

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL IDENTITY

Colonization practices such as Residential Schools, The 60s Scoop, and prohibition of cultural practices have led to identity loss for many FNMI people. Those who were able to continue practicing their traditions had to do so in secrecy, and these colonizing practices contributed to loss of language, difficulty passing down stories through the oral traditions, and loss of connection to the values and beliefs of their cultures. Many FNMI people have begun to reclaim their culture and are taking steps to learn languages and participate in ceremonies and traditions. People are on all different paths and stages of their journey to stay connected to or to reclaim their culture, and therefore, not everyone will know everything about their culture³¹.

CREATION TEACHINGS AND STORIES

“Everything begins and ends with creation” – Brent Stonefish

This philosophy is the foundation to all Indigenous cultures on Turtle Island (North America). Each nation has their own teaching and stories of creation, about how the universe came to be; these teachings guide their ways of knowing and understanding the world and how they interact with it. There are key components of these teachings and creation stories that are interwoven throughout cultural practices within each nation.

It is important to be aware that these teachings and stories have shared inappropriately in the past by those that did not have a true understanding. At times Aboriginal scholars might discuss concepts of these teachings and stories in written text however they are not sharing them in their entirety. When receiving the whole teaching it is to be done orally, as the connection between the speaker and the listener, the relationship, is a part of that learning and understanding. Most importantly there is an understanding between nations that all creation stories are considered of equal value and equally true.

STEPS FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

These are general suggested steps for building relationships. Each community will have their own preferences and will need to be consulted on the initiation of the relationship. Remember that true allyship is about hearing the voice of the people and supporting the people in what they say they need, not telling them what they need.

1

Become self-aware:

Examine your own biases and beliefs about FNMI people-- history, impact of colonization, racism, oppression, poverty, addictions, age and gender, health issues, suicide, mental health stigma, treaty rights, land claims, hunting, fishing, tax exemption, etc.

- When working with FNMI people, it is important to recognize your own bias and misconceptions as these can be interpreted as discrimination or racism by the FNMI clients, individuals and families.

2

Learn about the community you are working with:

Research or ask community workers about protocols, previous studies, available data, existing services, stakeholders, leadership, geographic catchment area, transportation/ access, past and present relationships. Some of this information can be found on community websites. During all stages of relationship-building, the initial component of the meeting needs to be dedicated to introductions and a sharing of how the community feels about what has happened and what is being proposed. It is also important to allow the community to decide who will be involved in the meetings.

3

Conduct organizational scan:

Assess the 4 P’s-- person, place, policy, process.

Person:

- Identify the FNMI people in your catchment area.
- What programs/services does your organization have to offer to FNMI people living on- or off-reserves?
- Within your organization is there a staff member responsible for FNMI programming?
- Has your staff completed cultural competency training to prepare them for working with FNMI people?

Place:

- Does your office environment welcome FNMI people?
- Is the location accessible to FNMI people living on- or off-reserves?
- Does your office recognize/respect the local FNMI community's culture and language (e.g. literature, books, pictures, etc.)?

Policy:

- Do you have inclusive and equitable policies for FNMI clients and staff? For example, hiring practices that value diversity, designated FNMI representation at Board levels and consulting with the local FNMI community about any plans/developments that have the potential to affect them. These policies should be reviewed and revised regularly to meet changing environment and needs.

Process:

To build relationships with FNMI communities ensure that you:

- Plan to meet regularly, offer to meet in the community (place, time);
- Develop terms of reference collaboratively;
- Have effective means of communication (in-person, speaking circles, teleconference);
- Have conflict resolution protocols; and
- Have access to traditional medicines for smudging.



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Tobacco: used during prayer as an offering for the spirits; also used to thank Creation (e.g. if you enjoyed good weather one might leave tobacco on the ground to thank the Creator); gifted to Elders to ask them for guidance and/or to thank them for their work and wisdom.

Sweetgrass: believed to be the sacred hair of Mother Earth; brings in good spirits and good influences.

Sage: used for releasing the mind of its troubles and for getting rid of negative energy.

Cedar: used for purifying a person or place; often used in tea for treating sickness (e.g. flu, upset stomach, vitamin deficiencies)³³.

It is important to note that many of the cultural and spiritual practices that previously united communities were outlawed in the mid-1800s³⁵. Some people experienced a cultural disconnect and divide that they are now seeking to overcome by learning more about the original way of life. As a result, there appears to be a resurgence of previously outlawed traditional practices such as the powwows, naming ceremonies, sweat lodges, fasting, and other traditional gatherings. One such ceremony that many FNMI communities and urban organizations partake in is smudging and an opening/closing prayer by an elder/senator (traditional tobacco should be offered to those conducting the ceremonies). This brings all parties together in a positive way and helps take away negative energies.

4

Moving forward & building capacity:

This is based on findings from the organizational scan and documented FNMI needs. Next steps may include: visioning sessions³⁸, cultural competency training, creating formal partnerships with FNMI communities and organizations, identifying shared interests and outcomes with timelines and funding requirements that include a commitment for FNMI capacity building.

COMMUNICATION STYLES

Nonverbal

Some FNMI people often observe non-verbal messages until they feel safe. Cultural awareness is necessary to avoid misinterpretation of non-verbal behaviour. Among some FNMI people, a gentle handshake is often seen as a sign of respect.

Humour

Used as a means of teaching, gentle teasing is intended to bring attention to behaviour that needs to be changed and/or to show affection. Humour, teasing and laughter are often used amongst people who are well known to each other, but not at the expense of someone else. It can be used to cover great pain and difficult situations with smiles or jokes. It is important to listen closely to humour, as it may be seen as invasive to ask for too much direct clarification about sensitive topics. It is a common concept that “laughter is good medicine” and a way to cope.

Indirect Communication & Non-Interference:

There is an unspoken understanding to respect the code of non-interference. For example, open criticism, disclosing personal information about another person, etc. may be viewed as breaking this code. It is important to understand that this code may be prevalent in FNMI communities.

Storytelling:

FNMI have an oral tradition in which storytelling is used to portray life lessons and teachings. It is the free will of the listener to determine what they will take away from the story, with certain stories often told in certain seasons. It is the listener's responsibility to hear the moral of the story, which is in contrast with the direct messaging that mainstream society often expects. The same story can have different meanings depending on the listener's personal context at the time. Getting messages across through telling a story is a common practice and one must be patient to receive the message. It is important to understand that communication may be hampered by internalized oppression and messages received over a lifetime of racism, discrimination, stereotyping and non-acceptance. Relationship-building is key to overcoming these barriers.

MYTH: All FNMI people are on welfare, or receive government assistance.

FACT: FNMI people are entitled to the same benefits as all Canadians and have to meet the same criteria. Where treaty rights exist and entitlement is right-based, FNMI people are still subject to regulation and/or funding in areas such as hunting, fishing, housing, education and health. New legislation, such as Bill C31 and C3, continues to impact rights-based eligibility and access to services. Unemployment rates are generally higher for FNMI populations when compared to the general Canadian population resulting in a higher need for assistance⁴⁰.

MYTH: All FN and Inuit people get free post-secondary education.

FACT: There is a limited amount of funding available in FN and Inuit communities for people who are registered community members (with Indian status). This funding is provided to help FN and Inuit achieve the same levels of education as non-FNMI Canadians. However, there is not enough funding to provide assistance to all applicants and the level of assistance usually does not fulfill all financial burdens of post-secondary education. Métis students can also access subsidies through the Métis Nation of Ontario. This financial assistance is available and provided to FNMI people through general application processes that may contain restrictions such as being required to attend the school with the program of choice closest to the community and maintaining a high grade point average (GPA). It is not uncommon for FNMI people attending post-secondary institutions to rely on OSAP, scholarships/bursaries and other loans to help pay for their post-secondary education.

MYTH: Aboriginal people are all the same.

FACT: The term Aboriginal is used to describe three distinct groups of people: First Nations (Status & Non-Status), Métis, and Inuit. Each has a unique history, culture, language, perspective, and spiritual beliefs. A variety of terms have evolved such as “Indian, Native, First Nation, and Indigenous”, and while preferences vary, it is important to take direction from the individual or community as appropriate. For example, the term Indian can be viewed by some as a derogatory term but is still used when referring to legislation such as the Indian Act. A growing trend is also the use of specific nations such as: Anishinabek, Métis, Haudenosaunee, Cree, Algonquin, etc. because this is the most accurate description of the people in question, and helps to differentiate between cultural groups.

COMMUNITY OF ORIGIN, SPIRIT NAME, AND CLAN

Nations have various ways by which their people identify themselves. There are often different clans (e.g. Wolf, Bear, Turtle, Crane, etc.) that people belong to based on matriarchal or patriarchal lines and each clan often has different strengths and purposes. Spirit names are given by Elders through naming ceremonies and can change throughout the lifespan. Often when meeting people for the first time or when gathering with groups, people will introduce themselves by their spirit name, clan, and community of origin if they know them to help other people connect and understand their relations. The people often have deep connections to these identifiers and often attribute different personality traits and characteristics to their name, clan or community.

TERRITORY & CONNECTION TO LAND

It is important to acknowledge traditional territories. Some ways to acknowledge this may include inviting an FNMI delegate, leadership, Elder or Métis Senator to offer opening remarks, prayer and/or a brief historical background as appropriate. According to history, the land that London is situated on belonged to the Attawandaron who are known as “the neutral people”³⁶.

LANGUAGE

There are many distinct languages spoken by the many different nations across Canada. In 2011, there were over 60 FNMI languages reported³⁷. Language is a key component of culture. The terminology used reflects the cultural values and beliefs. There is often not a direct translation between FNMI languages and English, especially for words describing spiritual events or connections, which can make understandings of traditional ways difficult to explain in English.

FNMI people from across Turtle Island (North America) live in London which makes it difficult to provide a full list of languages spoken, but some common languages include: Oneida, Mohawk, Anishinabek, Cree, and Ojibwe. Métis people have their own language called Michif, while Inuktitut is the language of Inuit people. There are also many dialects of each language. Many Elders believe that stories should continue to be passed on through oral traditions. However, many speakers of FNMI languages have made their journey to the spirit world taking with them the knowledge of the language, which causes some challenges when attempting to revitalize FNMI cultures and traditions. There are currently many initiatives to revive and revitalize FNMI languages that were all but lost through colonization practices such as Residential Schooling. For instance, one can take a First Nation language course at some universities in Ontario such as Western University. Language courses are also taught at the elementary school level in First Nations communities.

ALLY ETIQUETTE

DOS

Find out about community protocols and who to contact.

Ensure FNMI clients are aware of programs/ services offered through FNMI and mainstream organizations.

As a new partner, be honest and clear about your role, expectations, and provide appropriate notice for meetings. Send out meeting materials and agenda prior to meeting and allow time for follow up.

Avoid jargon and acronyms when speaking or writing.

Provide food and refreshments if you are hosting a meeting - be open to offering traditional foods.

Be aware of differences in communication styles.

Model and encourage respectful communication.

Explain what you are writing when you are charting or making clinical documentation during a session with client(s).

Seek guidance on appropriate behaviour, practices and protocol that would help service providers demonstrate cultural respect while developing cultural competency.

Inform and obtain consent as applicable before inviting other agencies or staff to a meeting with individuals or families.

Invite FNMI community representatives to participate on planning committees.

Find out the process and protocol for meaningful consultation with FNMI.

Use a trusted FNMI facilitator when doing consultations for/with FNMI communities.

Promote community events, socials, ceremonies (with permission), etc. as deemed appropriate.

Find out about existing mainstream and FNMI programs or services. Refer as applicable and accompany as necessary as an advocate.

Work in partnership with FNMI stakeholders to offer culturally-appropriate programs and services to FNMI families.

DON'TS

Avoid making assumptions about FNMI individuals, families or communities.

Avoid imposing your own values and beliefs - be open to those of others.

Do not assume that all FNMI individuals want services from FNMI agencies.

Do not assume that all FNMI individuals know their history and culture.

Do not put the onus on the FNMI clients to inform you about their culture and history.

Avoid making stereotypical assumptions about FNMI people.

Do not interpret silence as lack of interest or agreement.

Avoid constantly looking at your watch during sessions or meetings, do not be in a hurry or on a strict time line.

Avoid using cultural symbols and items without understanding their significance and cultural protocol (i.e. medicines, drums, etc.). When in doubt, ask an appropriate person with cultural/traditional knowledge.

Do not touch sacred items, such as medicine bags and other personal or ceremonial cultural items unless given permission.

Do not be afraid to ask someone from the community if you are not sure about specific practices and protocols. It is always best to observe the local practices and protocols.

Do not take/use photos or any other information gained by working in the FNMI community for personal presentations, case studies, research, without the expressed written and prior consent of those involved.

Do not consider FNMI culture a privilege. Do not assume you are allowing FNMI people to practice their culture. It is their right.

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INDIGENOUS CULTURE CARD

LONDON + MIDDLESEX

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was developed by Healthy Weights Connection (Western University) and London's Child and Youth Network in response to overwhelming interest expressed by service providers in London and Middlesex County to learn more about First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) cultures and local communities. It has been adapted from a similar cultural awareness resource developed by the Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle (BANAC). We would like to extend our sincere thanks to BANAC for their support.

The content of this guide was informed by members of the local FNMI community in London and Middlesex through several engagement sessions. The purpose of the guide is to serve as a first step towards cultural competence and to help service providers learn more about FNMI history, the local cultures and how to work competently and sensitively with FNMI communities. For those interested in formal training, Indigenous Cultural Competency and Cultural Safety training are recommended.

Cultural awareness:

The acknowledgement that we are all bearers of culture – there is self-reflection about one's own attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and values.

Cultural competence:

Skills, knowledge, and attitudes of practitioners/ service providers to provide a care environment that is free of racism and stereotypes, where FNMI people are treated with empathy, dignity, and respect.

Cultural safety:

Based on understanding the power differentials inherent in service delivery, the institutional discrimination, and the need to fix these inequities through education and system change¹.

TERMINOLOGY

It is very important to cover terminology as it is a very sensitive issue for many within the FNMI community as well as an area that is widely misunderstood by the Canadian community.

Aboriginal peoples: The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution Act recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people - Indians, Métis and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs³. Even within each of these groups there are distinct nations with highly diverse cultural differences.

First Nation (FN): A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian", which some people found offensive. Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. Among its uses, the term "First Nations peoples" refers to the Indian peoples in Canada, both Status and Non-Status².

Indian: Indian people are one of three cultural groups, along with Inuit and Métis, recognized as Aboriginal people under section 35 of the Constitution Act. There are legal reasons for the continued use of the term "Indian". Such terminology is recognized in the Indian Act and is used by the Government of Canada when making reference to this particular group of Aboriginal people².

Status Indian: A person who is registered as an Indian under the Indian Act. The act sets out the requirements for determining who is an Indian for the purposes of the Indian Act.

Non-Status Indian*: An Indian person who is not registered as an Indian under the Indian Act.

Indigenous: Overarching term to describe the descendants of the original inhabitants of a country or a geographical region. Indigenous people practice unique traditions, and retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those practiced by the dominant societies in which they live⁴. Indigenous is the preferred term for Aboriginal people in Canada and has been adopted by the Canadian government with the department name change to Indigenous Northern Affairs Canada.

Inuit: An Aboriginal people in Northern Canada, who live in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec and Northern Labrador. The word means "people" in the Inuit language - Inuktitut². Inuit is the contemporary term for "Eskimo" which is considered a derogatory term in Canada.

Métis*: People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis are distinct from First Nations people, Inuit and non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins and cultures - European and First Nations². They have distinct language called "Michif".

*In April 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Métis and non-status Indians are considered "Indians" under Section 91(24) of the Constitutional Act.

REGIONAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

According to the Chiefs of Ontario registry, there are 133 FN communities across Ontario, and according to the Assembly of First Nations, there are 633 FN reserves across Canada. These numbers do not include Inuit and Métis communities. The Métis Nation of Ontario reports that there are 15,000 Métis citizens, and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami represents 55,000 Inuit people across Canada.

According to the 2011 Census conducted by Statistics Canada there were 6,196 First Nations people, 1,825 Métis peoples, and 70 Inuit peoples living in London, Ontario. In addition to a large urban FNMI population, there are three distinct FN communities in close proximity to London: **Oneida Nation of the Thames; Chippewas of the Thames First Nation; and Munsee-Delaware Nation.**

Each community is part of a distinct nation that has a unique culture, traditions, beliefs, history, political affiliation, experiences, and perspectives. This makes it important for service providers to be aware of and responsive to the specific and distinct cultural groups they serve.

Oneida Nation of the Thames is part of the Haudenosaunee Nation.

Haudenosaunee (hoh-DEE-noh-SHoh-nee): Also known as "people of the longhouse", and commonly referred to as Iroquois or Six Nations, are members of a confederacy of First Nations known as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy - Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Mohawk and Tuscarora.

Chippewas of the Thames First Nation is part of the Anishinabek Nation.

Anishinabek (ah-ni-shi-nah-bak): In the Ojibwe language or Anishinaabemowin means "one of the people"/"original people"/"original man". This cultural group represents a majority of the Algonquin speaking nations: Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi and Algonquin peoples.

Munsee-Delaware Nation is part of the Lunaapeew Nation.

Lunaapeew (luh-nah-PAY): In the language this means "The People". There are three Lunaapeew communities in Canada: Munsee-Delaware Nation, Moravian of the Thames First Nation, and Delaware of Six Nations (at Six Nations of the Grand River).

According to many Indigenous nations their history as a people living on Turtle Island (North America) began with creation. Each nation has their own teaching and stories of creation, about how the universe came to be; these teachings guide their ways of knowing and understanding the world and how they interact with it.

A TREATY RELATIONSHIP

Historically, the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canada was based upon treaties, which are constitutionally recognized agreements between the Crown and Aboriginal peoples⁵. Most of these agreements describe exchanges where Aboriginal groups agree to share some of their interests in their ancestral lands in return for various payments and promises. On a deeper level, treaties are sometimes understood, particularly on the Aboriginal side, as sacred covenants between peoples that establish the relationship linking those for whom Canada is an ancient homeland with those whose family roots lie in other countries. According to The Canadian Encyclopedia, treaties form the constitutional and moral basis of alliance between Aboriginal peoples and Canada.

When Canada is referenced here it needs to be clear that the Federal government and Crown have made these agreements on behalf of all Canadian citizens; therefore, all Canadians are affected by treaties and need to be educated thoroughly on their meaning and current state.

Indigenous Wampum Belts

Wampum belts are traditionally made of quahog shells woven in simple or intricate designs that symbolize the purpose it was created for. In Anishinabek and Haudenosaunee cultures, wampum belts are used as records of significant history, symbols of authority, symbols of agreements/ treaties, or used to send messages or invitations to meet.

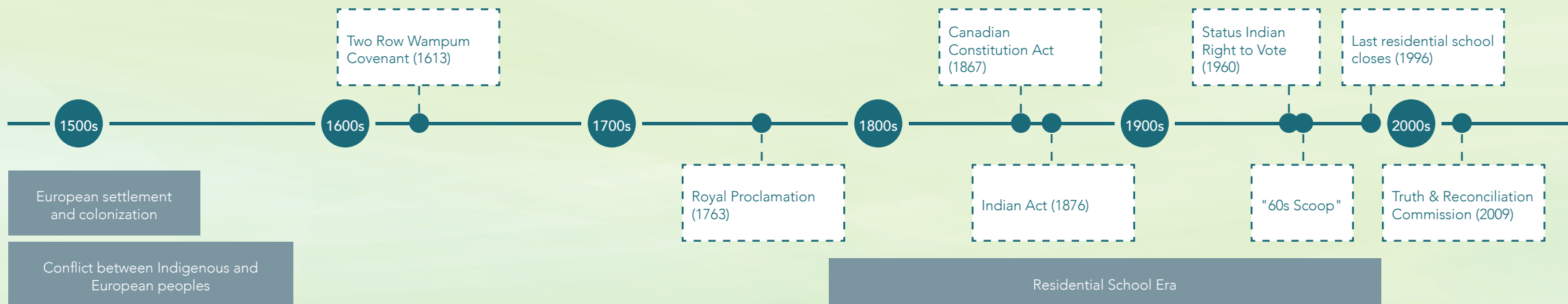


The Dish with One Spoon

This is a peace treaty made between Haudenosaunee, Anishinabek and allied nations after a long history of conflict between the nations and before European contact. The dish is meant to represent the collective responsibility of the people to share equally, and the use of one spoon can symbolize the avoidance of sharp instruments or even sharp words⁶. This treaty is represented by a white background with a symbol of a rounded dish in the centre of the belt⁶.

The Two Row Wampum

The first agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Europeans was recorded by the Haudenosaunee and it is called The Two Row Wampum Belt¹⁰. One purple row represents a sailboat (the Europeans) and the other purple row represents a canoe (The Native Americans)¹¹. Each will travel down the river of life side by side, and neither will attempt to steer the other's vessel¹². The white rows symbolize peace, friendship, and forever and is the basis of agreements between Haudenosaunee nations and all other nations¹³.



Local Treaties

The London Township Purchase of 1796 (London Treaty) between the Anishinabek and Crown. This treaty enabled the settlement of London and Middlesex.

A Nation-to-Nation Relationship

Over time the relationship between Indigenous communities and Canada began to evolve and was negatively impacted by colonial policies that undermined FN cultures and governance structures.

The **Royal Proclamation of 1763** established a nation-to-nation relationship, autonomy, and independence of First Nations as owners of the lands they were using. It also established the foundation for governance and membership. Indigenous people view the Royal Proclamation as a unilateral oppressive approach to gaining control of Indigenous lands.

The **British North America Act (1867)** changed the nation-to-nation relationship toward the Crown and served as a gateway to forced assimilation. During this period, a number of Acts (with numerous paternalistic amendments) were introduced to support forced assimilation, such as: Gradual Civilization Act; Gradual Enfranchisement Act; and the Indian Act.

The **Indian Act (1876)** was created for the purpose of governing the lives of Indians in a paternalistic manner. It established criteria for status, non-status and First Nation band membership. Enfranchisement was a process by which Indians lost their status voluntarily or involuntarily and became non-status Indians. Some examples include: serving in the Canadian armed forces; gaining a university education; leaving reserves for long periods; and, for Aboriginal women, if they married a non-Indian man or if their Indian husbands died or abandoned them¹⁴. Status Indians were not given the right to vote until the 1960s. The Act is a form of structural racism which refers to economic, social and political institutions and processes of society that create and reinforce racial discrimination¹⁵. If the Canadian government discarded the Act then there would be no policies that protect the rights of status First Nation and Inuit peoples.

The Indian Agent was a person assigned by the Crown to help strengthen military alliances but over time their role shifted towards encouraging First Nations people to abandon their traditional ways of life and to adopt a more agricultural and sedentary lifestyle¹⁶.

Over time, many amendments to the Act further restricted the rights and freedoms of First Nations people. One change made in 1985 (Bill C-31) allowed women who previously lost their status through marriage or enfranchisement to apply to have their status reinstated. The latest amendment (Bill C-3) allows grandchildren of those mentioned above to register their status as well, creating confusion about rights, benefits and identity.

HISTORIC SOURCES OF DISTRUST

Historical distrust continues to impact interactions between Indigenous communities and the Canadian government. For this reason, the importance of re-establishing the relationship and rebuilding trust cannot be overstated. Many Indigenous communities are still dealing with the intergenerational effects caused by colonization and treaties made by the government that were broken, with negotiations and/or court cases still ongoing.

"The 60s Scoop" refers to a time when, according to statistics from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, over 11,000 status First Nations children were removed from their families and placed into the child welfare system in most cases without the consent of their families or bands¹⁷. 70% of which were adopted into non-FNMI homes. Events such as this, which continue to contribute to cultural identity confusion are referred to as the "Millennium Scoop" syndrome.

From the 1800s-1990s, Residential Schools were used to assimilate FNMI children into settler society. Children were forcibly removed from their families to attend schools far from home, and although parents did not approve of this practice, they had no recourse or authority to remove them from the schools¹⁴. Children were punished for speaking their language and practicing their spiritual ways.

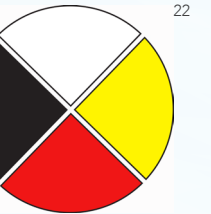
In his formal apology in 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper acknowledged the intent of the Residential School era was "to kill the Indian in the child." The Truth and Reconciliation reports estimate that 3,200 of the 150,000 FNMI children who attended Residential Schools died in care¹⁸. Many survivors experienced spiritual, physical, mental, and sexual abuse. There were approximately 120 schools across Canada, with 23 in Ontario. One of the first Residential Schools was the Mount Elgin Industrial Institute that operated from 1851-1946 on Chippewa of the Thames First Nation¹⁹ – only 30 minutes outside London. The last Residential School in Canada closed in 1996. Residential school survivors were taught that their traditional cultures were inferior or shameful, which still affects many FNMI communities today. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was formed to learn the truth about what happened in the residential schools and to prepare a public report with recommendations to renew relationships between FNMI people and Canadians²⁰. This process encouraged survivors to share their stories and begin their healing journey towards reconciliation.

For more information please visit the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation: <http://nctr.ca/reports.php>.

Indian Hospitals were a system of segregated hospitals where FNMI patients were treated with the intent of reducing the spread of communicable disease that had been introduced through the process of colonization (Smallpox, Tuberculosis, etc.). Forced sterilization and experimentation were two detrimental occurrences at the Indian Hospitals where the government authorized and encouraged the sterilization of FNMI women and conducted medical research without consent on FNMI patients²¹.

STRENGTH OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Although the inequities in health and well-being of FNMI people are often compared to the general Canadian population, it is important to acknowledge that, despite these inequities, FNMI people and communities are thriving. FNMI people are resilient and have persevered over generations to keep their cultures alive despite active colonization and cultural genocide. The traditional knowledge that FNMI people have is not only being applied to FNMI-based services for addictions, family healing and children's programming; mainstream therapies are also open to incorporating FNMI methods and philosophies into their practices.



The medicine wheel is an important tool used by many FNMI people and agencies as a tool to describe health as holistic and consisting of four primary aspects: mind, body, spirit and emotion. Traditionally, only a few nations used this symbol, but many communities and agencies have adapted it to meet their purposes. There is some controversy over using the medicine wheel too much or using it when it is not traditionally part of the specific nation's traditions; it is up to the service provider to collaborate with community stakeholders to decide what the best symbol or tool for the desired purpose will be. It is the tradition of many FNMI cultures to take care of their people so that all are equally able to access what they need.

Recognizing strengths and contributions of the FNMI community form a strong basis for partnership and relationship-building. Strengths of the FNMI community include their holistic and balanced perspectives, collaborative and consensus-building approaches to decision-making, and their collective interest in the community as a whole.

Ways for providers to support the strengths of FNMI people and practice culturally competent service delivery:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Empower families and communities by using community-driven and community-led approaches;Provide culturally safe environments by understanding the historical impacts felt by families and individuals;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop and deliver culturally sensitive/appropriate programs and services;Maximize resources and bridge building (promotion of friendly relations between groups) among existing services.Connect with Native Friendship Centres, Métis Councils and Native Women's groups who provide culturally-appropriate services to FNMI people.
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CONSULTATION

The "Duty to Consult" flows from the Supreme Court of Canada decision (Delgamuukw Case) and is reaffirmed in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). It is important to build relationships with FNMI partners and cultural advisors in the region in the development of culturally appropriate policies, programs, services and initiatives.

Meaningful consultation protocols are emerging to ensure FNMI people are consulted at the beginning of projects and informed on matters that affect their traditional territory and peoples²³.

ROLE OF ELDERS AND SENATORS

The word "Elder" refers to the wisdom carriers of the FNMI communities. Elders transfer their unique knowledge from one generation to the next. For some nations it is respectful for one to offer traditional tobacco and a gift to an Elder for any work they do including imparting knowledge, speaking at an event, or involvement in decision-making processes. This can be done by an Indigenous or non-Indigenous person if they have access to traditional tobacco.

The word "Senator" refers to a Métis wisdom carrier, highly respected for their knowledge, values and experience. Senators are present at community meetings and they help keep Métis culture alive by sharing Métis traditions and ways of life²⁴.

Elders and Senators are often asked to open and close a meeting to help people be of good minds. Elders often offer teachings or advice in ways that are indirect, such as through storytelling or by helping to guide and advise the work being done in the community. In a social setting where food is served, Elders are served first. It is disrespectful to interrupt, openly argue, or disagree with an Elder. Elders and Senators are held in high esteem and have earned the respect of the community they serve.

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Racism is a social injustice based on falsely constructed, but deeply embedded, assumptions about people and their relative social value; it is often used to justify disparities in the distribution of resources¹⁵. Racist policies combined with racist stereotypes translate into discrimination against FNMI people¹⁵ (e.g. FNMI offenders are more likely to receive sentences of imprisonment if convicted of a crime). There is an over-representation of FNMI inmates in the correctional system — FNMI people account for 3.8% of the Canadian population, but 23.2% of the federal prison population.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The United Nation's Human Development Index rates quality of life, life expectancy and access to basic services such as housing, education and income. Canada consistently ranks at the top of the UN list with FNMI conditions equal to Third World Countries.

Many reports and statistics have highlighted significant overall health and economic disparities between the FNMI community and the Canadian population that include:

Diabetes: Rates of diabetes vary between and within groups of FNMI. After controlling for age, the rates of diabetes in FNMI populations overall is 17.2%, 10.3%, and 7.3% for FN living on-reserve, FN living off-reserve, and Métis, respectively. The prevalence of diabetes in the Inuit population is comparable to the general Canadian population at 5.0%²⁶.

Life Expectancy: FNMI people live 5-7 years less on average than non-FNMI Canadians and infant mortality rates are 1.5 times higher among FN infants²⁷.

Mental Health: 30% of FN people have felt sad, blue, or depressed for 2+ weeks²⁸, compared to 11.3% of Canadians who experience symptoms consistent with depression²⁹. There are also high rates of suicide and self-inflicted injuries leading to death among FN youth up to age 44. Suicide rates among Inuit are among the highest in the world (11 times the national average; suicide rates among FN youth are 5-6 times the national average).

Children in Foster Care: There were approximately 30,000 children in care in Canada in 2011; nearly half (14,225) were FNMI. Overall, 4% of FNMI children in Canada are in care, compared to 0.3% of non-FNMI children³⁰.