

Land-Based Teachings: Indigenous Approaches to Healing

Introduction

Indigenous people believe every life form on earth is connected and shaped by the land around us. Land-Based Teachings connect us with our environment, the land and the resources it provides us, other living creatures, and our inner self. Connecting to the land helps us become grounded, relieves stress, and lifts our spirits.

Colonization has resulted in a disconnection from the land. Land-based healing takes place as we begin to reconnect with the land. There is more recognition of the importance of reconnection to our environment, connection to traditional teachings, involvement in ceremony, cultural practices, and spending time with Elders and knowledge keepers. These connections support a movement toward holistic wellness. Building cultural supports and Indigenous approaches to healing into service provision reduces harm and creates an environment where people feel safe(r) in accessing services.

The Ministry extends gratitude to **Indigovation Consulting Inc.** for authoring this factsheet. Indigovation Consulting Inc. is owned by Michele Mundy, a subject matter expert in anti-racism strategies, cultural safety training, and more. Michele is of Scottish and Kwakwaka'wakw ancestry, a member of the 'Namgis First Nation with ties to Kingcome Inlet, Turnour Island, Village Island and Fort Rupert. She is passionate about bringing forward an Indigenous voice and lens in all her work.



Key words and definitions

Colonization: The action of settling on the lands of, and establishing control over, Indigenous people. It has resulted in the unfair treatment of Indigenous people. Colonization has caused unequal access to basic rights and services, the separation of families, and the disconnection of Indigenous people from their language, land, and traditional ways of being.

Examples of Indigenous Approaches to Healing

- Living off the land by harvesting traditional fruits (e.g., berries), hunting, fishing, and sustaining traditional resources.
- Education around Indigenous nutrition, wellness, and healing.

- Being able to recognize the importance of holistic healing and paying attention to all aspects of self: intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellness.
- Recognizing the interconnections between individual well-being and collective well-being and emphasizing that individual, family, and community care all equally important.
- Understanding the connection of language to the lands we are all surrounded by and how important this is to preserve traditional languages.
- Accessing Indigenous healers and spiritual guides.
- Connecting with Elders and Knowledge Keepers about traditional teachings, relearning traditional languages that Indigenous people were forbidden to speak in residential school systems, bringing ceremonial practices back to life, celebrating rites of passage, and reconnecting to land, history, and traditional medicines.

Examples of Land-Based Teachings

- Respecting the importance of land, oceans, forests, mountains, and all life forms, and only taking what we need.
- Traditional ways guide Indigenous people. Traditional teachings keep us rooted in who we are, where we come from, and keep us connected to one another — reminding us of what is important.
- Language stems from the lands around us, and our connection to the lands shapes and guides who we are as Indigenous people and how we engage with the world. Therefore, our languages are foundational to Indigenous people's sense of identity and sense of belonging.
- The values and beliefs held by Indigenous people, such as honesty, humility, truthfulness, integrity, strength, trust and respect, guide Indigenous ways of being. We need to be honest with ourselves and others. We should never view ourselves, or other human beings, as better than another. Recognizing our connections to all living things must be honoured, respected, and valued.
- Being truthful and building respectful and trusting relationships with one another. In healthcare, this can also translate to providing culturally safe care. Healing does not happen without the Land-Based Teachings.

How does this translate to Culturally Safe Care?

- Recognize the importance of language, traditions, and cultural programs for Indigenous people.
- Every person accessing care should be shown respect.
- Take time to get to know each person and understand the experiences that brought them to your service. Recognize the effort it may have taken for someone to even consider accessing care and understand that their healing journey will require patience.

- Recognize the important role of family and community in a person’s healing journey.
- Recognize the impacts of colonization on Indigenous people's willingness to access care and build trusting relationships. Consider how you could provide services in a way that builds trust.

Important Considerations for Service Providers

Indigenous approaches to health and wellness are important and should always be respected. Colonization has created a disconnect from culture and language for many Indigenous people. It is important to be thoughtful about this when working with people of Indigenous ancestry, as they may not be connected to a community or specific traditions and cultural ways. Some Indigenous people may not want to access any traditional or cultural supports offered.

Ask residents what services they want to access. We should always respect their wishes and know there is a reason behind their choices.



Q&A

Question 1: How do we build cultural, traditional, and language programs into our service provision?

- Seek out Indigenous people to lead and teach any Indigenous specific programs that are being implemented in your service.
- Connect with local First Nations, Friendship Centres, and Indigenous organizations to partner with and build in programs that are specific to the traditional lands you are on.
- Do your own research and personal learning about how to connect and involve different resources and people in your service. It is important you take responsibility for this process without relying on and/or exhausting Indigenous people.

Question 2: How long does it take to build trust with Indigenous people accessing services?

It depends on the services, service provider, and connection with the individual. Each relationship will look and feel different, and this is something you get to know over time. Even though you are working hard to build trust, it may sometimes be a challenge or take longer because of a person's life experience.

Question 3: Are all Land-Based Teachings, Cultural Teachings, and Indigenous Approaches to Healing the same?

Not all traditional teachings, cultural practices and teachings, or Indigenous approaches to healing are the same. Each First Nation, Inuit, and Métis group has very different practices, ceremonies, traditions, teachings, Land-Based Teachings, and approaches to healing. It is important that you engage with local Indigenous organizations, First Nation communities,

Elders, and other localized Indigenous resource people to lead this work and ensure proper protocols, practices, and traditional ways are followed correctly.



Summary

Land-Based Teachings and Indigenous Approaches to Healing are viewed as essential for most Indigenous people. Being connected to family, community, traditional ways, and culture is an important part of holistic — emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual — wellness. This connection provides balance, grounding, relief of pain and stress, and improves overall healing for a person. Historically, most health organizations have not recognized or supported traditional healing remedies.

Over the past few years, more service providers have recognized the importance of building traditional methods into their programs and seen the value in them. This has started to create shifts towards decolonizing our systems.

We encourage you to consider opportunities for Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) learning as you explore ways to implement traditional approaches to health and wellness in your programs:

- Connect with your local Friendship Centre or health authority to inquire about accessing ICS training programs.
- Take the Supportive Recovery Standards training on the Assisted Living Registry website.
- Attend workshops and information sessions.
- Research material online.
- Find opportunities to attend local events hosted by Indigenous people in the area you work, live, or play.

By building different practices into your services and residents' care plans, you can provide support in a variety of ways that also hold up Indigenous values and principles that are important to them and offer value for others as well.

Disclaimer: This factsheet is intended to provide helpful tips for supportive recovery operators. For information on registration and operational requirements, please visit [Assisted Living in BC](#).

To learn more about Indigenous perspectives related to treatment and recovery, please see the [Indigenous Cultural Safety: Trauma-Informed Care Fact Sheet](#).



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