Indigenous Cultural Competency
A conceptual Framework for building a culturally safe organization

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The story of the first Gigalgam house

The river Gwani was first a man named Gwanalalis. Kanikilakw, ‘the Worshiped One’, was going around the world fixing things, making them right. He met and turned Gwanalalis into a river. It has been said that Gwanalalis was a wise and generous man and this is how Kanikilakw wanted him to be remembered. Gwa'alalis, himself, wanted to be seen by his descendants as a river. He wanted salmon to come to him and he wanted to flow forever and not dry up.

One day, a steelhead salmon swam up the Gwani River to a place called Udzalas. He went up on the beach and took his costume off and became a man. The man’s name was Kwakwasa. Now it has been said that Kwakwasa wanted to build a house at Udzalas. He felled trees and placed the house-posts in the ground. Then he wondered how he was going to put the beam on top of the posts. After thinking about this for awhile, he noticed a thunderbird behind him. Kwakwasa said, ‘Oh, supernatural One, I wish you were a man and that you would help me finish my house.’ Kwunusila, the thunderbird, lifted his mask and showed Kwakwasa that he was indeed a man under his costume. Then Kwunusila lowered his mask, flew up in the sky, lifted the beam with his talons and then placed this on top of the house-posts. Kwunusila took off his costume and sent this to his village in the Upper World. Kwunusila joined Kwakwasa at Udzalas and the two called themselves the Gigalgam...the first ones.

Kwakwasa symbolized the house as a river. The entrance, the door, was seen as the mouth of the river. Inside, looking to the rear, was ‘up river’ while the front of the house ‘down river.’ Kwakwasa lived in the rear middle of the house, in the forehead of the house. This is where he lived, in the river, just like Gwa'alalis.
Cultural Orientation

A Theoretical Basis for Cultural Perspective

- The nuyam (story) is a thought-orientation on Kwakwaka’wakw cosmology. This orientation has informed perspective and from this perspective has come a belief-system, value-system and a process for cultural discourse.

- Nuyambalis (the story that travels with you) results from observation and recruitment; it is selected, chosen and handed down from one generation to another.
Cultural Orientation

Connection

- **What this story does:**

- The ancestors placed emphasis on connection and relational practice. It was important to be in relationship with the Upper World, the world lived in, to each other, all things in nature, and to the covenants that kept harmony between.

- Seeing the house as the river focused attention on living systems, transference, cultural knowledge and knowledge transfer.

- They took only what they needed & they honored what they took.
Cultural Practice

Doing something with traditional knowledge

- **Where this story goes:**

  - “A strict law bids us dance,” a statement shared with Franz Boas, anthropologist working with the Kwakwaka’wakw in 1800s, that illustrates the transference of knowledge into practice. As a living system, Kwakwaka’wakw houses must be worn on blankets. As the blanket is worn, danced, the person becomes a culture–bearer, the smoke of the house.

  - The act of dancing is healing, connecting and transferring of energy to the community.
Cultural Considerations

Moving Forward:

• When building a culturally safe organization, with culturally safe services, we must be grounded in cultural orientation, practices and knowledge of the people who will use the service.

• This presentation is about how to approach that opportunity.
Cultural Definitions: Things to think about....

- Cultural Perspective (orientation) is anchored to indigenous beliefs, ideals and preferences - all are rooted to personal, family and community mythology.

- Cultural perspective is indigenous people’s inner most story.

- Cultural perspective gives life, meaning and breath to indigenous social organization, cultural discourse and cultural inquiry. ‘It is how we see things.’

- The Indigenous cultural lens is like a ‘looking glass’ we need to use when visioning, designing and doing work.

- The lens needs to be embedded in our mind, body and heart and serves as a cultural reference point, a tenet, a law, a checklist of sorts, a guide that helps to chart the course for community engagement, interaction, and community development.
Definitions

Cultural Safety

• When an indigenous child, youth or family member enters the space of another, and they are warmly welcomed, respected, encouraged to feel comfortable, and empowered to express their thoughts and feelings, or needs, in a way that is culturally appropriate, they are culturally safe and in culturally safe space.

• Cultural safety is anticipated, experienced and lived.

Cultural Competence

Defining Cultural Competence:

1. It is the integration and sharing of indigenous knowledge that gives shape and life to Aboriginal Centered Practice, supported by policy and standards of practice.

2. It is when culturally appropriate attitudes & behaviors are used in settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes for those receiving services.
Cultural Definitions

Cultural Agility

- Cultural agility is a term used to describe a service providers ability to respond to cultural diversity within the Aboriginal community, or community lived by Aboriginal people.

- Service providers recognize the different cultural needs of Aboriginal people and are able to respond appropriately and are resourceful in the delivery of service.

Cultural Sensitivity

- Cultural sensitivity is about having a cultural mindfulness of the needs of those receiving services; in the space between, there exists empathy for the history, experience of that history, and the response is culturally safe, sensitive and empathic.
Cultural Orientation: ‘Uk’wadzala’dzi...my belief.’ Kwakwaka’wakw word pronounced ook-wa-dza-la-tsee.

‘The house is my ancestor. It is a river. When I enter the house, I am walking into his mouth. The beam is his backbone and the rafters ribs. At the centre of the house is a fire. This represents his soul. When our fires are strong the smoke covers the world, our story is being shared, lived. That is ‘Uk’wadzala’dzi...my belief.’
Moving Forward

Nanwakola...working together to come to the right solution.
Discovery: Du-gwit-tla-la...looking inside the house.

Dream: ‘Ik’ikala...we are feeling good inside.’ Kwakwaka’wakw word. Pronounced eek-eek-all-la.
Question:

- Why is it important for us to have a culturally safe organization?
Question:

- Tell about a time when the Ministry was most connected positively to Indigenous People?
Questions:

- If you could fast forward to the year 2020 and imagine your highest hopes and dreams for the organization have become a reality, how does the organization look?
- How is the work different?
- How does the engagement with Indigenous People look?
Question:

- How can we go about achieving what we dream?
- What are the ways we will apply or embed our discoveries in the organization?
Question:

- Who will provide leadership to this effort?
- What’s the first thing that’s needed to make it happen?
Orientation

- ‘Images of the future are powerful. We can only move in the direction of what we can imagine.’ Bliss Brown – Imagine Chicago
Framing our work:

- A conceptual framework serves the Ministry as an interpretive lens through which we organize, develop and deliver service to Aboriginal children, youth and families.

- The framework is the Ministry’s ‘meta-narrative’ or ‘story’ and contains explanation of and the reasons for strategic approaches, priorities and key actions.

- It is a story about building safe space, sharing safe space and accounting for what is placed in the space between.
Orientation:
Aboriginal Centered Service
Vision:

- Reclaiming social work through cultural safety, and culturally safe & effective management systems. Using a cultural lens that empowers those receiving the services.

- Ministry staff work from a model of practice that is anchored to principles and values of indigenous cultural competency and cultural safety, and support the goal of Aboriginal children and youth being empowered by living in strong, healthy families and communities that are connected to their culture and traditions.
Purpose

- There are two related purposes for the Indigenous Cultural Competency Framework; first, to signal a directional shift in Ministry commitment and priority, and, second, to define the organization discourse for Ministry staff.
Values

The Ministry of Children and Family Development will deliver services in a respectful, compassionate, strength-based and culturally appropriate way and fully engage Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, youth and families in successfully meeting their development needs and goals.
Gawalapa...working together. Kwakwaka’wakw language – pronounced gaw-wah-lap-ah
Du-gwit-tl’a-la...looking inside the house...
Kwakwaka’wakw word
pronounced ‘Do-gweet-tlah-law’

- Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect. (Chief Seattle)

- Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success. (Henry Ford)

- It is when we start working together that the real healing takes place. We become namima...people of one kind. (Chief Kimkak’xawidi)
A strategic approach

- A visionary life is strategic and forward thinking.
- The beginning of one’s work anchors thinking to a place that has as its destination the heart.
- A envisioned destination, embedded with appreciative qualities builds on what is good, possible and creative. It is inclusive, collaborative and curious.
K’anayu...the circle of life...
• Indigenous Cultural Competency: A multi-strategic Approach

- Culturally safe workplace: cultural safety is anticipated, experienced & lived.
- Culturally competent & trained staff
- Aboriginal Centered Service: safe, sensitive, supportive
- Policies and Decision Making reflect a culturally competent organization
Culturally Safe Organization

Indigenous Cultural Competency

Organizational Culture
ICC Framework:
Indigenous perspective
Cultural safety
Cultural self-assessment
Cultural due diligence
Cultural agility
Cultural competence

Mandate
Legislation: CFCA
Cultural Protocols

HR
ICC HR Framework
Recruitment
Retention
Mentorship

Learning & Development:
(Six Service Lines)
ICC competency
Sustained learning & development

Policy
Indigenous policy statement
Outcome statement
Standards
Procedures

Service Delivery
Aboriginal Practice Framework
- Aboriginal Centered Service
- Cultural Agility
- Cultural safety

Community Engagement
- Cultural engagement framework
- Due diligence
- Cultural agility

Communication
Aboriginal Centered Service
Indigenous perspective
A Strategic Approach: strategies

ICC Mentorship

Leadership 2020
Indigenous focus

Learning & development

Building Bridges:
The Village

ICC online training
Organizational Culture

- A culturally competent organization factors into its culture indigenous values, principals and history. Cultural safety is anticipated, experienced and lived.
Recruitment & Retention

- Culturally competent staff are recruited, trained and supported to support an Aboriginal Centered Approach, cultural agility and cultural safety.
Policy & Decision Making

- Policy serves to anchor and support cultural competency by identifying & containing cultural perspective and cultural safe practice by identifying a set of culturally safe standards and procedures.
Service Delivery

- Service delivery along the Ministry’s six service lines are anchored to principles and values of indigenous cultural competency, cultural safety and support the goal of Aboriginal children and youth living in strong, healthy families and communities that are connected to their culture and traditions.
Gilakasla...thank you!