

# Declaration of Commitment

## Cultural Safety and Humility in Health Services Delivery for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis People in Canada

Our Declaration of Commitment is an important step that reflects the high priority we place on cultural safety and humility as essential dimensions of quality and safety in reaching our shared objective of promoting the highest standard of health care with and for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in Canada. We are committed to an ongoing journey of cultural safety and humility and to be champions in exhibiting and mentoring this to our members and to the larger health care system. The parties acknowledge that Indigenous-specific racism is systemic in the health care system and the overarching goal of this declaration is to reset the relationship between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people and their family physicians, and identify and address systemic and institutional barriers and harms that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people experience.

Through this Declaration of Commitment, the College of Family Physicians of Canada™ pledges to collaborate with the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada to promote culturally safe care and to actively address Indigenous-specific racism experienced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people accessing health services in Canada. This declaration also describes how the College of Family Physicians of Canada and Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada will work together to advance shared priorities that are grounded on the following guiding principles of cultural safety and humility:

- Cultural safety is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving services.
- Cultural safety must be understood, embraced, and practised at all levels of the health care system including governance, institutions, and within individual practices.
- A culturally safe environment is the desired outcome and can only be defined by the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis person(s) receiving care in a manner that is safe and does not profile or discriminate against the person(s) but is experienced as respectful and safe, and allows meaningful communication and service. It is a physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually safe environment, without challenge, ignorance, or denial of an individual's identity. To be culturally safe requires positive anti-racism stances, tools, and approaches and the continuous practise of cultural humility.
- Cultural humility is a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique. It is foundational to achieving a culturally safe environment. While western models of medicine typically begin with an examination of the patient, cultural humility begins with an in-depth examination of the provider's assumptions, biases,

beliefs, and privilege embedded in their own understanding and practise, to develop a relationship of trust with a patient.

- Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a lifelong learner when it comes to understanding another's experience.<sup>1</sup>
- Undertaking cultural humility allows for Indigenous voices to be front and centre and promotes patient/provider relationships based on respect, open and effective dialogue, and mutual decision making. This practice ensures First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples are partners in the choices that impact them, and ensures they are informed decision makers in their course of care.

The College of Family Physicians of Canada is proud to sign this Declaration of Commitment in partnership with Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada and the support and guidance of the BC First Nations Health Authority. We understand that strong leadership and concrete actions at multiple levels will demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that cultural safety and humility is embedded into the health care services to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals, families, and communities in Canada. The signing of the Declaration of Commitment is our first step on this journey. We, the undersigned leadership of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, in partnership with Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada, will:

### Create a Climate for Change by:

- Contributing to a national vision of a culturally safe and humble health care system for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada and co-creating a set of actions that enable our shared vision.
- Articulating the importance of establishing cultural safety and humility as a framework to improve health care services for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada.
- Encouraging, supporting, and enhancing cultural safety and humility among family physicians in Canada.
- Continuing an honest, informed, and respectful dialogue with all partners to address Indigenous-specific racism in health care in Canada.
- Participating as a member of a national coalition of influential leaders and champions who are committed to the priority of embedding cultural safety and humility in health care services through standards for family medicine residency programs and education materials for practising physicians.

<sup>1</sup> First Nations Health Authority. Creating a Climate for Change. Vancouver, BC: First Nations Health Authority; 2015. Accessed October 7, 2022.  
<https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Creating-a-Climate-For-Change-Cultural-Humility-Resource-Booklet.pdf>

### Attend to Governance by:

- Understanding and recognizing the impact of settler-colonialism and racism on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. The parties acknowledge the work that Indigenous peoples have undertaken to assert the inherent right of self-determination, which is now enshrined in Canadian and international law.
- Actively recruiting and retaining First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people to the governing body and to other decision-making mechanisms of organizational governance (e.g., board of directors, board committees, steering committees).

### Engage and Enable by:

- Proactively forming and nurturing, by the organization's leaders, strong and meaningful partnerships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people and communities of and within the lands in which they live, by engaging them in meaningful consultation, in opportunities for organizational governance, in advocacy, leadership, and education, and in standards setting for family medicine in Canada.
- Championing the vision of a culturally safe health care system for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in Canada, and demonstrating the commitment and understanding with partners.
- Leading by example, making progress strategically and with intention, identifying and removing barriers to progress.
- Promoting and upholding the rights, knowledge, strength, and leadership of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

### Implement and Sustain Change by:

- Identifying systemic levers to “hardwire” cultural safety and humility into policy, practise, education, and training. This includes supporting processes for a safe environment that promotes a “speak up” culture and protection from negative repercussions.
- Openly expressing commitment to employment equity for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in the parties’ strategic documents and have talent management and recruitment policies that support and ensure equitable leadership opportunities.
- Developing and implementing cultural safety and humility strategies and action plans, and tracking, reporting, and evaluating progress for continuous learning.
- Encouraging and empowering our organization and its members to develop and enhance cultural humility and foster a humble culture that strives for cultural safety.

### Report on Progress by:

- Working with the support and guidance of our long-time partner, the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada, to prepare an action plan that includes a timeline for community facing annual reporting on strategic activities and demonstrating how the commitment is being met.
- Sharing lessons learned and opportunities this work presents for possible adaptation and/or application in other regions of the country.

### Honourable Acknowledgement

The work of developing and making this commitment would not be possible without the crucial leadership, guidance, and support of the BC First Nations Health Authority.

The First Nations Health Authority champions culturally safe practices throughout the broader health care system. Taking a leadership role, the First Nations Health Authority actively works with its health system partners to embed cultural safety and humility into health service delivery and improve health outcomes for First Nations people. Health system partners throughout British Columbia have signed the Declaration of Commitment on cultural safety and humility in health services, to address Indigenous-specific anti-racism and embed cultural safety and humility to achieve better health outcomes for First Nations people living in British Columbia.

The FNHA has spearheaded an important movement that is expanding across Canada to advance culturally safe care for Indigenous peoples. This declaration builds from that important body of work advanced in British Columbia, and grounded in ceremony. We are deeply grateful to them for their time, effort, and guidance throughout this process.

### Our Commitment

Our signatures demonstrate our long-term commitment to providing culturally safe health services for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in Canada and to champion the process required to achieve this vision. True realization of this vision will require meaningful partnerships with the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada, the national organization that supports First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people pursuing medical careers and supports Indigenous health initiatives at community and university levels across the country.

This Declaration of Commitment is made and endorsed by the College of Family Physicians of Canada, with the guidance and partnership of the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada, and signed by their representatives.

SIGNED on this date, \_\_\_\_\_

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The College of Family Physicians of Canada

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The College of Family Physicians of Canada

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Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada

