



# Mission Public School District Indigenous Cultural Safety, Humility, and Competency Guide

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*As learning partners of Mission Public School District, we humbly work and learn on the Traditional, Ancestral, Unsurrendered, and Shared lands of the Stó:lō people, of Leq'á:mel, Semá:th, Máthxwi, Sq'éwlets and Qwó:lt'el First Nations, stewards of this land since time immemorial.*



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# About this Guide

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this guide is to support *all* employees of MPSD find and use appropriate and meaningful resources that will increase their ability to provide culturally safe and respectful learning environments.



## CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND CULTURAL HUMILITY

Cultural competency is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures (*Creating a Climate for Change, First Nations Health Authority*).

Cultural competency involves being aware of and sensitive to your own biases and developing skills for interacting in respectful ways with people who are different from you.

Cultural competency does not require you to become an expert in cultures different from yours, it simply requires that you reflect on how your values and biases affect your interactions with others. It is only by understanding a family's, caregiver's, learner's, or colleague's culture through communication and relationship building that you can provide cultural safety (*BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2021*).

To understand cultural humility, it is important to think about how culture is central in these interactions. The authors of the *Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards* explain the importance of culture. The use of 'health care' can easily be substituted with 'education' and 'learning.'

*"Culture defines how... information is received, how rights and protections are exercised, what is an... [education] problem, how symptoms and concerns about the problem are expressed, who should provide treatment for the problem, and what type of treatment should be given. In sum, because... [education] is a cultural construct, arising from beliefs about the nature of... [learning], cultural issues are actually central in the delivery of... [education and learning] (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services, found [HERE](#)).*

Thus, discovering and incorporating these differences help foster an environment that allows cultural humility to grow and take shape.

Cultural humility is a process, while cultural competency is an outcome (*Foronda, Cynthia (2019). A Theory of Cultural Humility. Journal of Transcultural Nursing. Vol 3(1) 7-1.*



## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide contains educational resources to develop cultural competency for educators but is applicable for anyone working in the education system. The inclusion of these resources is not an endorsement; as professionals, it is up to each individual educator's discretion and autonomy to determine which resources work best for them, as per MPSD Administrative Procedures and Policies.

## WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE

All employees in MPSD.

MPSD recognizes and needs to ensure that the unique rights, interests, and circumstances of Indigenous peoples in BC are acknowledged, understood, affirmed, and applied. The district recognizes First Nations, the Métis Nation, and Inuit as the Indigenous peoples of Canada, consisting of distinct, rights-bearing Nations, with their individual histories. The work of forming relationships based on the recognition of rights, titles, respect, and partnership must reflect the unique interests, priorities, and circumstances of each people.

*Adopted from BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2021). Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide.*



# What is Cultural Competency, Safety, and Humility

## A NOTE ON DEFINITIONS

The definitions in this guide are basic in nature. To be equitable and culturally safe, Indigenous nations and organizations may define cultural safety in a manner appropriate to the wishes, interests and needs of their community, or their Nation.

### DEFINITION OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Cultural competency is the ability “to provide care to individuals with diverse values, beliefs, and behaviours... [to] meet their social, cultural, and linguistic needs” (*Health Care Assistant Core Competencies, 2014*). Whether a child or family feels culturally safe is dependent in part on whether the educator is culturally competent.

### DEFINITION OF CULTURAL SAFETY

Cultural safety is about fostering a climate where the unique history of Indigenous peoples is recognized and respected to provide appropriate services in an equitable and safe way, without discrimination. It is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in systems. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe. (*Creating a Climate for Change, First Nations Health Authority*).

Cultural safety means attending to cultural differences. It is also important to understand that power differentials, which are part of providing care, impact cultural safety.

### DEFINITION OF CULTURAL HUMILITY

Cultural humility is a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic conditioned biases, and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a life-long learner when it comes to understanding another’s experience (*Creating a Climate for Change, First Nations Health Authority*).

The *National Institutes of Health (NIH)* defines cultural humility as “a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another’s culture, but one starts with an examination of their own beliefs and cultural identities.”

## CONTEXT

Cultural humility and cultural safety are important when two or more cultures interact within the same space, as one culture is often dominant.

This means that the values of the dominant culture are placed above the marginalized group or groups. This is true in Canada, where many Indigenous cultures and traditions are often intentionally or unintentionally invalidated. Cultural safety means creating a space where these cultures are respected and treated equally.

In 2019, a *Progress Audit of the Education of Aboriginal Students in the BC Public School System* reported significant inequities of outcomes for Indigenous learners in the BC public school system. According to the provincial *Aboriginal How Are We Doing Report* (2024), this continues to be true in almost every school district in the province today.

In 2019, Standard 9 was added to the *Professional Standards for BC Educators* which apply to all individuals holding a Certificate of Qualification to teach in British Columbia. Standard 9 states:

*Educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future. Educators contribute towards truth, reconciliation, and healing.*

*Educators foster a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and being, histories, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.*

*Educators critically examine their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices to facilitate change. Educators value and respect the languages, heritages, cultures, and ways of knowing and being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Educators understand the power of focusing on connectedness and relationships to oneself, family, community, and the natural world. Educators integrate First Nations, Inuit, and Métis worldviews and perspectives into learning environments.*

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURAL HUMILITY, SAFETY, AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY

To be culturally competent, it is necessary to be aware of, and understand, the cultural belief of the communities where you work as well as reflecting on your own beliefs and identity and how they might create biases. Cultural competency is a necessary step towards building a culturally safe experience for learners. Developing cultural competency in partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples will help you work towards providing cultural safety.

*Adopted from BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2021). Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide.*





# Information / Facts

These resources were adapted from the Ministry of Children and Family Development for shared education and learning.

**CONTENT WARNING:** *The content in the following resources addresses topics that include information on residential schools, trauma including intergenerational trauma, and may trigger unpleasant feeling or thoughts of past trauma.*

*Individuals who may need emotional support and resources can contact the Crisis Line Association of BC Mental Health Support Line at 1-800-784-2433. Indigenous peoples who may require emotional support can also contact the 24-Hour IRS Crisis Line 1-855-242-3310. MPSD Staff can access the Wellness Page [HERE](#).*

## WHAT DOES INDIGENOUS MEAN?

Indigenous refers to a person who is native to an area. It is the term currently utilized by the United Nations, as well as the Canadian and British Columbia governments. There is no common definition, rather the basis is on self-identification with pre-colonial societies, sovereign territory, and cultural systems. Currently, the term used to self-identify within the Mission Public School District as agreed on by the local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities through representation on the Indigenous Education Council is Indigenous. However, Aboriginal is an accepted alternative term. Many Indigenous folks prefer to identify specifically as per the Nation who claims them (the Nation with which they are registered or to which they belong).

## EXPLORE LEGAL TERMINOLOGY

Aboriginal peoples, as defined in the 1982 Constitution, refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. Aboriginal is a legal concept.

- A Band is a legal term used to refer to a group of Indigenous peoples. Most prefer to use the terms Nation, First Nation, or Community.
- A reserve is a track of land set aside by the Indian Act for the use of a specific Band or Nation.
- A person who is Status meets the definition of an Indian under the Indian Act and has certain rights and restrictions.
- A person who is non-Status does not meet the definition of an Indian or chooses not to register yet still identifies as First Nations.

**NOTE:** *Indian is a legal term, and in most other contexts is considered offensive.*

## FIRST NATIONS

There is no legal definition of First Nations, but it can refer to both a collective (i.e., Kwantlen First Nation) or an individual.

- In 2021, there were 290,210 Indigenous people in British Columbia, representing 5.9% of the province's total population. The majority of this population identified as First Nations (62.1%), followed by Métis (33.7%), and Inuit (0.6%). Within the First Nations population, 69.5% had Registered or Treaty Indian Status.
- There are 202 distinct First Nations in BC, each with their own unique traditions and history.
- British Columbia is home to 34 distinct First Nations languages. These languages belong to 7 distinct language families and are further divided into at least 93 dialects. B.C. has more Indigenous languages than any other province or territory in Canada, representing about 60% of all Indigenous languages in the country.

## MÉTIS

Members of the Métis Nation trace their origins to historic family lines in the Red River Valley and across Rupert's Land. Like the First Nations and Inuit, Métis people are distinct from other Indigenous people, and share a common culture, language, shared history, and homeland.

- In British Columbia, 97,865 people self-identified as Métis in the 2021 Census. Additionally, 27,135 individuals are registered members of the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC).
- Métis people share collective cultural practices, kinship ties, and history as a Nation. The term Métis does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage, rather Métis refers to a distinct people who have their own customs, ways of life, and recognizable group identity separate from those of their First Nations and European forbears. Although the Métis people are one Nation, they have diverse expressions of Métis culture.
- MNBC defines Métis as individuals who self-identify as Métis, are distinct from other Indigenous peoples, have a historic Métis Nation ancestry, and are accepted by the Métis Nation.

## INUIT

Inuit refers to Indigenous peoples of Northern Canada, the word means 'people' in Inuktitut. Inuit people have a distinct language and culture.

- In Canada, Inuit have inhabited communities stretching from the westernmost Arctic to the eastern shores of Newfoundland and Labrador for uncounted generations. This area, known as Inuit Nunangat, refers to the land, and surrounding water and ice, which Inuit consider to be integral to their culture and way of life.
- In the 2021 Census, 1,720 individuals identified as Inuit., making up just under 1% of all Indigenous people in BC.
- [Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami](#) is the national representative organization for Inuit in Canada.

Adopted from BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2021). Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide.

# Indian Act

## BACKGROUND

Coming into effect in 1867, the Indian Act (the Act) is the principal statute which the federal government administers Indian status, local First Nations governments, and the management of reserve land and communal funds.

The Act does not apply to Métis, Inuit, and non-status First Nations peoples. However, since the Daniels Decision in 2016, Métis and non-status First Nations are now considered under s.91 (24) of the Constitution, which places them under federal jurisdiction.

The Act was amended significantly in 1951, which removed many political, cultural, and religious restrictions; yet introduced new restrictions on status that discriminated against First Nations women. The Act was amended in 1985 following the passage of Bill C-31, which called for the reinstatement of status to those who had been discriminated against and giving Bands control over their membership list. It was again amended in 2011 (Bill C-3) granting status to grandchildren of women who regained status in 1985. It was amended again in 2017 (Bill S-3), which enables more people to pass down their status to their descendants and reinstate status to those who lost it before 1985, then finally in 2019, the second part of Bill S-3 — related to restoring status to women and their offspring who lost status before 1951, known as the “1951 Cut-off” (*The Canadian Encyclopedia*).

Despite amendments, the Act continues to be heavily criticized, and its historical impacts are felt to this day. The Act is administered by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).

## PRESENT DAY

### Jurisdiction

Provincial laws that do not contradict the Indian Act apply to ‘Indians’ in that province.

### Finances

Personal property and income are tax exempt only when an ‘Indian’ is living and/or generating income on reserve.

### Healthcare

Essentials are provided by Non-Insured Health Benefits in BC. This is administered by the First Nations Health Authority in BC and does not cover all types of health costs.

### Land and Housing

Reserve lands are held in trust by the Crown. Individuals cannot own reserve land unless they are granted a certificate. Housing on reserve is typically owned collectively.

## Education

Schools can be established and run under the Indian Act. Educational funding is provided by Canada and administered by the Band. Children who live on reserve do not qualify for K-12 provincial public-school funding, therefore children living on reserve who attend K-12 public schools are charged tuition. This is known as the Nominal Roll. The Nominal Roll list is determined annually by the Band in cooperation with the local school district. Educational services for Nominal Roll students are often guided by Local Education Agreements (LEA) and more recently (2018), the BC Tripartite Agreement (BCTEA).

While the Act outlines rights to housing, funding for education and access to healthcare, *not all 'Indians' will receive these benefits*. There are limitations and exclusions to the medical coverage provided. Some reserves are limited in size and cannot offer housing to band members. The education funds offered are limited, resulting in students and families receiving partial funding or funding being deferred if there are more eligible students than funds available.

## UNDERSTANDING STATUS

- Status 'Indians' may be eligible for a range of benefits, rights, programs, and services offered by the federal, provincial, or territorial governments.
- Individuals must apply for Status. The Indian Registrar determines eligibility and maintains a federally controlled list.
- There is currently no federal register for Inuit or Métis. Métis people can register as members of their local or regional Métis organizations (Example: Métis Nation BC). Inuit people may be members of a land claim agreement.

Adopted from BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2021). Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide.

**NOTE:** Indian is a legal term, and in most other contexts is considered offensive.



# Residential Schools

## BACKGROUND

The Canadian state funded church-run schools to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian society. Indian Residential Schools operated from the 1860s to 1997. Over 150,000 children were forcibly removed from their homes and forced to attend these schools.

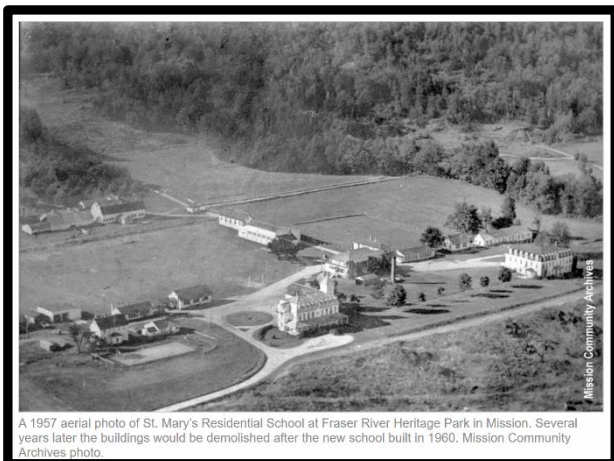
Children were often sent to residential schools far away from home and separated from their siblings in effort to destroy connections to community and culture. Other children were compelled to attend Indian Day Schools each day, where they experienced similar types of abuse as those who attended the residential schools.

Daily activities included religious worship, physical labour, and colonial education. Children were malnourished and exposed to the elements due to improper clothing and housing. They were punished with physical force and confinement for using their traditional languages or demonstrating ties to and practicing their culture. Children experienced physical, sexual, emotional, cultural, and psychological abuse. Many died while trying to return home, or from serious illness with inadequate medical care caused by malnutrition (and experiments). Some residential schools had a death rate as high as 50%.

In 1997, the last residential school closed in Canada.

## GOVERNMENT ACTION

- 1951 Mandatory attendance is removed from the Indian Act
- 1969 The federal government takes control of the residential schools from the churches
- 1980s Lawsuits are filed by survivors
- 1990s Churches begin to issue formal apologies
- 1996 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples conducts mass research on residential schools
- 2008 Prime Minister Stephen Harper formally apologizes
- 2015 Final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is released, including the 94 Calls to Action
- 2018 A new statutory holiday to memorialize residential schools is proposed by the federal government
- 2021 A new statutory holiday is established on September 30: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation



***The former St. Mary's Indian Residential School is located in Mission, and so this history is significantly intertwined into the fabric of the history of the community. It was the first school to open in BC in 1867 and was the last functioning residential school in BC. It closed in 1984.***

***Many Survivors of St. Mary's have made Mission their permanent home.***



## LEGACY

- The trauma experienced in residential schools have affected every aspect of Indigenous life, and has intergenerational effects on language, culture, and family and community structure.
- Cycle of abuse began with those who attended residential schools and has been passed on through generations. Many survivors feel feelings of guilt, shame, depression, hopelessness, and mistrust and anxiety around government institutions.
- The Métis experience had been underemphasized in the telling of residential school history. Métis people attended and survived residential schools, and many Elders are beginning to share their stories.

**NOTE:** The **National Day of Truth and Reconciliation** (Orange Shirt Day) held on September 30 is a commemorative event inspired by Phyllis Webstad's story of when she arrived at St. Joseph Mission Residential School in Williams Lake, BC.

Adopted from BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2021). Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide.



# Sixties Scoop & Children in Care

## BACKGROUND

In 1951, amendments to the Indian Act gave provinces jurisdiction over Indigenous child welfare. Discriminatory child welfare practices led to a surge of Indigenous children in provincial care.

The Sixties Scoop refers to the large-scale removal of Indigenous children in provincial care. The scoop took place from 1950s through to the 1980s; although many have pointed out that over representation of Indigenous children has remained high since (the Millennial Scoop), despite shifts in policy and practice.

Due to colonial policies and intergenerational trauma, some Indigenous children and families face social and economic barriers. It was provincial policy during this era to remove Indigenous children, often without consent of the family or community.

In BC, the percentage of Indigenous children in care rose 33% in 13 years – from 1% in 1951 to 34% in 1964. 70% of children removed were placed in non-Indigenous homes. Approximately 11,000 children were removed, but many believed it to be closer to 20,000 due to the erasure of non-status and Métis identity in the gathering of data, even though these groups experienced the Scoop. Children were separated from their families and siblings, many even being adopted out of the country, losing all ties to their culture and identity.

In British Columbia and in Canada, Indigenous children and youth are currently significantly overrepresented in the child welfare system, representing a significantly disproportionate percentage of children in care. As of January 31, 2024, 68% of children and youth in care in BC were Indigenous, despite Indigenous children making up only a smaller portion of the overall child population. (*MCFD Reporting Portal, 2024*). Indigenous children are often removed due to poverty, which is linked to systemic barriers and intergenerational trauma.

## GOVERNMENT ACTION

- 1970 Indigenous communities begin lobbying for control over child and family services.
- 1985 Justice Edwin Kimelman releases a report concluding that ‘cultural genocide has taken place in a systematic, routine manner.’
- 1980s Many legislative changes take place, including requiring Band notification and prioritizing placements with extended family members.
- 1992 A moratorium is placed on non-Indigenous families adopting Indigenous children in BC, which was later replaced by an Exceptions Committee to determine care plans.
- 1996 BC passes the Child, Family and Community Services Act and the Adoption Act, both requiring greater inclusion of a child’s community and culture in decision making.
- 2019 Government of Canada introduces Bill C-92, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth, and families.

## LEGACY

- Residential school survivors in Canada are eligible for compensation through two main settlement agreements:
  - the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) and,
  - the Federal Indian Day Schools Settlement Agreement.
  - These agreements provide financial compensation for the harm experienced by survivors, as well as funding for healing initiatives and commemoration projects.



# Intergenerational Trauma

## BACKGROUND

Through colonial assimilation policies such as mandatory attendance at residential schools, forced hospitalizations, and removals during the Sixties Scoop, Indigenous peoples have been subject to traumatic experiences that have affected their well-being.

Intergenerational trauma occurs when an older member of a community transfers the effects of trauma onto younger members, affecting their ability to lead healthy lives mentally, physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

Trauma can result in but is not limited to the loss of language, culture, and connection to community and family, low sense of self-esteem, internalized racism, disconnection from Indigenous and Western society, physical and emotional abuse, substance use and addiction, and suicide.

Different communities and Indigenous groups experienced colonization and trauma in different ways, resulting in different effects. For this reason, each Indigenous person's story and history should be treated as unique and valid.

## IMPACTS

### Mental Health, Self-Harm & Suicide

Indigenous peoples in Canada experience significantly poorer mental health outcomes compared to the non-Indigenous population. They are more likely to report fair or poor mental health, experience higher rates of diagnosed mood and anxiety disorders, and have significantly higher suicide rates, particularly among youth. Suicide and self-inflicted injuries are the leading cause of death for Indigenous youth. The suicide rate is five to six times higher for First Nations youth than non-Indigenous youth and 11 times higher for Inuit youth than the Canadian national average (*Statistics Canada, 2021 & Indigenous Services Canada, 2018.*)

### Children

68% of children in care in BC are Indigenous (*MCFD Reporting Portal, 2024*).

### Violence Against Women

Indigenous women in Canada experience significantly higher rates of violence compared to non-Indigenous women, facing disproportionately high rates of homicide, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault. They are also more likely to experience violence from strangers or acquaintances.

From 2001 to 2014, the average rate of homicides involving Indigenous female victims was four times that of those involving non-Indigenous female victims. (*Assembly of First Nations, 2024*).

### Incarceration

Despite accounting for approximately 5% of the adult population, Indigenous Peoples continue to be overrepresented in the federal correctional system, accounting for 28% of all federally sentenced individuals and 32% of all individuals in custody; and Indigenous women account for 50% of all federally incarcerated women. (*Public Safety Canada, 2023*).



## Community Health

First Nations communities have reported that there are many barriers for those choosing to live in community (on reserve) including inadequate housing and infrastructure, limited access to essential services, health disparities and disproportionately high rates of substance use, poverty and unemployment (*Statistics Canada, 2021*).

## RESILIENCE

While Indigenous communities are often encouraged to move on from the past era, this feat is not a simple matter. Legacies from residential school, the Sixties Scoop, along with ongoing issue like inadequate housing, lack of capacity, and continued discrimination under the Indian Act makes recovering from colonial trauma an ongoing and complex process.

Indigenous communities are actively revitalizing and reclaiming traditional practices and fighting against ongoing colonial policies and attitudes.

Indigenous communities are actively healing from trauma. There are several organizations that one can access, and includes but is not limited to:

- [Indian Residential School Survivors Society](#)
- [60's Scoop Healing Foundation](#)
- [First Nations Health Authority](#)
- [First Peoples Wellness Circle](#)

Adopted from BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2021). *Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide*.





# Structural Intervention

## BACKGROUND

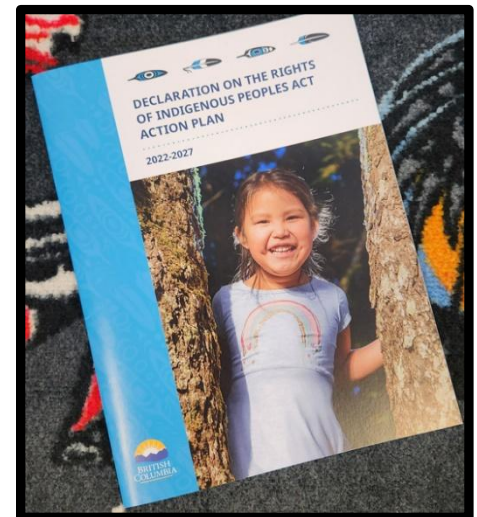
Systemic barriers are hidden in the rules, procedures, policies, and operations of organizations and are intentionally or unintentionally discriminatory. These barriers limit access to services, goods, programs, and facilities.

A structural risk is an issue that results from systemic problems beyond the control of any individual (i.e., poverty, housing, transportation, discrimination, etc.).

Because of systemic barriers, Indigenous children are over-represented in alternate education programs, suspensions, attendance, etc., and underrepresented in learning outcomes evidenced in school completion rates, learning assessments, as well as sports, enhanced educational programs, extracurricular activities, etc.

## GOVERNMENT ACTION

1. 2005 The creation of a New Relationship with Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia.
2. 2006 The development and signing of the Transformative Change Accord and the Métis Nation Relationship Accord.
3. 2010 Supporting the release of the Healthy Minds, Healthy People: A Ten-Year Plan to Address Mental Health and Substance use in BC.
4. 2017 The provincial government endorses the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People and the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' Calls to Action.
5. 2017 The BC Ministry of Education introduces the Equity in Action Project which defines a collective and collaborative decision-making process for school districts to enter in to a genuine and meaningful self- assessment dialogue about the experience of education for Indigenous Learners and to respond in strategic ways to create conditions for success.
6. 2018 The provinces release the Draft Principles that guide the Province of British Columbia's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples.
7. 2019 The provincial government passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Declaration Act) into law.
8. The *BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner* and the *BC Human Rights Tribunal* are working alongside the provincial government to enact the Action Plan of the Declaration Act, specifically in the areas of discrimination.
9. A person is discriminated against under *BC's Human Rights Code* if the following apply:
  1. They have a protected characteristic protected under the code (examples are: marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, mental disability, physical disability, ancestry, colour, place of origin, race, Indigenous identity, religion, age, family status, Lawful course of income, political beliefs, and criminal convictions.
  2. They experience harm.
  3. Their protected characteristic is connected to the harm.



## STRUCTURAL INTERVENTION

- A structural intervention allows the service provider to adapt programs and services to reduce the presence of structural risks.
- This type of intervention requires recognizing the existing social order and acknowledging that the cause of Indigenous Peoples' over-representation across the social sector is because of the ongoing discrimination and systemic barriers that they face.
- Structural interventions promote a holistic service delivery by treating the source of the problem, not the symptoms.
- The cycle of trauma will continue if systemic barriers and the source of problems are not addressed.
- Structural interventions help build strength-based, collaborative relationships with children, youth, families, and communities in British Columbia.

## JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE

Jordan's Principle only applies to Status First Nations children, or children of Status First Nations parents, and is an example of structural intervention. Non-status First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children do not qualify unless their parents are Status First Nations.

Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle named in memory of Jordan River Anderson, a First Nations child from Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba.

Jordan spent more than two years unnecessarily in hospital while the Province of Manitoba and the federal government argued over who should pay for his at home care. Jordan died in the hospital at the age of five years old.

Jordan's Principle aims to make sure First Nations children can access all public services in a way that is reflective of their distinct cultural needs. It takes full account of the historical disadvantage linked to colonization, and with experiencing and service denials, delays, or disruptions because they are First Nations. First Nations Health Authority is leading the implementation of the Jordan's Principle in BC.

*Adopted from BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2021). Early Years Cultural Safety Resource Guide.*



# Cultural Safety

## BACKGROUND

Due to a history of colonialism, oppression, marginalization, Indigenous people are under-represented in most categories of what would be considered successful learning outcomes. Indigenous learners often do not see themselves or their communities reflected in the learning activities or environment and when it is, it often feels like an afterthought.

Past and ongoing trauma at the hands of government institutions have made Indigenous peoples less likely to trust service providers, and cultural barriers may cause an Indigenous person to avoid taking actions to get the help they need.

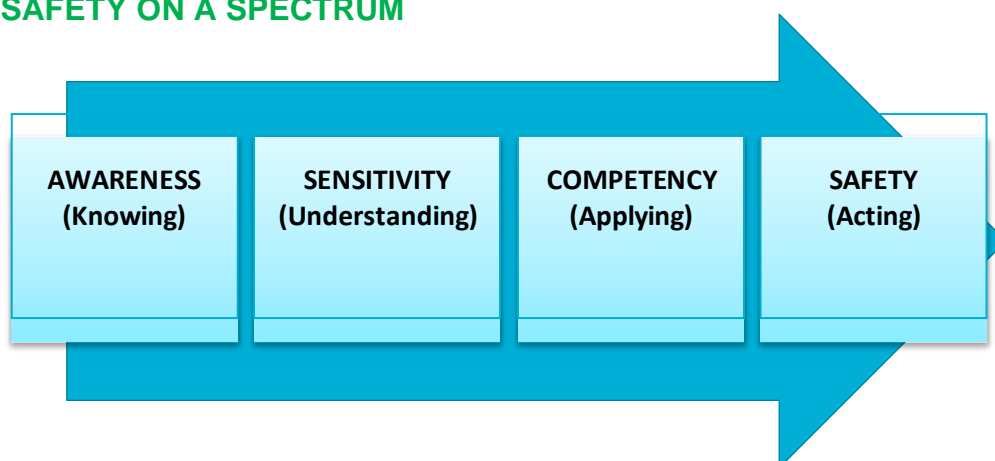
Government institutions and service providers are not designed by and for Indigenous people, and Indigenous people often feel alienated, humiliated, or under-served when they try and access support.

**Cultural Safety** is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe (First Nations Health Authority).

**Cultural Safety** represents a journey into wisdom, where wisdom is to know that culturally significant knowledge, shared histories, and experiences are relevant and must guide decisions and actions.

**Cultural Safety** is based on a framework of two or more cultures interacting in a colonized space – where one culture is legitimized, and the other is marginalized. This can happen in schools, hospitals, workplace, and in many service settings.

## CULTURAL SAFETY ON A SPECTRUM



Adopted from BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2021). Early Years Cultural Safety Resource

# Culturally Sensitive Learning Environments

Many educators are understandably afraid of teaching Indigenous material poorly, perpetuating stereotypes or overstepping their bounds and engaging in cultural appropriation.

## CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Cultural appropriation can take on many forms.

- It can be the adoption of elements of one culture into another without fully understanding or acknowledging their meaning.
- It can mean making use of sacred objects, like headdresses at Halloween, or a Paper Towel Totem Pole craft for example, without learning about why they are sacred and important.
- It can mean presenting Indigenous peoples as caricatures or as existing only in the past.
- It can mean speaking on behalf of Indigenous people or taking on elements of Indigenous spirituality without getting permission from qualified Indigenous Knowledge Holders.

Basically, cultural appropriation is taking and using important cultural elements that do not belong to you without learning about them first. It is setting yourself up as an expert on a culture you are not a part of, or not respecting the living existence of Indigenous people, the sophistication of Indigenous knowledge and spirituality, or the capability of Indigenous experts, Elders, and knowledge holders. It is important to work with First Nations, Métis and Inuit in the development of learning materials.

## STEPS TO AVOID CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AND TO EMBED INDIGENOUS CONTENT RESPECTFULLY

- Research the teachings and ceremonies and use of sacred Indigenous belongings and practices before teaching about them. Consult with Siwal Si'wes Staff. This will prevent misuse.
- Teach about Indigenous culture in your classroom. This is different than practicing it.
- If planning to embed Indigenous practices into your work (i.e., Drumming and Singing, Smudging or Blanketing etc), refer to the documents provided by Siwal Si'wes.
- Never dress up in a costume, act, or do activities that reduce a group into a caricature or stereotype.
- Ask yourself: "If I were a member of the group in question, could I be offended?" Take history into account and show empathy.
- If unsure, contact an Indigenous Staff Member of Siwal Si'wes.



*The above photo is an example of Cultural Appropriation and Cultural Theft (from The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Stephen Covey).*



## TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION: TIPS FOR TEACHING

- Allow Indigenous people to speak for themselves. Inviting local Indigenous Knowledge Holders into your classroom is an opportunity to forge new and ongoing relationships. If an Indigenous person cannot be present, there are excellent and well-vetted videos available.
- Teach about Indigenous brilliance and contribution first. Take the time to learn about the many proud and resilient people who were impacted by colonization. As such, teach about cultural genocide and residential schools after you have taught about the strength of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are not victims first. When developing learning materials, it is important to work and engage with First Nations, Métis and Inuit.
- Learn and teach about contemporary Indigenous people. Not only do they still exist, but they are also the fastest growing population in Canada.

## PREPAREDNESS

Investing time to prepare yourself to teach Indigenous content is crucial to success and helps to build confidence. There are many opportunities available, including completing an online course, attending Indigenous events, participating in professional development activities offered, and engaging with Elders or Knowledge Holders.

The best resources are human resources. Indigenous people have time-tested knowledge systems, education, governance, and ways of raising children that are sophisticated and beautiful; you won't regret taking the time to have conversations with Indigenous people in your community and learning about them. Also, don't forget BC has 203 different Indigenous communities and each one is having a unique cultural identity, so don't assume that the cultural identity of one Indigenous group represents all Indigenous groups.

In some places, having conversations with Indigenous people in your community isn't easy and there is much healing to do. Some places where you can find experts on these matters include friendship centers, Indigenous Studies departments, and Indigenous student services at universities, and Siwal Si'wes!

## VETTING AUTHENTIC RESOURCES

As a general guide, look for these four things and work with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people:

1. **Content and Accuracy:** Make sure that the content makes sense and portrays Indigenous people in a realistic manner.
2. **Authorship:** Promote and privilege Indigenous authors. There are also many non-Indigenous people with expertise in Indigenous studies, but it is important to make sure that they do have authentic expertise and have engaged with and received permission from the Indigenous community. Research to check authors' biographies and credentials. See [HERE](#) for an online resource.
3. **Approachability:** Choose resources that reflect local Indigenous lands and Nations first and then move to additional Nations and communities. You can also connect students' interests to Indigenous content. Avoid resources or content that exclude or marginalize Indigenous learners.
4. **Diversity:** Indigenous people have knowledge of content that touches on all subject areas, so educators can embed Indigenous content into any classroom. Including Indigenous content in every subject underlines the sophistication of Indigenous knowledge. You can also use Indigenous content to share diverse perspectives and compare mainstream and Indigenous views on historical and current events.
5. **Refer to:** MPSD Selection of Learning Resource Materials Administrative Procedure Policy found [HERE](#).
6. **Engage with Colleagues:** Contact the Siwal Si'wes Teacher-Librarian and Indigenous Mentor Teacher.

*Adapted from EDCAN Network: Equity, Indigenous Learning, Teaching: Truth and Reconciliation in YOUR Classroom (2018)*



# Resources

## SOURCES

- Cited throughout the document, dates provided when available.
- Gratitude to the following school districts for sharing this work as a template:
  - SD 73 Kamloops-Thompson, Indigenous Cultural Safety, Humility, and Competency Guide
  - SD 72 Campbell River, Indigenous Cultural Safety, Humility, and Competency Guide

## RESOURCES

- See below for more resources and reports:
  - [Progress Audit for Aboriginal Students in the BC Public School System](#)
  - [Disaggregated demographic data collection in British Columbia: The grandmother perspective](#)
  - [Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#)
  - [From Stealing to Healing: Repatriation and B.C. First Nations](#)

## PHOTO CREDITS

- All photo credits to Vivian Searwar, District Principal of Siwal Si'wes, Indigenous Education, MPSD Mission **except**:
  - Page 8 – Sketchnote by Michael\_TDSB (Reddit)
  - Page 9 – St. Mary's Indian Residential School, taken 1957, Mission Community Archives
  - Page 10 – Photo by *Ellen Nguyen Photography*

# Notes