

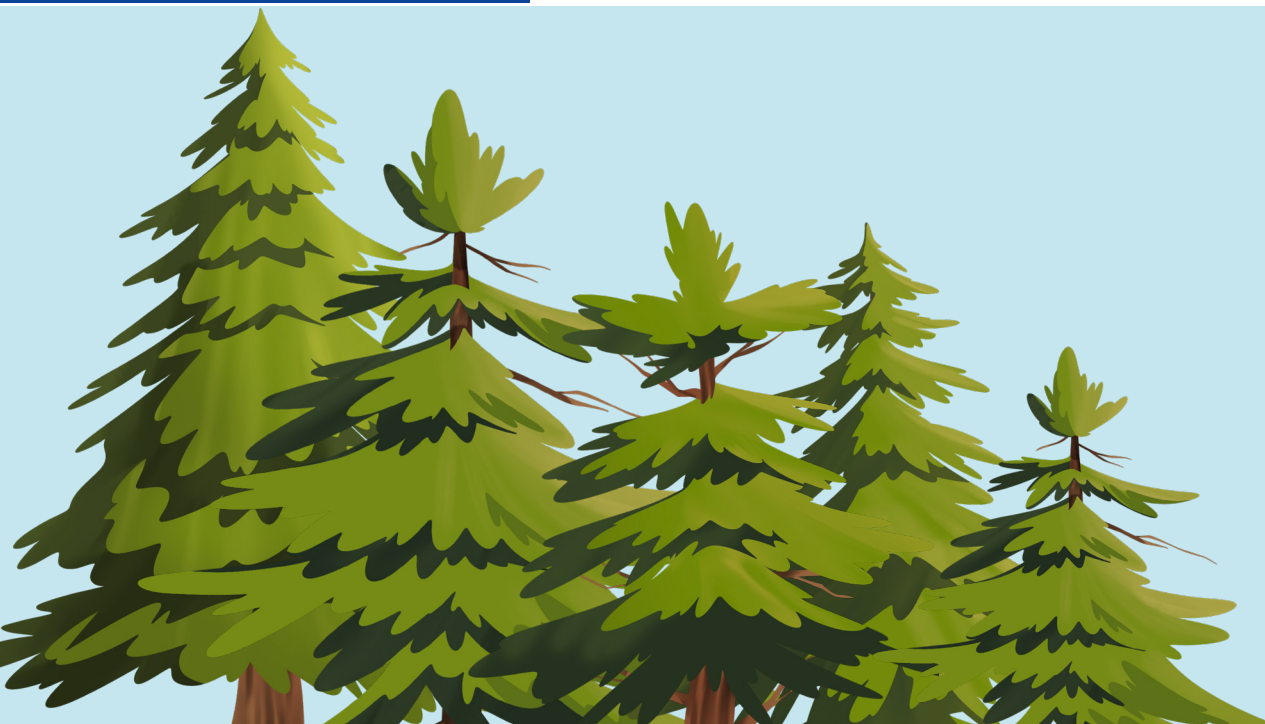


Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Ornge Plan to Implement Calls to Action 22 and 23

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Land Acknowledgement

We begin by acknowledging the Indigenous Peoples of all the lands that we are on today. We acknowledge the importance of the lands, which we each call home. We do this to reaffirm our commitment and responsibility to improving relationships between nations and to improving our own understanding of local Indigenous peoples and their cultures. From coast to coast to coast, we acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territory of all the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations people that call this land home. We take a moment of reflection to acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past and present and to consider how we can each, in our own way, try to move forward in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

Introductory Message



The development and public posting of Ornge's plan to implement Calls to Action 22 and 23 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a meaningful step in our ongoing commitment to reconciliation and to advancing health equity. As an organization that provides critical care transport across Northern Ontario, Ornge serves many Indigenous communities and witnesses firsthand the realities of healthcare delivery in remote settings. This plan affirms our responsibility to recognize Indigenous Peoples' distinct health needs, respect Indigenous knowledge and healing practices, and ensure our workforce is supported with the cultural awareness and clinical preparedness required to deliver safe, respectful, and effective care.

This plan is a start in how we will strengthen our relationships with First Nations partners in a collaborative and respectful manner. It will inform how we improve engagement with communities, improve our support for Indigenous patients and families during medical transport, and better prepare our staff for the social, cultural, and logistical realities of providing care in northern and remote environments. Through this work, Ornge is committed to learning, to accountability, and to continuously improving how we serve Indigenous communities.

Dr. Homer Tien
President and CEO
Ornge

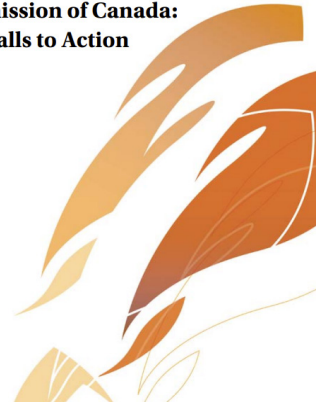
Introduction

This implementation plan outlines Ornge's commitment to advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action 22 and 23.



TRC Call to Action 22 calls upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.

**Truth and Reconciliation
Commission of Canada:
Calls to Action**



TRC Call to Action 23 calls upon all levels of government to:

- Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health-care field.
- Ensure the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities.
- Provide cultural competency training for all health-care professionals.

As the sole provider of air ambulance service in Ontario, Ornge is uniquely positioned to respond to these Calls to Action. Ornge transports over 20,000 patients annually and in 2024 nearly 60% of these patients originated in Northern Ontario. For many remote First Nations communities, Ornge is often the only link to emergency and other healthcare services.

This Implementation Plan is divided into two sections:

- 1. Ornge's Commitment to Health Equity, Learning and Partnership** – outlines Ornge's commitments made in our Strategic Plan, and outlines two recent initiatives where Ornge has worked with Indigenous partners including Operation Remote Immunity (ORI) and Emergency First Response Teams (EFRTs).
- 2. Ornge's Plan to Implement Calls to Action 22 and 23** – outlines Ornge's commitment to implement the TRC Calls to Action 22 and 23 through future initiatives including cultural competency training.

In November 2025, a coroner's inquest into the blastomycosis outbreak in Constance Lake in 2021 led to the issuance of 79 recommendations, including several recommendations made to Ornge. While this plan has been released to address the Inquest's recommendation, it also provides an opportunity for Ornge to confirm its commitment to health equity, learning and partnership with First Nations communities and leadership.

Ornge commits to annual public reporting on progress made to advance these Calls to Action in its annual report starting in 2027.

Ornge's Commitment to Health

Strategic Plan

In 2024, Ornge released an updated strategic plan called 'We Respond: 2024-2029'. Several priorities in the updated strategic plan speak to Ornge's vision and values as they relate to working with Indigenous partners including:

Priority #1 Timeliness:

Over the next five years we will focus on optimizing our capacity, performance and capabilities across the organization in order to better meet patient need and continue to improve timeliness and equity in access to care, particularly for those living in the most remote parts of the province.

Priority #2 Health Equity:

Ornge has a mandate to ensure access to care for the entire population of this province: 14.5 million people living in communities spread out over approximately one million square kilometres. Equity in access to care is an enormous challenge and impacts both life and death, particularly in remote parts of the province. Ornge is continually looking for evidence-based clinical and operational innovations to improve access to care.

- o **2.1 Building a Provincial Health Equity Alliance:** As part of Ornge Academy for Health Equity, research and learning in health equity will be translated into action and measurable impact, in collaboration with leading academic institutions, provincial, Indigenous and local partners across the province.

- o **2.2 Improving Equity in Access to Care:** Ornge will take a leadership role in renewing emergency response capabilities in the remote north in collaboration with Indigenous leadership.

- o **2.3 Innovation and Leadership Through Learning and Development:** Ornge is recognized internationally for its leadership in education and research. As Ornge values professional development for all staff, all internal training and development will be directed under the banner of Ornge Academy for Health Equity.

Equity, Learning and Partnership

Priority #4 Accountability:

Ornge is accountable to its patients and its partners. Ornge depends on its partners and our partners depend on us. Trust, collaboration, transparency and accountability are at the heart of our partnerships with a specific focus on working more closely with First Nations communities.



Operation Remote Immunity



EFRT Communities participating in trainings



Past and Current Partnerships

Ornge has a long-standing history of working in and with First Nations communities. In March 2021, Ornge was one of the signing partners to the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Relationship Accords which were signed to advance collaboration between NAN and its partners, including Ornge, for improved health outcomes for communities and to bring meaningful improvement in health care across NAN territory. This includes practice guidelines, quality improvement and development tools, culturally specific training and awareness, practice support and strengthening communications. As a signing partner, Ornge committed to responding to requests for help with a sense of urgency that comes from passion and respect, as well as working with communities to create meaningful advancement in health and building health capacity.

Over recent years, Ornge has focused on working closely with First Nations partners to advance health equity initiatives including:

Operation Remote Immunity (2021)

In early 2021, Ornge partnered with remote First Nations communities and leadership to execute the COVID-19 vaccination program called Operation Remote Immunity (ORI). ORI helped to ensure that vulnerable First Nations communities throughout Northern Ontario were able to be protected from COVID-19 through vaccination and resulted in more than 25,000 doses of vaccine administered. Key partnerships in this initiative included:

- o Co-leadership of Ornge with Indigenous health authorities such as the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA) helped ensure community consent was obtained from the start of the campaign and that Indigenous leaders were consulted throughout the operation
- o Collaboration with NAN which represents 49 First Nations and approximately 45,000 Indigenous people living both on and off reserve. NAN leadership was tasked with drafting a proposal outlining the resources and non-governmental contractors required for the operation.

At the launch of ORI, every member of the vaccination teams completed the San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training course before entering

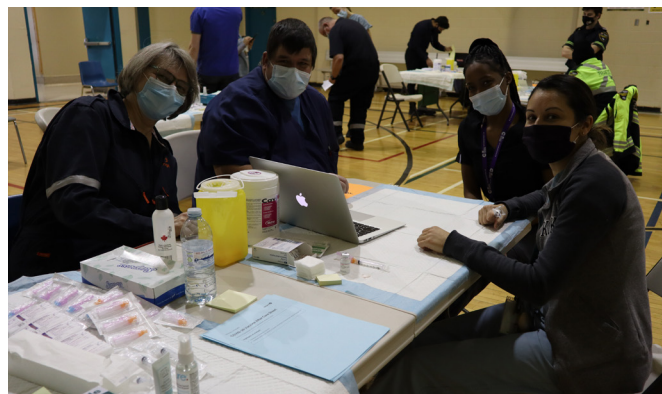
communities. In 2023, this training was offered to all Ornge full-time employees. The course offered staff a deeper understanding of Indigenous cultural safety, to learn the skills necessary to work with Indigenous peoples in a safe way, and to gain the tools needed to begin reconciliation in their community and work life.

- o A case study [report](#) which summarized ORI was developed by Reach Alliance in 2022. Lessons learned from ORI are addressed in this report and stress the importance of:
 - *Indigenous co-leadership to guide decision making,*
 - *Operational experience working in remote Indigenous communities*
 - *Cultural safety training as part of building trust.*

Ornge is committed to applying these lessons in its relationships with Indigenous partners.



Operation Remote Immunity



Mental Health Transport Team (2022 to present)

Northern Ontario's hospitalization rate for mental health concerns is twice that of the rest of the province, coupled with higher use of prescription medicine than in urban communities.

In 2022, Ornge launched a pilot project based in Thunder Bay, mobilizing a specialized mental health team to provide air ambulance transports in Northern Ontario. This initiative was put in place to support Indigenous patients who experience long wait times for transport to definitive care for mental health care and was continued beyond the pilot.

The team is available seven days a week and is comprised of a Registered Nurse who is experienced and specially trained in mental health care, as well as trained security personnel with experience in a healthcare setting. There is also a Primary Care Flight Paramedic on board the aircraft during transport. Since April 2022, this team provided in-flight mental health care to 1,646 patients.

Emergency First Response Teams (2025 to present)

In October 2025, Ornge launched the new Emergency First Response Teams (EFRT) program. The EFRT Program is operated by First Nations communities and supported by Ornge and includes a community-led, emergency first response team to respond to local health emergencies. Features of the EFRT Program include paid responders overseen by a local community coordinator, 24/7/365 response capability, one truck and pod per community to support safe patient transport, medical equipment and supplies, and record keeping and data collection. As of July 2026, ten communities have signed on to the EFRT Program.

The EFRT's education program has been designed to equip community-based responders with the skills and confidence to manage urgent medical situations. The program ensures consistency, safety, and quality through formal medical directives, robust quality assurance and quality improvement processes, and a structured certification and recertification system. Participants receive culturally relevant, hands-on training tailored to the realities of remote and Northern communities. The education program is designed to continuously evolve based on feedback from participating communities.

In December 2024, Ornge met with NAN Health Directors to discuss the proposal for EFRT including the guiding principles of EFRT (community-based, sustainable, capacity-building, collaborative, etc), proposed order of communities, and other implementation details (such as paid positions, scope of practice, transport needs, and record keeping).



EFRT Communities participating in trainings

Ornge's Commitment to Implement Calls to Action 22 and 23

As part of its plan to implement Calls to Action 22 and 23, Ornge is committed to several actions which are outlined below.

Advance Call to Action 22 which recognizes the value of Aboriginal healing practices and uses them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.

Implementation Action #1
Repairing the Sacred Circle

Advance Call to Action 22, Implementation Action #1

Ornge has an existing partnership with St Joseph's Hospital in Thunder Bay to support Ornge staff who are new to Canada with cultural safety training through the 'Repairing the Sacred Circle' training program. This program has two half-day modules including:

Repairing the Sacred Circle 1: An Indigenous and Awareness Primer

A three hour in-person training session that is led jointly by an Elder and two facilitators, one Indigenous and one ally. This session introduces participants to concepts such as colonization, race and racism, common stereotypes and how these contribute to health inequities for Indigenous Peoples within the current health care system. This course also introduces participants to Indigenous knowledge and cultural protocols/practices such as the use of the Sharing Circle and traditional medicines.



Transport hand off with EFRT team



EFRT Event Thunder Bay

Repairing the Sacred Circle 2: Journey for Practice

Repairing the Sacred Circle's second phase shifts its focus to trauma and a behavioural-informed approach. This training is a four hour in-person session designed for staff who work on the frontline with or for Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) and desire a deeper understanding of trauma-informed behavioural approaches within the health care system. Participants will be reintroduced to Indigenous knowledge, histories, trauma approaches and behavioural change interventions via case studies in small group discussions.

As part of our commitment to advance Call to Action 22, Ornge will explore opportunities to expand this training to more frontline workers, prioritizing those who serve Ontario's northern communities.

Implementation Action #2

Advance Call to Action 23 by increasing the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the healthcare field, ensuring the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities, and providing cultural competency training for all healthcare professionals.



Advance Call to Action 23, Implementation Action #2

Providing employment opportunities through EFRT Program

The EFRT program provides one full-time paid position in each participating community to support a community coordinator, as well as funding for responders (standby rates and callout rates) to help ensure staff retention. EFRT program leadership remains committed to encouraging team members to remain in community, provide ongoing and relevant training, and support responders to explore career paths in healthcare as desired.

Success of the EFRT Program will be measured by program-level and clinical Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as well as program adoption indicators.

Program-level KPIs include:

- Crews are mobile to the patient 30 minutes after notification, 90% of the time
- Response coverage: two responders in each community are scheduled 100% of the time
- Record keeping

Clinical KPIs include:

- Breakdown of clinical call type (medical vs injury) including drug-related calls
- Controlled medical acts (type and frequency)
- Patient outcome (if available)

Program adoption indicators include:

- Community coordinator retention rate
- Community satisfaction/confidence ratings
- Time from program agreement to first active callout



EFRT Communities participating in trainings

Recruitment-Related Initiatives

Ornge will continue its commitment to recruit Indigenous talent to Ornge including:

- Participation in Indigenous Workforce Career and Graduation Fair (Summer/Fall 2026). This initiative supports outreach to Indigenous early career talent, building new talent pipelines aligned to the 2027 Early Talent Program, and increasing Ornge visibility with First Nations job seekers and community partners.
- Posting in the Canadian Indigenous Careers Recruitment magazine. This supports increased visibility of employment opportunities and demonstrated commitment to Indigenous employment pathways.
- Exploration and use of Indigenous job boards including Aboriginal Job Board, aboriginalcareer.ca, and Indigenous Career Board.



EFRT Communities participating in trainings



Cultural Competency Training Strategy

Ornge is currently developing a multi-year cultural competency training strategy including:

- Baseline Indigenous cultural competency training for all staff which includes frontline and corporate staff as well as Board members and executive leadership as well as baseline training to new staff as part of onboarding.
- Training on the social determinants of health with modules such as Indigenous Ancestry and Indigenous People, and Health Services, Geographic Location and Health Services as Health Determinants.
- Continuous learning opportunities focused on equity-informed practice and recognizing the value of Aboriginal Healing.
- A commitment to incorporating Joyce's Principle in future training and learning opportunities. Joyce's Principle aims to guarantee all Indigenous people the right of equitable access, without discrimination, to all health and social services, as well as the right to enjoy the best possible physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, including the recognition and respect of Indigenous people's traditional and living knowledge in all aspects of health.

Ornge's cultural competency training strategy will be reviewed annually and will be measured by the number of staff who have completed training in the past year as well as participant feedback.

Ornge remains committed to supporting an organizational culture of awareness and understanding, as well as collaboration with Indigenous communities to advance health equity and partnership. This Implementation Plan is an initial step in Ornge's journey to advance Truth and Reconciliation, and Ornge is committed to reporting back annually on progress in the Annual Plan.



Operation Remote Immunity



EFRT Communities participating in trainings

Conclusion

Ornge's Plan to Implement Calls to Action 22 and 23 represents a meaningful and necessary step toward advancing reconciliation, particularly for Indigenous communities across Northern Ontario. Through targeted initiatives such as cultural competency training, the Emergency First Response Teams program, and dedicated recruitment and retention strategies, Ornge is working to strengthen Indigenous representation in healthcare, improve service delivery in remote communities, and ensure care is responsive to cultural and community needs. These efforts demonstrate a commitment not only to meeting the TRC Calls to Action, but to embedding equity, partnership, and accountability into the organization's core practices.

Importantly, this plan acknowledges that reconciliation is an ongoing process requiring continuous learning, reflection, and adaptation. Ornge's commitment to annual reporting and ongoing collaboration with Indigenous partners signals a willingness to be transparent and accountable while evolving its approach based on community feedback and emerging needs. Ultimately, the success of this plan will depend on sustained engagement, mutual respect, and shared leadership with Indigenous communities. By building on existing partnerships and continuing to invest in culturally-informed care, Ornge is working to contribute to a more equitable and inclusive healthcare system for all Ontarians.





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