

AD0200 – INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY AND HUMILITY

Interior Health would like to recognize and acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Däkelh Dené, Ktunaxa, Nlaka'pamux, Secwépemc, St'át'imc, syilx, and Tsilhqot'in Nations, where we live, learn, collaborate and work together.

Interior Health recognizes that diversity in the workplace shapes values, attitudes, expectations, perception of self and others and in turn impacts behaviors in the workplace. The dimensions of a diverse workplace includes the protected characteristics under the human rights code of: race, color, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical disability, mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, criminal or summary conviction unrelated to employment.

PREAMBLE

This policy aligns with the [Health Service Organization \(HSO\) BC Cultural Safety and Humility Standard \(2022\)](#) which addresses racism against First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples, in the land where British Columbia (BC) resides. It also supports the following federal, provincial, and regional commitments: In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-Specific Racism and Discrimination in BC Health Care, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action 23 and 24, Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls to Justice 7 and 15, adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, Métis Nation Relationship Accord II, Declaration of Commitment to Cultural Safety and Humility, and the Interior Partnership Accord. This policy also aligns with the Interior Health's (IH) Anti-Racism policy.

1.0 PURPOSE

This policy sets out Interior Health's (IH) direction on:

- (a) providing Culturally Safe service delivery;
- (b) supporting a Culturally Safe work experience for Staff;
- (c) guiding Staff to deliver Culturally Competent care for Clients and families;
- and
- (d) supporting Client and Staff access to traditional medicines and Indigenous ways of healing.

Indigenous Cultural Safety is a health care approach that considers how social and historical contexts, as well as structural and interpersonal power imbalances, shape health and health care experiences. In a culturally safe organization, Staff are self-reflective and self-aware and understand their role in creating Culturally Safe spaces for colleagues and Clients.

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Date Approved: April 2021	Date(s) Reviewed-r/Revised-R: May 2025 (R)
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2.0 DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Act	The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) of BC that incorporates the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' 46 Articles covering all facets of the human rights of Indigenous Peoples such as culture, identity, religion, language, health, education and community.
Ally	Any person that disrupts oppressive spaces by educating others on the realities and histories of marginalized people. An Ally speaks up in the face of racism and discrimination.
Anti-Racism	The practice of actively identifying, challenging, preventing, eliminating and changing the values, structures, policies, programs, practices and behaviors that perpetuate racism. It is more than just being “not racist” but involves taking action to create conditions of greater inclusion, equality and justice.
Client	Anyone receiving care or services from IH. It includes patients and those who reside in the Interior region.
Cultural Awareness	The acknowledgement of difference. It is the first step in understanding cultural differences and involves observing those differences. Cultural awareness focuses on the ‘other’ and the ‘other culture’. Cultural awareness does not consider political or socio-economic influences on cultural difference, nor does it require an individual to reflect on his/her own cultural perspectives (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023).
Cultural Competency	The capacity to interact compassionately, sensitively, knowledgeably, and effectively with people of different cultures... Cultural competence is a lifelong journey. Whether you are part of the cultural group itself, or an interested learner, internalizing Indigenous knowledge takes time and practice. Being open to new ways of looking at the world brings new and enriching opportunities for growth. (Assembly of First Nations, 2021)
Cultural Humility	Cultural humility is a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and privileges to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another's experience and culture and is focused on identifying then dismantling power imbalances (HQBC, 2025).

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<i>Cultural Practices</i>	<i>For the purpose of this policy, refers to common Indigenous practices that promote health and healing such as, but not limited to: Traditional Foods, Smudging Ceremony; Sacred Pipe Ceremony; Ceremonial Cedar Brushing; Water Ceremony; Drumming, Fiddling, and Healing and Talking Circles.</i>
<i>Cultural Safety</i>	<i>Cultural safety is about the experience of the patient. It is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the healthcare system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving health care. Only the Indigenous patient accessing or receiving care can define it as culturally safe (HQBC, 2025).</i>
<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>The Canadian Constitution Act, 1982 Section 35 (2) recognizes three groups of Indigenous Peoples: First Nations/"Indians" (status and non-status), Métis, and Inuit. These three distinct groups have their own unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Although the term "Indian" is imbedded in the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982 Section 35 (2) it is not an acceptable term to refer to Indigenous Peoples and should not be used.</i>
<i>Indigenous-Specific Racism</i>	<i>Indigenous-specific racism refers to the unique nature of stereotyping, bias and prejudice about Indigenous peoples in Canada that is rooted in the history of settler colonialism. It is the ongoing race-based discrimination, negative stereotyping and injustice experienced by Indigenous peoples that perpetuates power imbalances, systemic discrimination and inequitable outcomes stemming from the colonial policies and practices. (IPS Report).</i>
<i>Racism</i>	<i>The belief that a group of people are inferior based on the colour of their skin or their cultural or spiritual practices. It leads to discriminatory behaviors and policies that oppress, ignore or treat racialized groups as 'less than' non-racialized groups.</i>
<i>Safety</i>	<i>The absence of harm and/or threat to Staff or Client mental, spiritual, physical, or emotional well-being. Safety includes the experiences of psychological and Cultural Safety.</i>
<i>Staff</i>	<i>Includes physicians, medical staff, volunteers, students, contractors and other persons working or acting on behalf of IH.</i>

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3.0 POLICY

3.1 Organization Indigenous Cultural Safety

- 3.1.1 IH is committed to Culturally Safe care, as defined by Interior region Indigenous Peoples. Health services are expected to be accessible, of high quality, relevant, Culturally Safe, and provided in a Culturally Competent manner.
- 3.1.2 IH is committed to addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism and breaches of Cultural Safety, and actively engaging in Anti-Racism, in alignment with the IH [Anti-Racism policy](#).
- 3.1.3 As per Article 18 of the Act, IH is committed to embedding this policy throughout the organization to address and decrease health inequities through meaningful engagement with Indigenous partners in providing Culturally Safe and responsive services.

3.2 Staff Cultural Safety

- 3.2.1 Staff, including self-identified and non-self-identified Indigenous Staff, can expect to experience and contribute to a Culturally Safe work environment. Staff have mechanisms to report Racism, discrimination, or breaches in Cultural Safety in the workplace.

3.3 Providing Culturally Competent Health and Wellness Services

- 3.3.1 Indigenous Clients and families receiving services from IH can expect Staff to act in a respectful and Culturally Competent manner.
- 3.3.2 IH is committed to delivering health services in Culturally Safe and inclusive environments.

3.4 Right To Traditional Medicines

- 3.4.1 As guaranteed by Articles 11, 12, 13, 15, and 24 of the Act, when delivering health services for Indigenous Peoples, Staff shall include, where possible, access to Cultural Practices and traditional medicines as part of Client care, in consultation with and at the request of the Client.
- 3.4.2 IH will support Indigenous Staff to access Cultural Practices and traditional medicines, where possible and appropriate, in their work environment.

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4.0 PROCEDURES.

4.1 Organization Indigenous Cultural Safety

- 4.1.1 IH will take steps to support health services to be Culturally Safe and provided in a Culturally Competent manner including:
- Supporting Staff to participate in professional development opportunities that promote Indigenous Cultural Safety, including education, resources, and/or community engagement, based on availability and applicability.
 - Consistently applying this policy across the organization, including utilizing this policy as an Indigenous Cultural Safety lens to develop new IH Policies and review and revise existing IH Policies.
 - Reviewing all complaints about Staff compliance with this policy as per its normal investigation process which may include other IH policies (including but not limited to AU1000), medical staff bylaws and rules, or applicable legislation.
- 4.1.2 IH will investigate and address anti-Indigenous Racism and actively engage in Anti-Racism practices and principles. IH will undertake Anti-Racism activities to effectively address Anti-Indigenous Racism. IH requires and will support Clients, Staff, and other Allies to recognize, report, and respond effectively to Culturally Unsafe, racist, and discriminatory behaviors and will view any retaliation of a report or complaint as a violation of this Policy and any other applicable IH policy.
- 4.1.3 IH will consult and coordinate with internal and external Indigenous Peoples, organizations, and communities to: (i) deliver accessible, quality, relevant, and Culturally Safe care and (ii) plan and evaluate health service delivery (both (i) and (ii) guaranteed as per section 3 and Article 18 of the Act).

4.2 Staff Cultural Safety

- 4.2.1 All Staff, including self-identified and non-self-identified Indigenous individuals, can expect to experience a Culturally Safe work environment. Staff will take steps to contribute to a Culturally Safe work environment for others. Staff have mechanisms to report Racism, discrimination, or breaches of Cultural Safety in the workplace (including but not limited to [AU1000](#)) and can expect protection at all levels from retaliatory outcomes of the submission of a complaint.
- 4.2.2 IH will take steps to support Staff experiences of a Culturally Safe work environment including:

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- Supporting Culturally Safe workplace environments that are free of discrimination and Culturally Unsafe behaviours as per [AU1000](#) Workplace Environment and [AU0100](#) Standards of Conduct for IH Employees.
- Developing a workforce that values diversity and enhances organizational efficiency and effectiveness through the inclusion of diverse perspectives and points of view as per [AU2100](#) Diversity.
- Promoting Staff psychological well-being, including cultural well-being, and actively working to prevent harm to Staff psychological health in negligent, reckless, or intentional ways as per [AV3000](#) Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.

4.2.3 Staff are responsible for:

- Taking relevant mandatory and recommended education to enhance their Cultural Awareness and understanding of the unique history of the Interior region and the diverse Indigenous population that has lived, lives, and will continue to thrive on this land.
- Practicing and seeking out opportunities to engage in Cultural Humility, including identifying appropriate occasions to offer an acknowledgement of the First Nations Traditional Territory as per [ADO100](#) Welcome and Acknowledgement of First Nations Traditional Territory.
- Communicating opportunities to enhance Indigenous Cultural Safety within their team(s) to managers, supervisors, or designated Human Resources Advisor.
- Participating as Allies in initiatives and activities that address Anti-Indigenous Racism and support Indigenous Cultural Safety.
- Protecting their own and other people's Cultural Safety in the workplace.
- Modelling the behaviours and actions that are consistent with a Culturally Safe workplace, including but not limited to, respect, inclusiveness, self-reflection and self-awareness, and non-judgmental behaviour.
- Reporting all work-related breaches of Cultural Safety as per [AU1000](#) Workplace Environment.

4.3 Providing Culturally Competent Health and Wellness Services

4.3.1 Clients and families receiving services from IH can expect Staff to act in a Culturally Competent manner and have mechanisms to report Racism, discrimination, or breaches of Cultural Safety as per [AK0100](#) Client Complaint Management.

4.3.2 Staff are responsible for:

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- Knowing what the Cultural Competency expectations are, including the mandatory educational requirements.
- Conducting themselves in a Culturally Competent manner with Clients and families.
- Implementing and/or following policies and procedures related to Cultural Safety.
- Addressing personal knowledge and Cultural Competency gaps by attending ongoing education and learning opportunities that facilitate an applied knowledge of Cultural Safety in their work.
- Behaving or interacting with Clients in Culturally Safe and respectful ways, and where safe to do so, challenging harmful practices and interactions of others, including such things as stereotyping, discrimination, and racist, sexist, or other demeaning and harmful commentary.

4.3.3 IH Managers and those with direct reports are responsible for:

- Supporting direct reports to participate in professional development opportunities that promote Indigenous Cultural Safety.
- Providing clear guidelines to direct reports and access to resources that support learning and application of Indigenous Cultural Competency.
- Supporting a safe environment free of retaliation for Staff to report breaches in Cultural Safety and being responsive to these reports as per [AU1000](#) Workplace Environment.

4.3.4 IH will support its physical environments, including but not limited to acute sites, community health centres, long-term care sites, and office spaces, to be accessible and meet the spiritual, cultural, and emotional needs of Clients, families, and Staff by:

- Supporting all IH owned and leased facilities and spaces to be Culturally Safe including reviewing the accessibility and availability of ceremony or cultural practices.
- Providing access to tools, resources, and processes to support Staff to implement continuous quality improvement for Culturally Safe and inclusive physical environments.

4.4 Right To Traditional Medicines

- 4.4.1 Staff will, upon request and where possible, facilitate the inclusion and access to traditional medicines in health care planning.
- 4.4.2 IH recognizes Indigenous Clients may request and may have access to the ceremonial use of traditional medicines such as tobacco, sage,

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cedar, or sweet grass. Staff will make reasonable efforts to consult, cooperate, and collaborate in arranging ceremony in a timely and respectful manner. A smudging ceremony requires a ventilated environment. All other use of tobacco products will comply with the [AV2000](#) Smoke Free Environment policy.

4.4.3 Staff will:

- Collaborate with the Client and/or family in arranging ceremony, as requested, in a timely and respectful manner.
- Consult with the Client, family, or Traditional Practitioner (Elder, Knowledge Keeper, Healer) to determine the best location for various ceremonies.
- Help make space in a Client's room if the Client is unable to be transferred to a sacred space or other ventilated area.
- Consult, if needed, with Indigenous Patient Navigators (IPN) or other members of the care team for sites that do not have an IPN available.
- Follow the ceremonial protocols, as per the Client, family, or Traditional Practitioner, if invited and able to attend the ceremony.
- Monitor for fire and room safety and notifying facilities personnel when the ceremony is complete to ensure smoke detectors are turned back on, as required.
- Document that a ceremony has taken place, the type of ceremony, and the name of the person who provided the ceremony.
- Work with facility managers and leadership to develop procedures relevant to each facility, including safety considerations.

4.4.4 Indigenous Staff shall be supported to access Cultural Practices and traditional medicines, where possible, in their work environment.

- Staff may access and use traditional medicines, as appropriate, such as tobacco, sage, cedar, or sweet grass to support psychological health and wellness and Cultural Safety in the workplace.

5.0 REFERENCES

Adapted from First Nations Health Authority (2017) [FNHA's Policy Statement on Cultural Safety and Humility, 'It Starts with Me.'](#)

Adapted from Vancouver Coastal Health (2018) [Indigenous Cultural Safety Policy](#)

Assembly of First Nations (2021). Why Is Cultural Competency Important? In It's Our Time: Education Toolkit. Retrieved May 1, 2025 from <https://education.afn.ca/afntoolkit/web-modules/plain-talk-8-cultural-competency/why-is-cultural-competency/>

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First Nations Health Authority (2015) [Declaration of Commitment to Cultural Safety and Humility](#)

First Nations Health Council (2019) [Interior Partnership Accord: Interior Region Nation Executive and Interior Health Authority](#)

Government of British Columbia (2019) [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#)

Government of British Columbia (2016) [Métis Nation Relationship Accord II In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-Specific Racism and Discrimination in BC Health Care](#)

Health Quality BC. (2025). Backgrounder: Cultural Safety & Humility and Indigenous Specific Anti-Racism Education and Training Framework

In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care. 2020.

[Reclaiming Power and Place: Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada \(2015\) Final Report: Calls to Action](#)

[UN General Assembly \(2007\) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

RELATED POLICIES

IH Policy [AD0100 Welcome and Acknowledgement of First Nations Traditional Territory](#)

IH Policy [AK0100 Client Complaint Management](#)

IH Policy [AU0100 Standards of Conduct](#)

IH Policy [AU1000 Workplace Environment](#)

IH Policy [AU2100 Diversity](#)

IH Policy [AU2200 Anti-Racism](#)

IH Policy [AV1100 Employee Incident Reporting and Investigation](#)

IH Policy [AV2000 Smoke Free Environment](#)

IH Policy [AV3000 Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace](#)

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