

**RTOERO News you can use – February 2023**

## **New webinar recordings available at [rtoero.ca](https://rtoero.ca)**

If you missed some of last year's webinars, you can now find the recordings at [rtoero.ca](https://rtoero.ca). The following sessions were recently added:

- Diabetes prevention and management – What you should know
- Auto and home insurance 101
- Social purpose and philanthropy with the RTOERO Foundation
- Strengthening your financial capability

Find all RTOERO videos at [\*\*rtoero.ca/resources/videos\*\*](https://rtoero.ca/resources/videos).

# The role of dental care in overall health

Our oral health both impacts and is impacted by overall health. Good oral hygiene is an essential part of maintaining your wellness. Regular dental checkups can help ensure that any issues are caught or treated early.



## Six ways oral health interacts with overall health

- Bacteria from your mouth can enter the body and lead to medical concerns. Evidence has connected mouth bacteria to endocarditis, pneumonia, cardiovascular disease and Alzheimer's.
- Bacteria in the mouth can cause gum disease. Gum disease is common – about seven in 10 Canadians will develop it. Left untreated, it can become periodontitis, which comes with various unpleasant symptoms. Since the risk for gum disease increases with age, having dental insurance can provide the peace of mind that you'll be covered if you need specialized treatment.
- Medications can impact saliva flow. Saliva is important for oral health. It helps to neutralize acids and support digestion. It can also help prevent tooth decay and gum disease by coating the teeth, eliminating harmful bacteria with its antimicrobial agents, and washing away bits of food that can feed bacteria.
- Some health conditions can impact oral health. For example, gum disease occurs more frequently among people with diabetes. And if you're receiving chemotherapy, you may not be able to have dental treatment done until your blood counts have recovered.
- Oral health issues can impact mental health and quality of life. Evidence shows that people with periodontal disease may avoid social contact. You may not be able to enjoy food in the same way. Bad breath or missing teeth can cause feelings of embarrassment or shame.
- Good nutrition supports oral health. Perhaps unsurprisingly, what you eat and drink impacts your oral health. Avoiding too many sugars is a good idea. Foods high in acid should be eaten as part of a larger meal as much as possible, including citrus and tomatoes.

**Did you know that the spouse or dependent of an RTOERO member with extended health insurance can join the dental plan, even if the primary member doesn't?** Details about RTOERO's dental plan are available at [rtoero.ca/insurance/dental-plan](https://rtoero.ca/insurance/dental-plan) or contact the RTOERO benefits team to discuss your needs: 1-800-361-9888.

# Honour Black history in February and beyond through learning, celebrating Black excellence

While learning about Black history and celebrating Black excellence in Canada isn't for Black History Month only, the learning opportunities are plentiful during February. It's a great chance to deepen your knowledge. Here are a few ideas to consider to help you honour Black History Month and build your understanding this month and all year round:

## Visit local events and heritage sites

Exploring Black heritage sites near you is a great way to learn about local Black history. Use google to look up Black cultural centres, museums and heritage sites to find options. Remember, your visit doesn't have to happen in February. When travelling in Canada, consider making it a point to stop at Black historic sites.

## Watch films curated by the National Film Board

The National Film Board offers a playlist called *Black Communities in Canada: A Rich History*. "This playlist is intended to provide a glimpse of the multi-layered lives of Canada's diverse Black communities."

Find the English films at: [nfb.ca/playlist/nfb\\_celebrates\\_black\\_history\\_month/](https://nfb.ca/playlist/nfb_celebrates_black_history_month/)

Find the French films at: [onf.ca/selection/mois-de-lhistoire-des-noirs](https://onf.ca/selection/mois-de-lhistoire-des-noirs)

## Get to know the history of anti-Black racism in Canada

Anti-Black racism has caused various disproportionalities in Canadian society, including the overrepresentation of Black Canadians in the criminal justice system. But what are the roots of anti-Black racism in Canada? The Canadian Encyclopedia offers an overview that unpacks Black enslavement in Canada and segregation. Knowing the history can help to paint the picture of how anti-Black racism became entrenched in Canadian society and systems. Find the article at

[thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/anti-black-racism-in-canada](https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/anti-black-racism-in-canada)

# Cozy up with Indigenous stories this winter

*Written by Shaneeka Forrester for RTOERO, Cree artist, mother and advocate from Brunswick House First Nation, planting roots in Simcoe County, Ontario.*

During colder weather, you may be looking for more things to do indoors. Reading stories independently or with your family is a great way to learn more about Indigenous peoples across Canada. Not every story needs to be a history lesson. Some fiction stories offer an opportunity to read about Indigenous characters. Centring Indigenous authors, illustrators and characters can become a rich tradition to add to your family's winter agenda. Many stories incorporate Indigenous language, which can be fun to integrate into other activities around your home.

Here is a list of various stories for all ages and reading levels.

## Fiction

- *Awâsis et la délicieuse bannique / Awâsis and the World-Famous Bannock* – Dallas Hunt
- *Cheval Indien / Indian Horse* – Richard Wagamese
- *Debout comme un grand cèdre / Stand Like a Cedar* – Nicola L. Campbell
- *J'ai le cœur rempli de bonheur / My Heart Fills with Happiness* – Monique Grey Smith
- *J'espère / I hope* – Monique Gray Smith
- *Je suis aimé / I Am Loved* – Kevin Qamaniq-Mason & Mary Qamaniq-Mason
- *Kamik et son premier traineau / Kamik's First Sled* – Donald Uluadluak
- *Kamik : le chiot inuit / Kamik: An Inuit Puppy* – Donald Uluadluak
- *Kamik rejoint la meute / Kamik Joins the Pack* – Donald Uluadluak
- *Kulu adoré / Sweetest Kulu* – Celina Webstad
- *L'ambassadrice de la paix : Thanadelthur / The Peacemaker: Thanadelthur* – David A. Robertson
- *Le caillou de guérison de Trudy / Trudy's Healing Stone* – Trudy Spiller
- *La lune est un étang d'argent / The Moon is a Silver Pond* – Sara Cassidy
- *Les aurores boréales : joueurs de soccer / Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails* – Michael Kusugak
- *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut / Chasseur au harpon / Hunter with Harpoon* – Markoosie Patsauq

## Non-fiction and educational

- *Collection Lecteurs forts – B : Nous saluons les quatre animaux / Strong Readers Set B: We Greet the Four Animals* – Terri Mack
- *L'Indien malcommode / The Inconvenient Indian* – Thomas King
- *La chemise à rubans / The Ribbon Shirt* – Sylvain Rivard
- *La veille du jour de l'An métis / A Metis New Year* – Leah Marie Dorion

- *Les façons de porter un bébé métis / Ways To Carry A Métis Baby* – Leah Marie Dorion
- *Rendre grâce / Giving Thanks* – Leah Marie Dorion

## **Language books**

- *C'est ce qu'on m'a dit / This Is What I've Been Told* – Juliana Armstrong
- *Discovering Numbers* (English, French, Cree) – Neepin Auger
- *Discovering People* (English, French, Cree) – Neepin Auger
- *Discovering Words* (English, French, Cree) – Neepin Auger

## **Residential schools**

- *Avec nos cœurs orange / With Our Orange Hearts* – Phyllis Webstad
- *Cher journal : Les mots qu'il me reste / Dear Canada: These Are My Words: The Residential School Diary of Violet Pesheens* – Ruby Slipperjack
- *Étrangère chez moi / A Stranger at Home: A True Story* – Christy Jordan-Fenton & Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
- *Je ne suis pas un numéro / I Am Not a Number* – Jenny Kay Dupuis & Kathy Kacer
- *L'histoire du chandail orange / The Orange Shirt Story* – Phyllis Webstad
- *Les mots volés / Stolen Words* – Melanie Florence

Knowledge sharing with non-Indigenous individuals allows a glimpse into the history and traditions of our communities. It offers individuals a unique opportunity to observe our lived experiences and how they manifest in our communities today. When we take the time to learn about one another, we also challenge our preconceived ideas about groups of people and foster a deeper understanding of those groups. Knowledge sharing can happen in many ways. It can be through hearing indigenous stories about the past, receiving teachings from knowledge keepers or even laughing through a whimsical story.

# The medicine wheel: a tool for education, reflection and more

*Written by Shaneeka Forrester for RTOERO, Cree artist, mother and advocate from Brunswick House First Nation, planting roots in Simcoe County, Ontario.*

The medicine wheel is a circle divided into quarters, with each piece filled with a different colour. The four colours seen commonly are white, yellow, red and black. However, these colours can change depending on the territory being discussed and where the resource originates. I was raised with the teachings around the white, yellow, red and black version of the medicine wheel. Many of us may be familiar with the medicine wheel but may not know the many ways in which it is and can be incorporated into teaching.

Each quarter of the medicine wheel can be used to categorize lists of things containing four. In many Indigenous communities, sacred teachings are broken down into four pieces. The number four carries a lot of meaning. For instance, you have the four seasons, four directions, four colours, four stages of life, four elements, four sacred plants and the four components of health. The four components of health are spiritual, mental, emotional and physical.

When developing teaching tools or ways of guiding other people, we can use these four principles as a reference. Considering these four principles, we can use a whole-person approach assuring that many of their needs are being met. It's understood in many Indigenous communities that no singular piece of any four is more important than the other. Rather these four pieces are equal, connected and create a circle which emphasizes their connection to one another. If one piece of any four is removed, the circle becomes broken, leaving a big gap and disrupting the synchronicity. This, too, applies when considering four aspects of health. If an individual or community's spiritual, mental, physical and emotional health are not equally fostered, there lies the potential for disruption in their ability to flourish.

Many communities use these concepts when creating educational pieces for their members, and these ideas are being seen more and more in schools today. They are considering the whole individual and trying to ensure that all four health needs are being met and respected. As we navigate life outside these institutions, we too can use these concepts as a tool for self-reflection. I often will do a check-in with myself and journal how my emotional, mental, spiritual and physical needs are being met. It helps me to see any gaps that may exist and develop strategies to support my overall personal wellness. I challenge you to draw a medicine wheel on a piece of paper, write down the four areas of health and reflect on your own needs throughout the year. You may be surprised by what you find.

# How to engage in democracy between elections

Democracy means government by the people. Governments at all levels should have processes that allow the public to participate, and public officials should consider the public's opinions and experiential knowledge. There are various ways you can engage in democracy at the municipal level. Here are some suggestions:

## **Attend council and school board meetings**

It may be helpful to create a group that shares the responsibility of attending meetings and reading staff reports so that you can stay informed together.

## **Join public engagement and consultation sessions**

Watch for public notices about upcoming consultations and consider attending to learn more and share your thoughts. Respond to surveys asking for the public's input on municipal issues and share the survey with others to help encourage participation.

## **Reach out to your councillor directly**

You can always call, email or send a letter to your city councillor to express your thoughts on an issue of importance.

## **Request to speak at council**

You can request the opportunity to delegate to your city council. Check your municipality's website for information and guidelines about delegating.

## **Volunteer for local organizations**

There are organizations in your community focused on various issues that are related to municipal democracy. Find an organization working on a topic you care about and join them. Through that organization, you can interact with public officials and lend your skills to advocacy efforts.

## **Join municipal committees**

Municipalities often put out calls for volunteers for municipal committees. If you have experiential knowledge on a topic, this is a great way to engage in democracy. You will meet people and have more direct ways of influencing decisions.

## **Attend rallies and demonstrations**

There's strength in numbers. If there's a community demonstration happening about an issue you care about, showing up is a simple way to help the cause.

For more, read the full RTOERO blog post at [rtoero.ca/how-to-engage-in-democracy-between-municipal-elections](https://rtoero.ca/how-to-engage-in-democracy-between-municipal-elections).

# **Want to influence? Here are some tips to increase your chances of being heard**

Whether you're delegating at a city council or a school board or simply engaging in a debate around the dinner table, there are some evidence-informed ways to help you get your points across.

## **Find points of common ground**

Before entering a situation where you know there will be an opposing view, spend some time considering what the opposing points and perspectives will be. Consider where you have common ground. If making a presentation, you can start by emphasizing common ground.

## **Be respectful**

Be careful not to attack the person but focus on the task or challenge. Task conflict can be helpful because it'll surface various points of view. Listen closely; there may be times you can agree—and agreeing with an argument can disarm the other side. If you can listen with an open mind, you can stay humble and hopefully help move everyone closer to a good solution.

## **Focus on a small number of critical points**

More is not better. Pick a few solid arguments and focus on those. You can water down your best points when you start to layer on additional ideas that aren't as strong.

## **Stay curious**

Staying open and curious can help you respond in situations of disagreement. Think like a scientist. Use questions when you respond. Be willing to search for more information and find ways to leave both sides better off.

## **Back up key points with facts and stories**

Do your preparation work so that you have the research and facts to back up the key arguments you're making. Gather stories that you can offer as illustrations of the points you're making. Stories are memorable.

*These tips are adapted from the book *Think Again* by organizational psychologist Adam Grant.*



# RTOERO Foundation: An inspirational legacy

The RTOERO Foundation has received a very generous bequest gift from RTOERO member, Marie Cosgrove. The following excerpt is from a tribute to Marie from her long-time friend Dorothy Hollingsworth, District 23.

*When advising my friend, Marie Cosgrove, a long-time secondary school teacher in the North York school system in the latter days of her life as to how some of the money from the sale of the house of her sister Anita, also a long-time teacher with the Durham Catholic Board of Education had bequeathed her, we decided one of the recipients of the proceeds should be the RTOERO Foundation.*



Anita Stillman and Marie Cosgrove

*Good causes deserve generous funding. Educators should be proud of the Chair in Geriatric Medicine established in 2014 by RTOERO. The RTOERO Chair in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Toronto is held by Dr. Paula Rochon. Dr. Rochon and her group conduct research related to aging and older adults and the societal health challenges facing older adults.*

*I am hopeful Marie's bequest will inspire many other education sector employees, both retired and actively employed, to consider their own legacy and include this charity in their will as a profound and lasting contribution to those who follow, as my friend, Marie Cosgrove has done.*

To read more about Marie Cosgrove's inspirational legacy gift, please visit the Foundation website at [rtoero.ca/marie-cosgrove-leaves-an-inspirational-legacy](https://rtoero.ca/marie-cosgrove-leaves-an-inspirational-legacy).

If you are interested in learning more about leaving a gift in your will, please contact Tammy Gonsalves, manager of philanthropy at the RTOERO Foundation, by emailing [tgonsalves@rtoero.ca](mailto:tgonsalves@rtoero.ca) or by calling 1-800-361-9888 ext. 203.

# **RTOERO Foundation: 2022 webinars in review**

The Foundation hosted six informative presentations featuring experts in the fields of geriatrics, social engagement and the benefits of charitable giving. Through its webinar series, the RTOERO Foundation is working to ensure RTOERO members, and all older adults in Canada, are equipped with the latest knowledge and information relevant to healthy, active aging.

All webinars are available to watch on the RTOERO Foundation site with English and French captions.

## **Initiating a Dialogue on Dementia & Elder Abuse (IDDEA)**

As an older adult, older adult living with dementia, caregiver or family member, learn how to recognize the signs of elder abuse and how to prevent it.

**[rtoero.ca/webinar-initiating-a-dialogue-on-dementia-elder-abuse-iddea](https://rtoero.ca/webinar-initiating-a-dialogue-on-dementia-elder-abuse-iddea)**

## **Optimizing medication safety**

The presentation focuses on the need for optimizing medication safety for older adults. It includes an overview of polypharmacy and tips for discussing medications with your family doctor. **[rtoero.ca/webinar-optimizing-medication-safety](https://rtoero.ca/webinar-optimizing-medication-safety)**

## **Mentally healthy living after social distancing – A study of older Canadians**

This webinar provides an overview of a new RTOERO Foundation grant dedicated to understanding how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the mental health of older adults in Canada. **[rtoero.ca/webinar-mentally-healthy-living-after-social-distancing-a-study-of-older-canadians](https://rtoero.ca/webinar-mentally-healthy-living-after-social-distancing-a-study-of-older-canadians)**

## **Social inclusion – a practical guide to future-proof your relationships**

Learn how to “future-proof” your social connections in this webinar designed to provide you with the steps needed to support intergenerational relationships and support social inclusion. **[rtoero.ca/webinar-social-inclusion-a-practical-guide](https://rtoero.ca/webinar-social-inclusion-a-practical-guide)**

## **A panel discussion: Moving from isolation to inclusion**

Hear from three leading experts in the field of seniors’ health and wellness as they discuss initiatives they are working on and highlight trends in seniors’ issues from Canada and around the world.

**[rtoero.ca/a-panel-discussion-moving-from-isolation-to-inclusion](https://rtoero.ca/a-panel-discussion-moving-from-isolation-to-inclusion)**

## **Social purpose and philanthropy**

What do you want your legacy to be? This webinar introduces the basics of planned giving, how to have conversations with your financial planner and how to know if you are getting the right advice. **[rtoero.ca/webinar-social-purpose-and-philanthropy](https://rtoero.ca/webinar-social-purpose-and-philanthropy)**