Educating Minds. Improving Health.

Aboriginal Cultural Safety Initiative

Walking Together
The medicine wheel with the four quadrants represents wholistic health.
The moccasin represents “empathy”, the experience of walking in another’s shoes.
The sun rays pointing forward denote progress, a new day.
The four human figures represent all peoples joining hands and walking forward together.
Culturally Competent Care

• Defined as:

The integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of health care, thereby producing better health outcomes.
Cultural Safety:

• Quality care for people of diverse ethnicities:
  – Acknowledges values and norms of the patient may be different from her/his own
  – Health providers engage in self-reflection
  – Involves empathy: the capability to share another being’s emotions and feelings
  – Increases capacity to become collaborator & advocate
Cultural Safety

Improved Health Outcomes through Cultural Safety

Cultural Awareness: Acknowledgement of difference

Cultural Sensitivity: Attitude change; respecting difference

Cultural Safety: Self-reflection, leading to empathy & advocacy for clients

Cultural Competence: Skills, knowledge & attitudes
Understanding Your Patient

- Psychosocial situation of patients
- Social determinants of health
- Cultural beliefs and health practices
- Historical-political context
- Religious and spiritual beliefs
- Previous health care experiences of the patient
Goals and objectives:

Learners will gain a better understanding of the historical, political and cultural issues that impact the health of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Goals and objectives:

Learners will understand the connection between the historical and current government practices and policies towards First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples and the related impacts on their social determinants of health, access to health services and intergenerational health outcomes.

Goals and objectives:

Learners will, through a process of self-reflection, identify, acknowledge and analyze their own cultural values or considered emotional responses to the many diverse histories, cultures, world views, values, and contemporary events relating to First Nations, Inuit and/or Métis people.

Overview


Part 2. Demography, Health Determinants and Health Status of Aboriginal People.

Let’s define a few terms for starters...

*Indigenous*

“Indigenous” is a general term used to describe members of three distinct Aboriginal cultural groups in Canada: First Nations, Métis people, and Inuit (Assembly of First Nations, 2002; First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Health Canada, 2003).

The term Indigenous will be used interchangeably with the terms Aboriginal, Native, First Nations, Indian, Métis, and Inuit.
“Indigenous peoples are the descendants of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived in their lands. The new arrivals became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means. According to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, there are more than 370 million Indigenous peoples spread across 70 countries worldwide”

-Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009
Cultural Values

• **All My Relations:**
  – A prayer for health, harmony and balance of all natural and spiritual relations

• **Well-being:**
  – A politics of caring & equality
  – Harmony with the mother earth
  – Interconnectedness of all living things, non-living things in nature & spiritual realm
Cultural Values

• Sense of community
• Diversity in personal expression
• Dignity and respect for all sacred life
• Social responsibility: everyone cares for members of the group
• Well-being & suffering both natural aspects of life, both create balance
• Death: an important journey to another place
Cultural Values

• Keywords:
  – Tradition - Peace
  – Humility - Calmness
  – Kindness - Forgiveness
  – Faith - Wisdom
  – Kinship - Love
  – Thankfulness - Respect
  – Interdependence - Honesty
BAND

“band” means a body of Indians:

• (a) for whose use and benefit in common, lands, the legal title to which is vested in Her Majesty, have been set apart before, on or after September 4, 1951,
• (b) for whose use and benefit in common, moneys are held by Her Majesty, or
• (c) declared by the Governor in Council to be a band for the purposes of this Act;

RESERVE

• (a) means a tract of land, the legal title to which is vested in Her Majesty, that has been set apart by Her Majesty for the use and benefit of a band, and
• (b) except in subsection 18(2), sections 20 to 25, 28, 36 to 38, 42, 44, 46, 48 to 51, 58 to 60 and the regulations made under any of those provisions, includes designated lands.
**TREATY**

An historic agreement entered into by a group of Indigenous peoples and the British or Canadian government. May also be made with the provincial government.

Treaties are also made by Canadian Government; e.g. Nisga treaty in B.C. was made in 1998; Peguis First Nation was signed in 2009 and there are over 500 outstanding treaty claims waiting for resolution.
Two Row Wampum
The Indian Act

- Enacted in 1876 by the Parliament of Canada
- Provides Canada's federal government exclusive authority to legislate in relation to "Indians and Lands Reserved for Indians".
The Indian Act

- The Act defines who is an "Indian" and contains certain legal rights and legal disabilities for registered Indians. The rights exclusive to Indians in the Indian Act are beyond legal challenge under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom.
Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes three original peoples of Canada: First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Each group is distinct from the other and has a unique history. Within each group there is also considerable diversity.

Over one million people in Canada identify as Aboriginal, representing 4.1 per cent of the overall population:

62% First Nations; 30% Métis; 5% Inuit.
• The Indian Act was amended in 1920 to make residential schools attendance compulsory for all Indigenous children age 7-15, although some children were as young as 3 years old.
• The goal was to assimilate Indigenous children by educating children away from family and community
• The first school opened in 1840 and the last Canadian government school closed in 1996.
Two primary objectives of the residential school system were to:

1. Isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures
2. To assimilate them into the dominant culture: “To kill the Indian in the child”
The legacy of the residential school system:

The following conditions were present in residential schools:

1. Physical, emotional, spiritual harm
2. Educational harm
3. Loss of culture and language
4. Harm to family structures
5. Students were separated from their siblings
6. Students were punished for speaking Aboriginal languages
7. Students were at risk for malnutrition and infectious disease
8. A high proportion suffered various forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse.
• Schools resulted in affecting individual, family and community health
• Led to “intergenerational harm”
• Some of those who attended schools failed to learn good parenting and coping skills
• Some of those who were abused learned to continue the cycle of abuse
• Some of those who lost coping skills turned to drugs and alcohol to escape the ongoing torment; leading to child neglect and exposure to high risk behaviours.
“One good example is my grandpa. His education was up to grade 2, I think. From what my father tells me there was a lot of abuse going on. A lot of name-calling, a lot of put-downs with the priest toward the kids. For every little thing they got the whip. My grandpa grew up with that, and he learned that, then he used it on his kids. Then my father used it on us.”

(Anonymous)
“When you talk about things like addiction and family abuse, elder abuse, sexual abuse, suicide and all the different forms of abuse we seem to be experiencing, it’s all based on the original violence....churches and governments made us believe that the way we are today is the Dene way. It isn’t. That is not the Dene culture.”

Roy Fabian, Hay River NWT
Apology from the Government of Canada

Excerpts from Rt. Honorable Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s Apology to the Aboriginal People of Canada

June 11, 2008
“In the 1870s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligations to educate aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the residential school system were to **remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures**, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture.

These objectives were based on the assumption that aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal.

Indeed, some sought, as was infamously said, “**to kill the Indian in the child**”.
“Most schools were operated as joint ventures with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and United churches.

The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes and often taken far from their communities.

Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities.

**First nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools.**

Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools, and others never returned home”.
“The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian residential schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on aboriginal culture, heritage and language.

While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.

The legacy of Indian residential schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today”. 
Excerpt from Mr. Stephen Dion’s Speech, June 11, 2008
“For too long, Canadian governments chose denial over truth, and when confronted with the weight of truth, chose silence. For too long, Canadian governments refused to acknowledge their direct role in creating the residential schools system and perpetrating their dark and insidious goal of wiping out Aboriginal identity and culture.

For too long, Canadian governments chose to ignore the consequences of this tragedy instead of trying to understand them so that the suffering of first nations, Métis and Inuit communities continues to this day.
Let me quote the damning verdict of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples:

*With very few exceptions, neither senior departmental officials nor churchmen nor members of Parliament raised their voices against the assumptions that underlay the [residential schools] system or its abusive character. And, of course, the memory did not and has not faded. It has persisted, festered and become a sorrowful monument—*
Impacts of Colonial Policies:

- Loss of Culture
- Loss of Language
- Loss of Heritage
- Loss of Identity
- Loss of Parenting Skills
- Intergenerational Family Violence
- Loss of land & livelihood
- Loss of self control & Self determination
Continued Colonial Policies:

• Child welfare system

• Cognitive imperialism: Western knowledge and education
Aboriginal peoples historically and to the present day have really not been full participants in the nation state called Canada. As the political economy of Canada evolved, it became necessary to dislocate Aboriginal peoples from their traditional land and their way of life in order to make way for settler societies. That is not my opinion: it is a matter of fact.

The process of dislocation as a result of colonization meant that many Aboriginal people and communities were socially excluded from Canada. This led to marginalization in education and employment, housing, health care and many other services. This in turn, effectively created a two-tiered society in Canada – one standard for Canadians as a whole and another standard for Aboriginal peoples.

Jeff Reading, Professor and Director, Centre for Aboriginal Health Research, 26 March 2009.
Aboriginal Peoples Today