

About this Guide

This guide is not intended to be all things to all people. Rather, it was developed in response to requests from service providers as a **starting point in the development of culturally competent systems of care**. The focus is to address the unique needs of **First Nations, Métis & Inuit (FNMI)** within the Simcoe, York and Muskoka region in the following areas:

- 1) **Cultural awareness** - an acknowledgement of cultural differences;
- 2) **Cultural sensitivity** - understanding the consequences of European contact and the inter-generational impact on the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual well-being;
- 3) **Cultural safety** - focuses on a service provider's ability to recognize their own cultural bias and assist a client in the development of a plan of care that promotes individual well-being and does not compromise culture;
- 4) **Cultural competence** - knowing your limitations, local resources and when to draw on the cultural knowledge within the FNMI community. This also involves clearly defined policies, programs and interventions that fit the cultural context of the individual, family or community and knowing when and how to refer;
- 5) **Evaluation and assessment** - important measurements best conducted on a regular basis. This review assists with the development of culturally sensitive systems that impact wellness outcomes and promising practices based on feedback from consumers, staff and community. (Adapted from British Columbia's First Nations Health Council, 2009.)

Specific orientation or training can be provided by a trained facilitator from the First Nation, Métis or Inuit community. Contact the Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle (BANAC) for more information at ed@banac.on.ca.

Please note that FNMI is used for First Nation, Métis and Inuit for consistency and in the interest of space only.

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Nation to Nation Relationship

The relationship between FNMI and Canada has evolved over hundreds of years. Terminology has evolved as well. In this section, the term "Indian" is used in reference to specific legislation.

First Nations practiced Treaty making prior to the arrival of Europeans. First Nations shared knowledge of the land and resources with Europeans upon their arrival, and established Peace and Friendship Treaties in order to create respectful and mutually beneficial trade. These early treaties were often recorded in First Nations languages and adhered to First Nations forms of governance. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 recognized these Nation to Nation relationships.

Approximately **100 years later, the British North America Act changed the Nation to Nation relationship to wards of the Crown and gateway to forced assimilation**. During this period, a number of Acts were introduced to support this such as: Gradual Civilization Act; Gradual Enfranchisement Act; and the Indian Act with numerous paternalistic amendments.

Enfranchisement was a process by which Indians lost their status voluntarily or involuntarily and became non-status Indians. Some examples included marriage of a First Nation woman to a non-Indian man; when a male turned 21 and could speak and write English and absence from the community for extended periods of time.

The Indian Agent was introduced as a way for the Crown to hold control of land and assume power to dispose of lands reserved for Indians that included land transfer to Trans Canada Highway, CNR, CPR, hydro, etc. In many instances, a source of litigation today.

The Indian Act legislation was created in 1876 for the purpose of governing the lives of Indians. It established criteria for status, non-status and First Nation band membership. During this time, if you wanted to leave the reserve you needed permission from the Indian Agent or face incarceration. Lawyers were barred from acting on behalf of Indians or risk losing their licence. Indians were not given the right to vote until the 1960's. Over time, many amendments to the Act further restricted the rights and freedoms of First Nation people. One of the more significant changes was the 1985 amendment, Bill C-31, which allowed women who previously lost their status through marriage, or enfranchisement to apply to have their status reinstated. The latest amendment, Bill C3, allows grandchildren of those mentioned above to register their status as well, creating confusion about rights, benefits and identity.

FNMI continue to act as strong advocates in the promotion of autonomy as we work together to rebuild a nation to nation relationship.

Historic Sources of Distrust

It is important to understand that historic distrust continues to impact modern day interaction. As a result, the importance of establishing relationships and rebuilding trust cannot be over-stated. Many First Nation communities were devastated as a result of contact and the introduction of infectious diseases. Similarly, many treaties made by the government were broken with negotiations and/or court cases still ongoing.

From the 1800's through the 1990's, residential schools were used to assimilate FNMI. Children were forcibly removed from their families to attend schools far from home where they were punished for speaking their language or practicing spiritual ways. In his formal apology, Prime Minister Stephen Harper acknowledged the intent of the residential school era was "to kill the Indian in the child." Forced to attend, half of the estimated 150,000 FNMI children died in care. Many survivors experienced spiritual, physical, mental and sexual abuse. There were approximately 130 schools

across Canada with 23 in Ontario. The last school closed in 1996. Residential school survivors were taught that their traditional cultures were inferior or shameful, which still affects many FNMI communities today. The current Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a process where survivors can share their stories and begin the healing journey.

The 2011 Children's First Report refers to the 60's scoop with over 11,000 status First Nations children adopted, 70% into non-FNMI homes according to statistics from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Conditions that continue to contribute to cultural identity confusion are referred to as the "Millennium Scoop" syndrome.

The defeat of the Meech Lake Accord in 1990 by Elijah Harper was based on the concept of two founding nations with the proposed accord omitting Aboriginal people. In 1991, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was a response to the OKA crisis and Meech Lake Accord. **This resulted in approximately 400 recommendations including a call for the recognition of Aboriginal nationhood, better economic and educational opportunities and improved social conditions to name a few.**

Recommended Readings:

- Ontario Human Rights Code
 - Ilaquiinniq
- Aboriginal Justice Inquiry
 - Jordan's Principle
 - Ipperwash Inquiry
 - Touchstones of Hope
 - Split-Feather Syndrome
- Three Day Road
- Gladue Case
- Powley Case
- Mishoomis Book

Regional and Cultural Differences

The FNMI community represents a diverse range of cultures, languages, traditions, beliefs, history, political affiliation, experiences and perspectives.

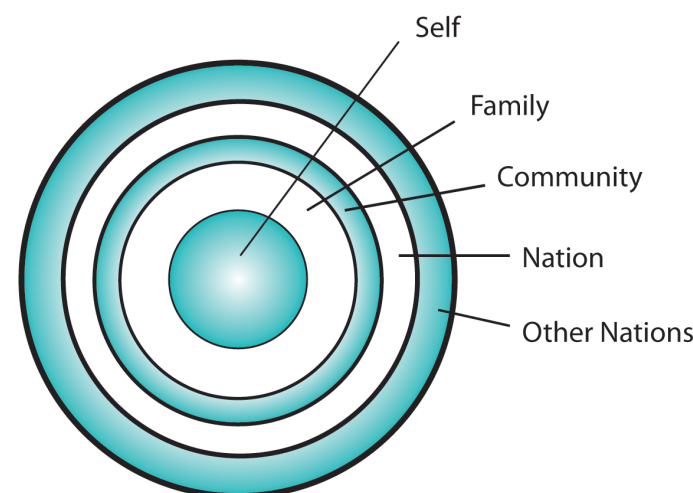
According to 2006 Census data, 1,172,790 people reported as being Aboriginal: 698,025 (North American Indian); 389,780 (Métis); and 50,480 (Inuit). One-fifth (242,490) resided in Ontario with 150,075 living in urban areas. In the Simcoe, York and Muskoka region there are 18,045 FNMI with 13,035 in Simcoe, 3,595 in York and 1,415 in Muskoka. This demographic includes: 9,465 First Nation; 7,900 Métis and 680 Inuit. According to census data for York, Simcoe and Muskoka region, approximately 54% are under the age of 29 years with FNMI youth representing the fastest growing demographic in Canada.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) indicates there are 633 First Nation reserves in Canada, which represents 52 distinct nations or cultural groups and more than 50 languages. According to the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), there are 15,000 Métis citizens and 30 chartered community councils. The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) represents 55,000 Inuit in 53 communities representing four Inuit regions in Labrador, northern Quebec, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories. **Demographics vary from region to region and it is important to know the FNMI demographics in your area.**

A sense of community can be enhanced through social interaction and culture based programs, services and activities found at Friendship Centres, Métis Councils, Native Women's groups, and Healing Lodges, for example. The First Nations and Métis have a historic connection to the Simcoe, York and Muskoka region and now consists of a number of FNMI from across Turtle Island (North America).

In 2011, 1,400,685 people reported as being Aboriginal or 4.3% of the Canadian population. Source: 2011 National Household Survey

A Community Development Approach



Strengths in FNMI Communities

Understanding the historical impacts felt by families and individuals with a focus on solutions is vital to bridge building and culturally competent service delivery.

Recognizing strengths and contributions of the FNMI community form a strong basis for partnership and relationship building.

Each FNMI community is unique with a range of culturally sensitive services and initiatives in response to growing interest and desire to learn from FNMI people. These focus on the physical, emotional, spiritual and mental well-being for the **next 7 generations** that include:

- 7 Grandfather Gifts/Teachings;
- Empowering families and communities;
- Providing safe environments;
- Development and delivery of culturally sensitive/appropriate programs and services;
- History of collaborative efforts;
- Maximizing resources and bridge building among existing services.

Consultation

The "Duty to Consult" flows from the Supreme Court of Canada decision (Delgamuukw Case) and 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 are consulted at the beginning of projects and informed on matters that affect their traditional territory and peoples.

First Nation and Inuit governments have the right to hold elections and determine their own citizenship (enrolment), but are still confined by Indian Act restrictions. The Métis Nation developed their citizenship code and membership rights as supported by the Powley decision of 1992.

Although the constitution protects "Aboriginal rights" as collective/community rights, legislation has played a role in creating complex issues and challenges as FNMI attempt to exercise those rights as individuals.

Cultural Identity

It is important to understand that cultural identity can be a source of confusion as a result of legislated oppression with past, present and intergenerational impacts.

The celebration of cultural identity and reconnection to the culture is individual with participation in cultural practices, family and community influences strong factors in this life-long journey.

It is important to respect where individuals are in their cultural identity and traditional practices with "culture" meaning different things to different people.

FNMI may identify their community of origin, spirit name and clan if they know it. This is another important aspect of identity and a way to make connections to new people.

Critical to this understanding of cultural identity, confusion and/or disconnect, is the

impact of historic trauma such as: residential schools; the 60's scoop; adoption outside the community; boarding schools and outlawed practices that viewed traditional ways as taboo. These factors caused older generations to feel shame, fear and guilt about who they were and their original way of life. However, the 70's marked a critical time of resurgence and resistance to cultural oppression. Leadership and Elders often identify language as a vital link to this reconnection.

This resurgence also marked greater awareness by Canadian society and a desire to learn about the significant contributions made by FNMI people in medicine, science, transportation, ecology, wholistic practices and FNMI role models to name a few.

Cultural Customs/Traditional Territories

As we carry out business in this region, 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.

Many FNMI experience a cultural divide and must adjust to contemporary society while maintaining cultural identity. **Cultural competency of service providers is an important part of this transition.** Questions are encouraged for the purpose of improving the service providers understanding, developing relationships, cultural competency and awareness. **It is important to acknowledge and follow the protocols and practices of specific geographic areas.** For example, there are Anishinabe and Mohawk communities/families within the region that have similar and different cultural practices.

Role of Elders/Senators

Elders/Senators are the wisdom carriers and transfer knowledge from one generation to the next. They are typically recognized by their community for wisdom gained throughout their lifetime. **Elders are looked to for historic and traditional knowledge valuable for local context and decision-making processes.**

Elders are typically offered tobacco and a gift for this work.

It is customary in many communities to show respect by inviting Elders/Senators to speak first, not interrupt and allow time for opinions and thoughts to be expressed.

In group settings, Elders and Métis Senators are often asked to open and close a meeting, to help people to be of good minds.

Elders often offer teachings or advice in ways that are indirect, such as storytelling to help guide and advise us in our work.

In a social setting where food is served, Elders are generally served first. It is disrespectful to interrupt, openly argue, or disagree with an Elder.

Elders and Métis Senators are held in high esteem and have earned the respect of the community.

Veterans

Historically, **FNMI had high rates of enlistment in the military service (1 in 3) long before given the right to vote in the 1960's.**

Upon return from service, many First Nation (status) veterans experienced hardship based on their status and inability to access benefits unless they gave up their status. There are long standing traditions that honour veterans at ceremonies and powwows with special songs and dances to acknowledge their many contributions and sacrifices.

Culture Card



A Guide to Build Cultural Awareness

Sources

This guide was inspired by the Culture Card developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) in partnership with American Indian & Alaska Native (AI/AN) ad-hoc group. The authors wish to thank AI/AN, SAMSHA, First Nation, Métis and Inuit community members and mainstream organizations in this region who took part in the Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle consultation and planning meetings.

Although this resource was developed to fill an identified need, it is not intended to provide exhaustive information about all matters pertaining to First Nation, Métis and Inuit. For more information, contact your local First Nation, Métis Council, Friendship Centre, Native Women's group, Healing Lodge, Tribal Council, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis Nation of Ontario, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs...

Information Resources: This resource was locally developed based on FNMI and mainstream service provider feedback in the Simcoe, Muskoka and York Region. Community consultation documents served as an important foundation. Additional resources include: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada; Assembly of First Nations; Census Canada 2006; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; Métis Nation of Ontario and Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. *Joseph, R. and Joseph, C. (2007). (*Working Effectively with Aboriginal Peoples™*), p. 127. Indigenous Corporate Training Inc, Vancouver, BC.

If you have suggestions in the development of additional resources to complement this guide, please contact ed@banac.on.ca.

Spirituality

Prior to European contact, spirituality was a way of life, source of strength and unity.

Since contact, and as a result of historical oppression, spirituality can be a source of conflict and confusion. **It is important to note that many cultural and spiritual practices that united communities were outlawed in the mid-1800's.** This contributed to a cultural disconnect and divide with many impacted and now seeking to learn more about the original way of life.

Spirituality is a wholistic source of strength that includes caring for self, family and community in the promotion of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. The majority of FNMI communities have traditional and various religious practices.

There is a resurgence of traditional practices previously outlawed such as: potlatch, powwows, naming ceremonies, sweat lodge, fasting and traditional gatherings. Social and health challenges and their solutions are often viewed from a wholistic perspective. This is an important approach in maintaining balance and wellness.

In many First Nation communities and urban organizations, **opening with a smudge and prayer by an Elder/Métis Senator are becoming more common place.** Generally, tobacco and a gift are given as a sign of respect for this work.

Spirituality, world views and the meaning of life can represent diverse concepts that are vast and practised to varying degrees in day to day living. **All Creations stories are viewed as true and equal, thereby highly respected.**

Health & Wellness Challenges

A Health Council of Canada report was one of many to highlight the significant overall health and economic disparities between the FNMI community and Canadian population that include:

- 3 to 5 times at risk of diabetes
- Life expectancy 5 – 7 years less than the non-Aboriginal population
- More likely to die in the first year of life
- 1.5 times more likely to have heart disease, chronic conditions and/or infectious disease
- Arthritis was the most prevalent chronic disease reported by Métis adults
- Tuberculosis has been cited as 8 – 10x and up to 31 times the national average
- 1 in 4 live in poverty, double the national average
- More likely to go hungry, suffer from poor nutrition with 41% obesity, live in over-crowded and substandard housing, median income 22,211 per year
- Suicide rate for First Nation, Métis 5-6 times and Inuit 11 times the national average;
- Rate of disabilities among FN children almost double that for Canadian children
- 1 in 4 children are also in CAS care
- 33% of First Nations experienced sadness and/or depression over extended periods

Challenges Continued

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. FNMI assert that access to services is an inherent right for all Canadians with Aboriginal & Treaty Rights reflecting a constitutional relationship with the Crown. Health services are intended to be comprehensive, accessible, portable and provided on an "as needed" basis without regard for a person's financial status, residency or cost of the benefit. The First Nations Inuit Health Branch and non-insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program serves to help close the Aboriginal health gap. **Although progress has been made in this area, challenges continue to exist.**

The NIHB Program is a national program that provides coverage for benefit claims to eligible status First Nation and Inuit for specified prescriptions, dental, vision, medical supplies and equipment, short-term crisis intervention, mental health counselling and medical transportation as per available funding.

However, ongoing cutbacks and changes to membership eligibility may impact access by an individual with jurisdictional issues having the potential to further complicate access.

Prevention and intervention efforts must include supportive partners, enhanced community resources, partnership building and the development of cultural competence.

Service providers must take great care during intake and assessment practices to consider cultural differences and preferences in the development of a plan of care.

A growing trend in hospitals and community health centres is access to traditional practices with Elders and healers as a means to bridge the cultural divide. However, health disparities still exist with limited access to culturally appropriate health care. To fill the gap, Friendship Centres, Métis Councils and Native Women's groups provide additional services to support overall well-being as budgets and staffing permit.

*"Equity is the floor, not the ceiling."
Cindy Blackstock*

Myths & Facts

Myth: Aboriginal people are ALL the same. **Facts:** The term Aboriginal is used in the Constitution to describe 3 distinct groups: First Nation (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. While preferences vary, it is important to take direction from individuals or community as appropriate. A growing trend is the use of specific Nations such as: Anishinabe, Métis, Haudenosaunee, Cree, Algonquin, etc.

Myth: Aboriginal people get everything for free. **Facts:** FNMI are entitled to the same benefits as ALL Canadians including Child Tax Benefit, Old Age Security, OHIP, & Employment Insurance. Where treaty rights exist and entitlement is rights based, they are still subject to regulation and/or funding such as hunting, fishing, housing, education and health. Comprehensive land claim settlements include reserve land & payment of annuities depending on the terms and conditions of their Treaty agreement. It is important to note that new government legislation such as Bill C31 and C3 continue to impact rights based eligibility and access to services.

Myth: Aboriginal people receive free housing and post-secondary education. **Facts:** Under the Indian Act, the Federal government provides a level of housing and post-secondary assistance to First Nations and Inuit to achieve the same standard of living as other Canadians. However, funding has been capped and only increased 2 – 3% in the last 25 years. It does not meet the high demands with waiting lists compromising student education, career and life goals. Métis students can now access subsidies through the Métis Nation of Ontario. Housing & education subsidies are provided in a manner similar to those provided to all Canadians.

Myth: Aboriginal people are tax exempt. **Facts:** The origin of tax exemption for a status person is found under Section 87 and 90 of the Indian Act. Income earned by registered Indians working on-reserve is exempt from income tax. Generally, First Nation individuals must pay income tax if they work off-reserve. Depending on the Province, some registered Indians do not pay provincial sales tax but in many instances, there is uneven application of this right. Registered Indians do not have to pay HST for goods delivered to a reserve. First Nations people living off-reserve for the most part pay the same taxes as the rest of Canadian society. Although on-reserve members don't pay taxes, **fee for service may be charged for basic services such as water delivery and garbage pick-up for example.** Foreign diplomats are also tax exempt.

Communication Styles

Nonverbal Messages

- Every culture expresses non-verbal communication differently. This can include gestures, posture, eye-contact, volume of speech, vocal noises, protocols for cultural observances etc.
- For example, in some Aboriginal cultures, direct eye contact, stepping over a person or object, or pointing at someone with a finger may be a sign of disrespect
- Cultural awareness is necessary to avoid misinterpretation of non-verbal behavior.
- A gentle handshake is often seen as a sign of respect.

Humour

- It is 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.

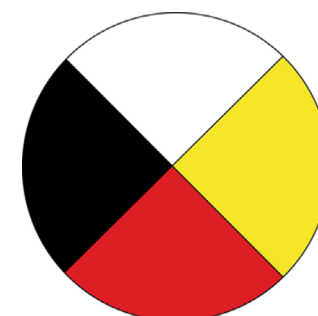
Indirect Communication & Non-Interference

- 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

- 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 direct messages that mainstream society may expect.
- Getting messages across through telling a story (traditional teachings and personal stories) is very common and sometimes in contrast with "get to the point" expectations.

- 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.



Be an ally!

Relationship Building

The following suggested steps are based on community consultation feedback with the understanding that each community will have their own preferences and protocols.

Step 1 – Examine your own bias' and beliefs about FNMI people related to issues such as: 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. Some questions to consider include: Are you comfortable working with FNMI people and issues? Do you understand them? Do you accept that Aboriginal people have special rights? Are you willing to learn more to develop your own cultural competency? * (Adapted from Working Effectively with Aboriginal People)

Step 2 – Acquire knowledge about the community you are working with such as protocols, previous studies, available data, existing services, contact people, leadership, geographic representation/catchment area, transportation/access (ie: ferry schedule), past and present relationship, services and community websites.

Step 3 – Organizational Scan (Assess the 4 P's – People, Place, Policy, Process)

a. People – Who are the FNMI in your catchment area? Do you employ any FNMI staff? Do you have a method of tracking or collecting data in relation to FNMI clientele? Do you have any FNMI programs or services? Have you had any cross cultural awareness sessions in your organization? Do you have a person responsible for FNMI programs and sensitivity who can act as a service navigator within the organization? Are staff knowledgeable about FNMI specific services available among stakeholders/partners?

b. Place – Do you have a warm and welcoming environment to reflect the FNMI community such as appropriate literature, books, pictures, etc.

c. Policy – Do you have policies in place that support inclusive and equitable services for FNMI clients and staff such as voluntary self ID, hiring practices, designated FNMI representation at Board level, involvement of FNMI in planning as per duty to consult, etc. These need to be reviewed and revised regularly to meet changing environment and needs.

d. Process – Regular meetings, terms of reference, evaluation, means of communications, conflict resolution, circles, access to traditional medicines and ability to smudge. All of these contribute to shared service delivery, relationship building, better understanding and cultural competency.

Step 4 – Moving Forward & Building Capacity is based on the organizational scan and documented FNMI needs. Moving forward could involve visioning sessions, cross cultural awareness training, identified outcomes with timelines and funding requirements that include a financial commitment for FNMI capacity building.

Self Awareness & Etiquette

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

The following Aboriginal Capacity Building Circle (ACBC) guiding principles are based on the community feedback from the Visioning Day held in April 2009 and further defined at the Gathering of the Clans in June 2010. These principles are an encouraging example of consultation when FNMI and mainstream service providers work together to meet identified needs in a meaningful way.

ACBC Principles

1. That children and youth will be grounded in their cultural identity, traditional beliefs and have their basic needs met;

2. That FNMI people have the right to respectful and culturally safe continuum of programs and services;

3. That programs & services for FNMI will be provided by FNMI people and where appropriate, in partnership with others;

4. That the FNMI community will design, develop, implement, govern, administer and evaluate a continuum of programs and services for children, youth and families in partnership with others;

5. That FNMI Elders and youth are present and will have a key role in planning and delivery of initiatives;

6. That a fully resourced FNMI workforce strategy is developed and implemented wherever FNMI people are employed;

7. That all partners have a mutual responsibility to ensure a welcoming and inclusive environment free from oppression and racism;

8. That all programs and services are informed by the past, encouraged by the present and strengthened for the next Seven Generations to come.



Etiquette - Do's

Find out about community protocols and who to contact.

Ensure families are given ALL available options.

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.

Allow others to finish speaking before you speak. If in a circle, wait your turn and respect confidentiality protocol.

Use language people can understand. Avoid jargon and acronyms.

Provide food and refreshments if you are hosting a meeting.

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).

Etiquette - Don'ts

Don't assume anything about FNMI individuals, families or communities.

Don't force clients to make suggestions.

Don't impose your own values and beliefs.

Don't assume that all FNMI want services from FNMI agencies.

Don't assume that all FNMI know their history and culture.

Don't put the onus on the FNMI client to inform you about their culture and history.

Don't make stereotypical assumptions about FNMI.

Don't interpret silence as lack of interest or agreement.

Don't constantly look at your watch during sessions or meetings.

Do not consider FNMI culture a privilege.

It is a right.



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.

Include FNMI community on planning committees with an understanding this does not constitute consultation.

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, 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 other stakeholders to develop general guidelines to consider when offering services to FNMI families.

Don't use cultural symbols and items without understanding their significance and cultural protocol. (ie: sacred pipes, medicines, ceremonial masks, drums, etc.) When in doubt, ask an appropriate resource person.

Don't assume there is one standard response when a person is in distress.

Don't touch sacred items, such as medicine bags, hair, jewellery, other personal or ceremonial and cultural items unless given permission.

Don't be afraid to ask someone from the community if you aren't sure about specific practices and protocols. Gender roles may vary among families and communities. Males and females have distinct social roles in every day interactions as well as ceremonies. It is always best to observe the local practices and protocols.

Don't take/use pictures or any other information gained by working in the FNMI community for personal presentations, case studies, research, and so on, without the expressed written and prior consent of the parties involved.