

Culturally Safe Engagement

What Matters to Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) Patient Partners?

In June 2021, Indigenous patient partners were asked to share what mattered to them when participating in Indigenous culturally safe patient engagement opportunities. Their words are reflected in the advice and eight key principles provided in this resource. As you consider your role in creating a safer place, be curious with an open heart and mind to learning. Find more guidance on how to use this tool: [Culturally Safe Engagement: What Matters to Indigenous \(First Nations, Métis and Inuit\) Patient Partners Companion Guide](#).

1. Awareness & Understanding



Acknowledge the history of racism in Canada and the impact of systemic racism on us. Have a level of cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Start off well. Provide a meaningful [land acknowledgement](#).

Get to know people from the territory you work and live on.

Avoid [translation exhaustion](#) by having some cultural competence.

2. Learning & Education



Humility is key to being influenced by Indigenous culture and open to learning.

Complete cultural safety and humility training before working with us.

Research local cultural practices and protocols.

Read resources such as the [In Plain Sight Recommendations](#) to better understand our experiences.

3. Build Relationships



Get to know us to balance the power dynamic, enable collaboration and build trust. Show genuine compassion through warm welcomes and connecting with us as people first.

Include time for relationship building throughout the engagement.

Be aware of sensitivities due to generational trauma. Consider the need for an action plan for trauma-informed practice.

4. Prepare



Provide documents well in advance and allow opportunities for questions to be asked.

Be flexible for seasonal cultural practices and events.

Send relevant documents ahead of time.

Make pre-meetings and debriefs standard practice.

Ask us if email is acceptable or if printed materials are preferred.

5. Kindness & Empathy



Always be HUMAN first. Take a moment to ask yourself: Am I being empathetic, patient and compassionate?

Greet everyone individually to welcome us and set the stage for building a relationship.

Include enough time at the start of a session for a meaningful welcome or introduction and set group guidelines with us.

Focus on leaving the table with a good feeling of the experience on both sides.

6. Respect



Show respect for Indigenous Peoples, cultures and nations. Understand we hold our ancestors close.

Set clear expectations for our role as patient partners and where we can contribute so our presence is meaningful.

Don't engage with us if solutions have already been pre-determined.

Create a respectful environment by treating everyone around the circle as equals.

7. Value



Acknowledge traditional expertise as well as our experience and knowledge. We have chosen, despite experience that reflects a colonial institution, to work with the health care system because of a desire to make things better and have health care reflect what matters to us.

Remember that we are experts in our own health care experiences.

Remind other participants how challenging it is for us to share our health care experiences.

Thank us for coming and explain next steps.

8. Listen



Have a sense of vulnerability, openness and humility. Be prepared to listen to us respectfully and actively.

Check in. Reflect words back to us.

In person: Set the room up so participants sit in a circle or U-shape.

Virtual: Don't multi-task. Stay focused with active listening and use breakout rooms.

Provide coaching to other participants in creating safe spaces for sharing and listening.



This material has been co-produced with patient partners.

Bert Azak's designs were inspired by the Seven Sacred Teachings and were designed in his style of Nisga'a Art and Culture.

All seven designs are related to the Seven Sacred Teachings as well as the Wilp (tribe or house) of the Nisga'a Nation.

Further information and guidance on how to use this tool can be found in the comprehensive companion guide at [HealthQualityBC.ca](https://www.healthqualitybc.ca).

