that Ms. Echaquan felt the need to record her interactions with the nurses charged with providing her with culturally safe services that meet the standards of their profession. Their racist behavior documented in her video is disturbing and repugnant.

We call on all leaders to act on the several reports that address systemic racism including the 142 recommendations of the Viens Commission, the 231 individual Calls for Justice in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report and the 94 Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

We send our sincere condolences to Ms. Echaquan's children, husband, family and community and commit to our ongoing anti-Indigenous racism activities as an organization.

The Board of Directors of the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada (IPAC)

Dr. Nel Wieman – President
Dr. Evan Adams – Vice-President
Dr. Kona Williams – Executive Member
Dr. Sarah Funnell – Executive Member
Dr. Mandy Buss – Physician-Director
Dr. Alexa Lesperance – Resident-Director
Erik Mandawe – Student-Director

For more information, contact Melanie Osmack at info@ipac-amac.ca