

Culturally Safe Engagement:

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

This document was created from the voices of Indigenous patient partners in June 2021 and is written using their words. Partners were asked what mattered to them when participating in Indigenous culturally safe patient engagement opportunities. Eight key principles, starting with Awareness & Understanding and ending with Listen, emerged along with a series of recommended actions. As you consider your role in creating a safer space, please be curious and open to learning as you engage Indigenous voices.

1. Awareness & Understanding

Acknowledge the history of racism in Canada and the impact of systemic racism. 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. Be a lifelong learner.

Avoid **translation exhaustion** so that you have 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.

Required reading:

- **In Plain Sight Recommendations**
- **Truth and Reconciliation Recommendations**
- **Jordan's Principle**
- **Joyce's Principle**

3. Build Relationships

Get to know us in order to balance the power dynamic, enable collaboration and build trust. Consider ways to learn about our culture and connect with us.

Include time for relationship building throughout the project.

Be aware of sensitivities in building relationships due to generational trauma. We suggest you consider the need to create an action plan for trauma-informed practice.

4. Prepare

Provide documents well in advance of the meeting and allow opportunity for questions to be asked.

Be aware of cultural seasonal practices and events and prepare to be flexible.

Send relevant documents ahead of time. Make pre-meetings and debriefs standard practice.

Ask us if email communication 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 relationship building.

Include enough time at start of the session for a meaningful welcome/introduction and agree upon ways to work together.

Leaving the table with a good feeling on both sides means we have achieved cultural safety.

6. Respect



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

Set clear expectations for our role as patient partners and where we can contribute so that 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. Self-determination has brought us to the health system, in spite of challenges.

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

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

Thank us for coming and explain next steps.

8. Listen



Have a sense of vulnerability, openness and humility. Come prepared to listen respectfully.

Check in, reflect words back to participant.

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. Use breakout groups to allow room for us to participate.

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



This material has been reviewed and approved by patient partners with the Patient Voices Network.

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 Teaching** 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 [BCPSQC.ca](https://bcpsqc.ca).



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