

Primary Care Networks: Indigenous Inclusivity

The importance of engaging and including Indigenous Traditional Wellness Practitioners and Indigenous-led Organizations in Primary Care Networks (PCNs)

This resource is part of a series of information pamphlets and supports for Ontario Health Teams and all those working to advance integrated health and care services for First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Urban Indigenous populations.

Reflections for PCNs

- What are the benefits to health system for engaging and including Indigenous organizations in PCN work?
- What specific actions are required from PCNs to ensure Indigenous organizations are better engaged and included in PCN work and leadership?

The Benefits Include Culturally Informed & Equitable Solutions

Inclusivity promotes culturally informed and equitable solutions for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) individuals. Primary Care Network (PCN)s can cultivate and maintain strong, positive relationships with Indigenous partners leading improved wholistic healthcare planning and service delivery. By fostering authentic partnerships, PCNs can collaborate with Indigenous leaders to create systems and processes that prioritize community-driven solutions that will result in better population health outcomes.

How Can PCNs Start to Action Indigenous Inclusivity

To foster inclusivity requires a commitment and dedicating sufficient time, and resources, to building relationships. This means engaging with and actively involving leaders from FNIM communities, Indigenous-led organizations, and Indigenous Wellness Practitioners, to be part of the PCN and to participate as genuine and equal partners in the work of the PCNs. Ultimately, this approach ensures Indigenous voices help shape decision-making and advance equitable healthcare outcomes.

Note: The IPHCC offers foundational Indigenous Cultural Safety Training but can also work with PCNs to provide tailored approaches. Additionally, the IPHCC has developed toolkits and resources that help understand innate and unconscious biases that perpetuate anti-Indigenous racism. These tools combined with the IPHCC Patient, Family, and Community Engagement toolkit, can help PCNs lay the foundations for genuine relationship building and effective engagement. See the Resources section below for links to these resources and many others.



Engaging Indigenous Organizations in PCNs

Did you know that there are many Indigenous Wellness Practitioners?

Wellness Practitioners (often referred to as “Traditional Practitioners”) are foundational to providing wholistic services that address the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical aspects of health and wellbeing for Indigenous populations.

Traditional Healing & Wellness Practitioners

Image used within the IPHCC's Indigenous Wellness Program, reviewed and endorsed by the Traditional Healing Advisory Circle.

Landbased Professionals

Hunters, Trappers, Fishers,
Medicine Gatherers,
Traditional Food Farmers

Artists

Traditional Craftworkers,
Traditional Dancers,
Illustrators

Indigenous Trades

Ceremonial Tool maker,
Carvers, Tipi & Lodge Builders

Traditional Educators

Story Tellers, Knowledge Keepers,
Curriculum Developers



Ceremonial Practitioners

Healers, Spiritual Advisors,
Sacred Ceremonial Conductors,
Medicine Carriers

Cultural Resources

Elders, Knowledge Keepers,
Aunties & Uncles

Apprentices

Helpers, Students, Youth

Language

Teachers, Speakers

Traditional Governance

Traditional Law Keepers, Data Stewards

Commit to learning and creating safe and inclusive spaces.

Ensure that your PCN is committed to ongoing learning and creating culturally safe and inclusive spaces for FNIM Leadership and Traditional Practitioners.

Resources:

[ReconciliACTION - An Indigenous Perspective](#) (IPHCC & Team Primary Care)

Indigenous Cultural Safety training: [Anishinaabe Mino'Ayaawin - People in Good Health](#).

Ontario Health's Indigenous Relationships & Cultural Awareness Courses: <https://elearning.ontariohealth.ca>

[Indigenous Patient, Family, and Community Engagement Toolkit](#) - IPHCC

[PCN Self- Assessment Toolkit](#) - IPHCC

[ICS OHT ACTION Framework](#) - IPHCC

[Understanding Unconscious Bias \(EN/FR\)](#) - IPHCC

How PCNs can ensure Wellness Practitioners are included in a meaningful way.

Indigenous health care should not be designed and delivered without Indigenous communities and organizations and adequate resources are paramount.

Reflection questions:

What is the membership composition of your PCN, and are FNIM Wellness Practitioners included at decision-making tables?

How will your PCN ensure FNIM individuals and Wellness Practitioners are appropriately engaged in initiatives to improve integrated clinical pathways and other priorities?

What measures are in place to ensure that FNIM organizations and Wellness Practitioners are leading discussions related to meeting the primary health care needs of FNIM populations in your communities?

For further information regarding the vision and objectives of PCNs in Ontario they are outlined in the Ministry of Health Primary Care Network Guidance document that was released in January 2024