

Intercultural communities of knowledge generation, sharing and application

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early CHILDHOOD development
INTERCULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS

Acknowledge the Larrakia people,
traditional owners of the land, water and
air in the region where Darwin is located

Home as a settler on the ancestral summer village of the Tsaout First Nation



Work as an invited guest/occupier of the unceded territory of the Songhees, SXIMELEL, and WSÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land, water and air continue to this day.



with gratitude



Diverse Indigeneities in Canada

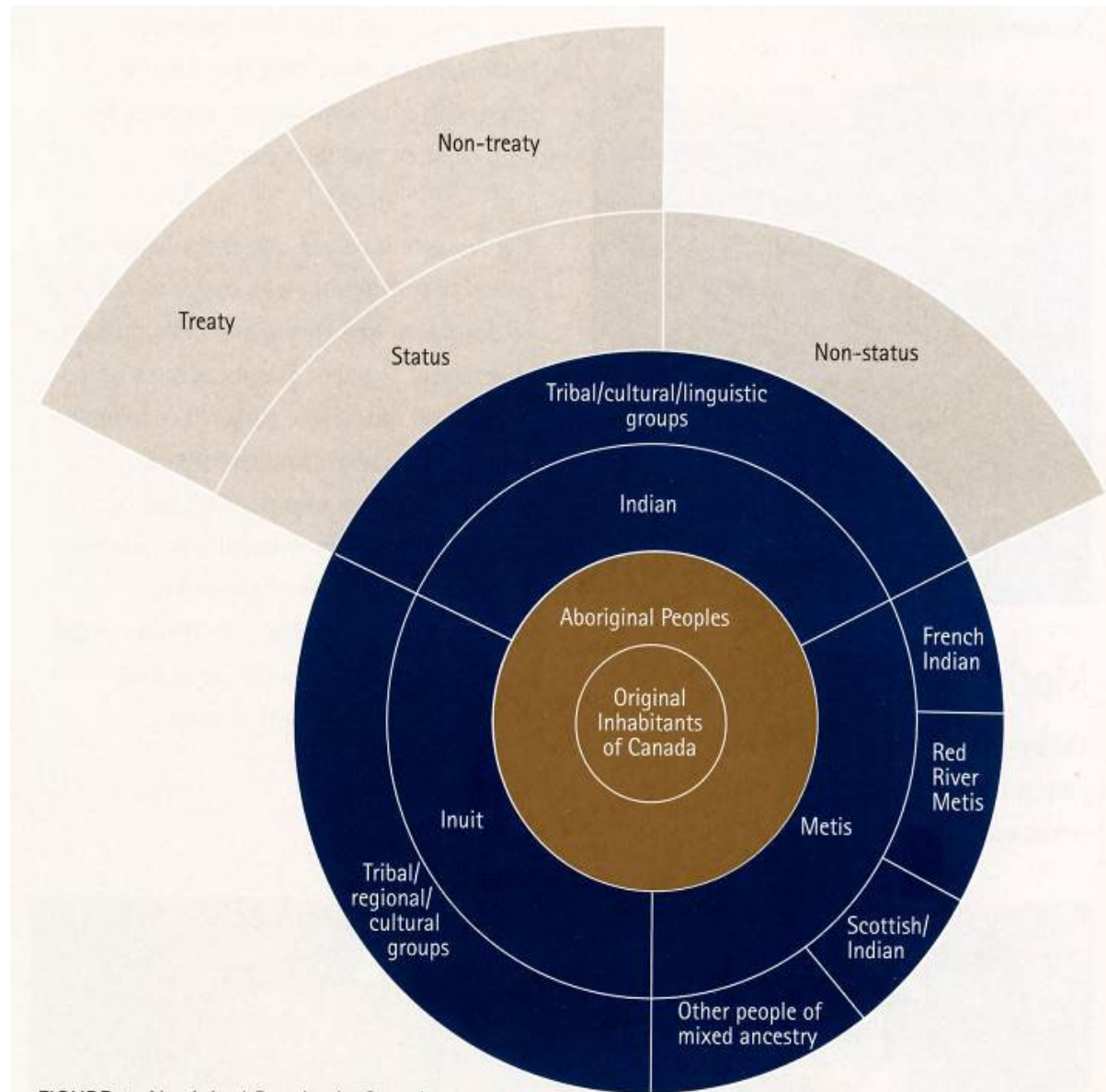


FIGURE 1: Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

Lessons learned

- ❖ Start where life begins – with relationships
- ❖ Look for the invitation.
- ❖ Coming empty handed can be very attractive
- ❖ Seek accompaniment.
- ❖ Work in 'ethical space' between/among cultural/community based ways of knowing, doing and being.
- ❖ It's ok to be seen as you.
- ❖ Practice in ways that promote cultural safety.



Start with relationships

- Opportunities to work with Indigenous people often start with personal relationships, where one conveys
 - humility
 - self-reflectiveness
 - awareness of colonial histories and ongoing oppression
 - desire to be useful
 - a learning disposition



Empty handedness can be more attractive than your credentials

Leave your sense of 'expertise' behind

Listen with open ears –

Suspend judgement, avoid solutionism

“I learned to leave my baggage at the door. Stopped needing to be the answer woman. Became open to what these women, these children, these Elders had to teach me. What we had in common was our desire to see them learn and grow to their full potential. What we needed to figure out was how to work together to see that happen.” (BH)

Look for the invitation

Engage in medium/long term relationships of mutual learning and respect.

Stay alert to opportunities to be useful and receptive to requests.

.... Contrast this with making an overture, arriving with a set agenda, having a solution for 'their' problems (e.g., Prevention of suicide, FASD, substance abuse, domestic violence.... A litany of holes to be filled by government, non-profits, academics, etc).

Demonstrate working in a good way



Seek accompaniment

Working in any community is fraught with politics from within and outside.

Expect turbulence.

Rely on 2-3 trustable, reliable, confidential insiders who care about you.

Ask and offer support and assistance.



Accompaniment

Outsiders need support and collaboration with one or more trusted people in the community who are proficient or nearly proficient in the Indigenous language/dialect and who are from the same cultural background as the partnering community or service client to be able to provide effective and culturally appropriate services (Speech Language Audiology Canada, Speech Pathology Australia)



An ethic of collaboration



What of us is in here?

Assimilation- Ongoing Colonization	Co-construction – Indigenous self-determination
One-way transmission	Two-way negotiations
Deficits	Differences
Pathology	Complexity/Strengths
Treatment	Wellness promotion
Dominant language	Multilingualism
Clinical focus on individuals	Contextualization within family and community
Target behaviours only	Quality of life / holism

Acculturation / Assimilation through professional services

Contemporary context of increasing:

- Standardization
- Universal surveillance
- 'Best practice' models
- One-size-fits-all

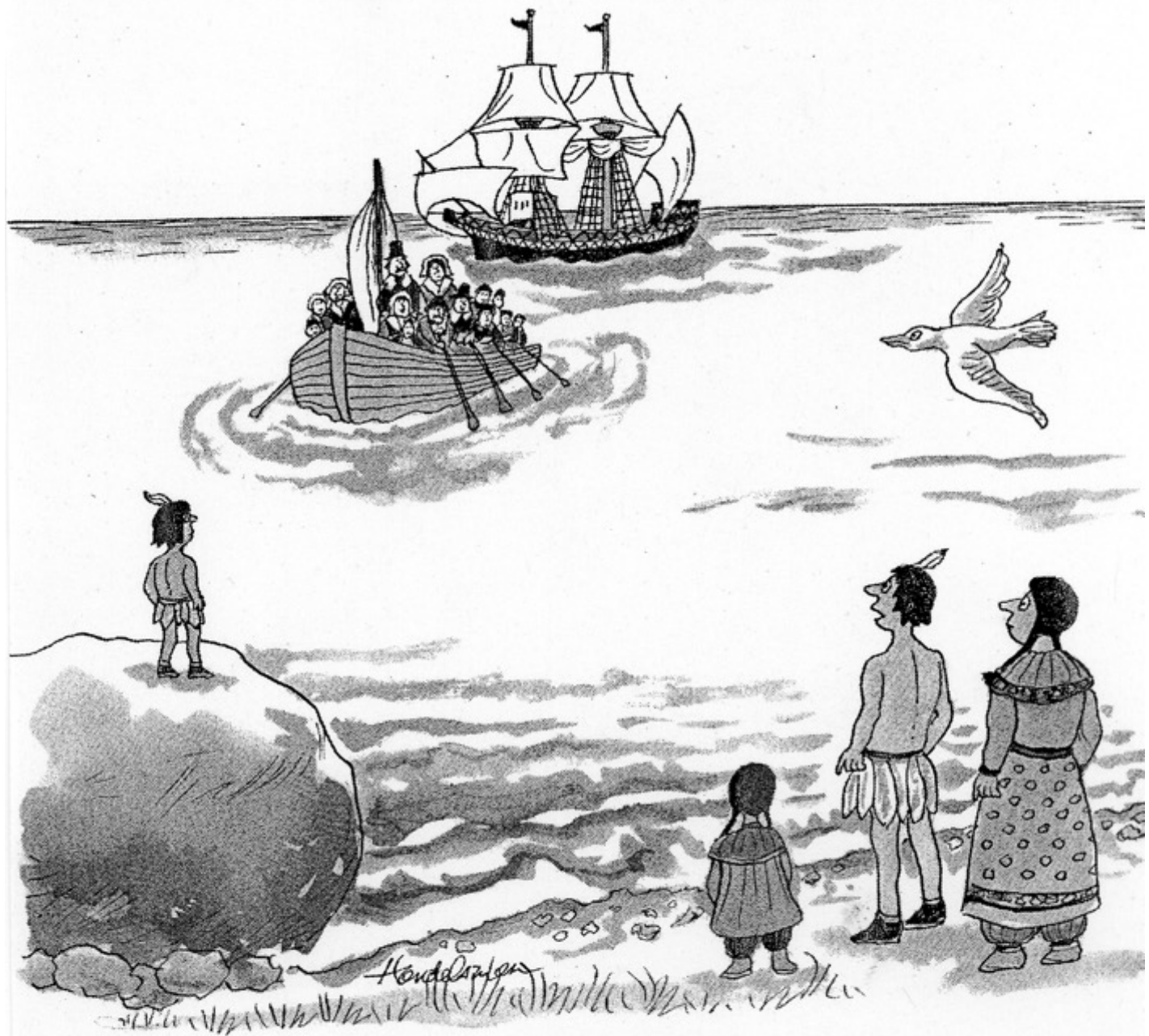
Technologies imported from the dominant European heritage cultures in Canada perpetuate colonial imposition of policies, procedures, criteria, performance demands, and social exclusion of Indigenous caregivers, Indigenous children, and Indigenous knowledges and values.

How can our best intentions really seem so dangerous?

“My grandparents taught me that to truly understand the importance of something you must look back seven generations and you must look forward seven generations”

Debbie Jette
Cree Elder





"Well, they look pretty undocumented to me."



Sharing land and resources has not served Indigenous Peoples, so far....

There are tremendous unmet needs for quality of life, access to appropriate services, and promotion of optimal developmental outcomes, including speech, language and hearing outcomes for all children ...

- Indigenous and other minoritized children's developmental needs are often poorly understood and poorly served.



Indigenous goals for children and families

Many Indigenous groups in Canada & globally are seeking to facilitate optimal development of Indigenous children through high quality, culturally guided early childhood care and development programs (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

There are negative effects of lack of service or ineffective and culturally discordant services.

Indigenous communities seek a 'made in [place name]' approach

e.g., Made in Flying Dust First Nation, Made in Waterhen First Nation....

Made in Bhutan.....Made in Malawi, Made in Mon State Myanmar.....

Cultural safety:

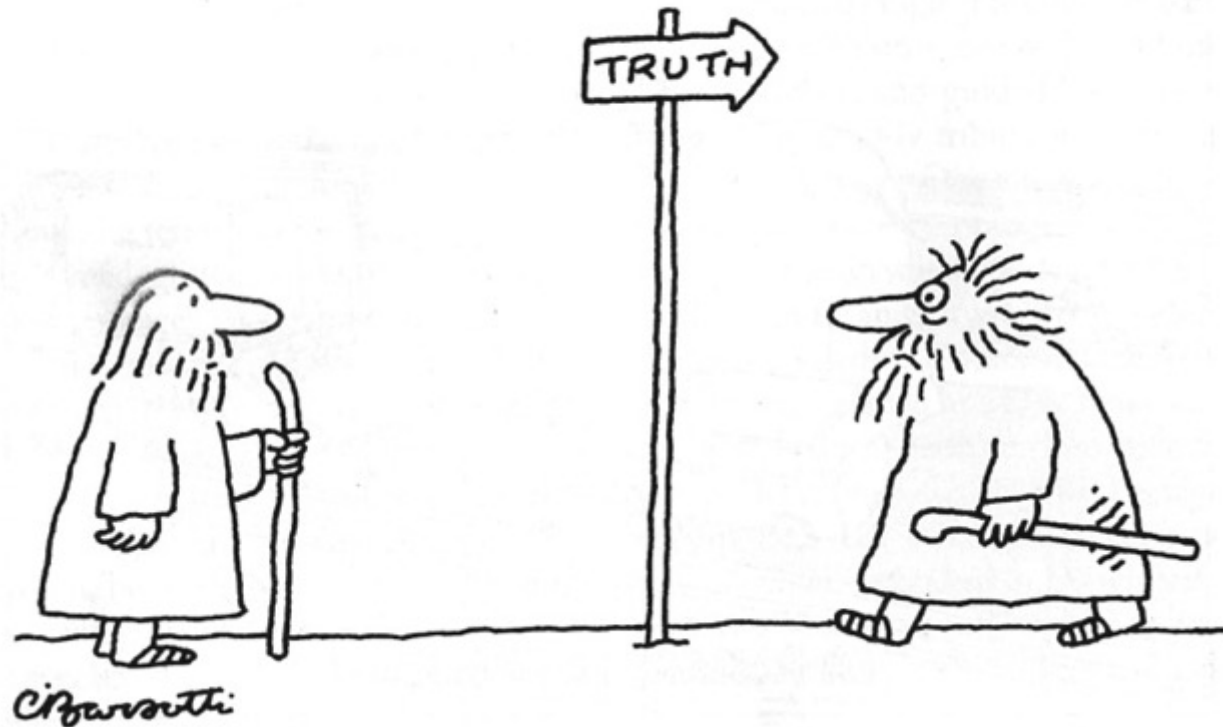
One way to think about improving practice across cultures

The experience that community members or service clients have of feeling respected and wanting to engage with program staff or professional service providers to address problems and support optimal outcomes.

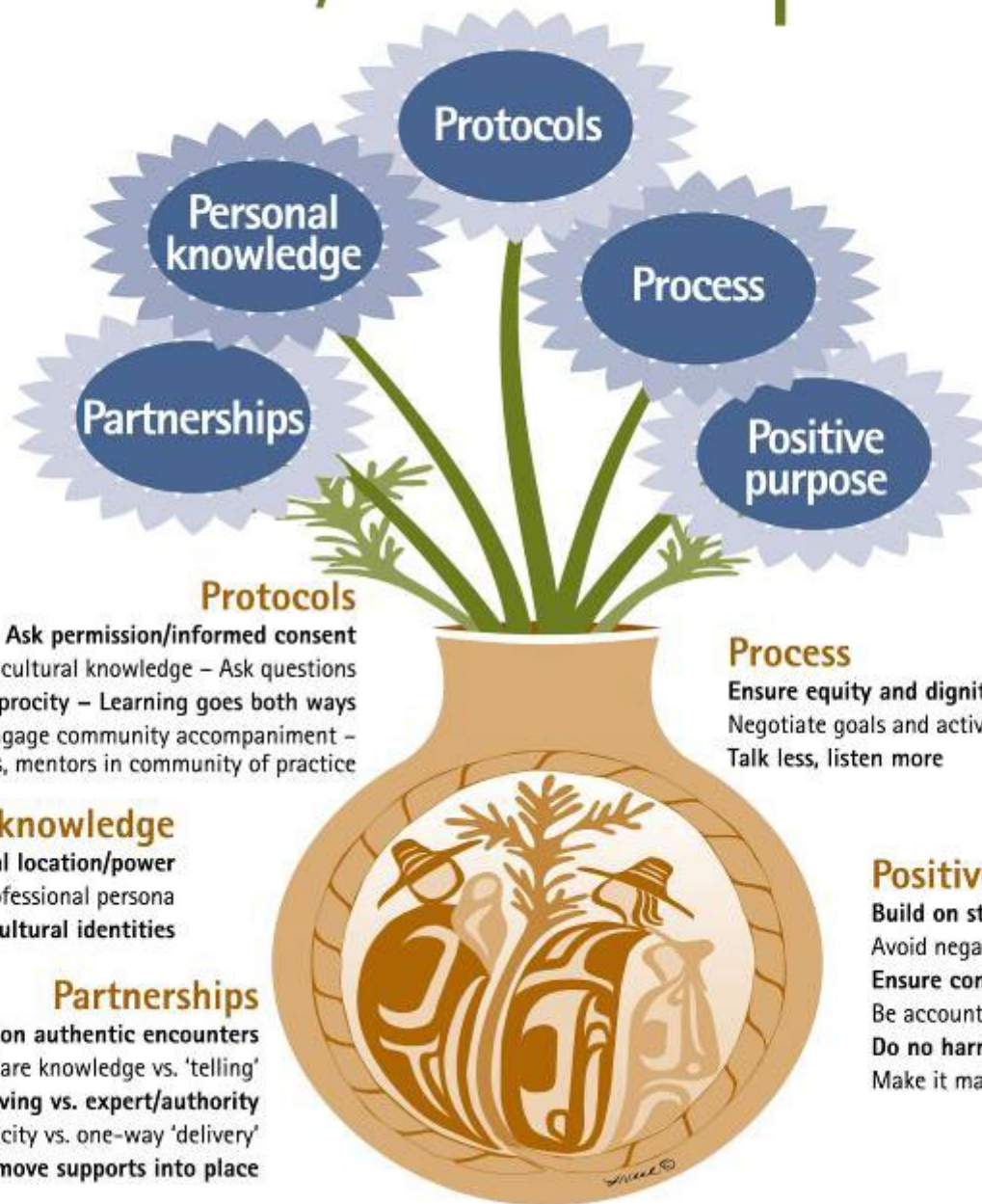


Cultural Unsafety may be mistaken as cultural difference, or as overall indifference or resistance!

Reticence, appearance of low engagement, or no-show behaviours may be indicators of lack of cultural safety experienced by parents and children (or what some call an intercultural communication gap).



Cultural Safety 5 Principles



Protocols

- Show respect – Ask permission/informed consent
- Seek cultural knowledge – Ask questions
- Demonstrate reciprocity – Learning goes both ways
- Engage community accompaniment – Find allies, mentors in community of practice

Process

- Ensure equity and dignity for all parties
- Negotiate goals and activities
- Talk less, listen more

Personal knowledge

- Hone critical consciousness of social location/power
- Who are you? Cultural affiliations, professional persona
- Introduce yourself in terms of your cultural identities

Partnerships

- Engage in relational practice founded on authentic encounters
- Share knowledge vs. 'telling'
- Collaborative problem solving vs. expert/authority
- Strengthen mutual capacity vs. one-way 'delivery'
- Co-construct ways to move supports into place

Positive purpose

- Build on strengths
- Avoid negative labelling
- Ensure confidentiality
- Be accountable
- Do no harm
- Make it matter: Ensure real benefits

Protocols

- ✓ Awareness of crossing boundaries – interpersonal, territorial, cultural, political, institutional and others.
- ✓ Awareness of 'not knowing' and being the stranger
- ✓ Work to make yourself not a stranger
- ✓ Seek accompaniment, guidance on doing in a good way/right intention
- ✓ Ask questions
- ✓ Demonstrate reciprocity



Personal knowledge

Who are you? Who is 'we'? Who are you representing? (your university, agency?)

Where does your name come from?

Where do you live?

Where are your ancestors from?

How long have you & your relatives been living in on this land?

Whose traditional territory do you live on? What do you do?

Do you have children, pets, a garden?

What else is important to know about you?

- Make yourself understandable, approachable, trustable.

Personal reflectiveness

Relational practice is founded on authentic encounters.

- Locate ourselves on cultural continuums.
- Introduce ourselves in terms of how our identities intersect many categories



“I was contracted as an SLP to work at the band-operated preschool. I learned patience! I had to wait for parents to feel comfortable with who I was and why I was there. I sat quietly at the side of the room for a year before any parents would engage in conversation with me. I had been there for two years before I ever assessed an individual chld. But I had formed some positive relationships and was familiar to the children by the time I started delivering a service.” (AHF)

Process

- Good process is culturally appropriate practice
- Grounded in relationships
- Pacing: Is this the right time to be offering this particular form of service?
- Family-centred



“A litany of woes”

“We hear a lot about what’s wrong with our kids. A lot of our kids know things that white kids growing up in cities don’t know. About who their ancestors are, and how they walked on this land. About living with nature. About where their food comes from. If they haven’t started learning the ABCs or having a big vocabulary by the time they go to school, it doesn’t mean they’re off track in their development.”

Avoid processes that inflame ongoing negative stereotypes.



Process: Balanced perspective including strengths

*“We believe that every child is a gift and has gifts. Isn’t there some way to use these observations to focus in on a child’s skills – what they CAN do – because we could work with **that**. If they’re good at cooking and they enjoy it, then they can be cooks! Not everyone has to be brainy or a speaker in the Big House to be happy.”*



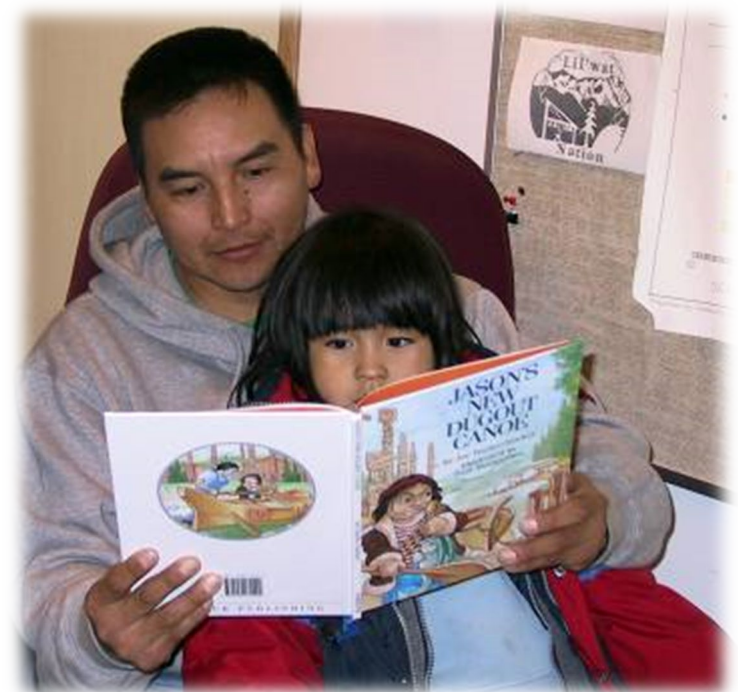
Take home message from several studies:
Process is a major determinant of outcomes of an interaction,
assessment, or service encounter (more than *content*)



Process

Awareness of colonial interventions that have depleted cultures, communities, & roles for families

- Informed consent
- Focus on strengths
- Avoid negative labeling
- Confidentiality
- Accountability
- The so-what? factor



It's about the *ways* the tools are used

- The relationship context in which the tools are used (trust vs fear)
- Who decides a tool or intervention will be used (consent?)
- What tools are used
- For what purposes ('ammunition', pathologizing, apprehending??)
- What happens, or fails to happen, afterwards?
- **INCLUSION** of key family members in the process.

Partnerships

Creating & negotiating relationships with:

- the child
- family members
- community-based program staff
- community leaders
- funders



An ethic of collaboration

- Knowledge sharing vs. informing
- Collaborative problem solving vs. expert/authority
- Reciprocal learning / mutual capacity building
- Co-constructing ways to move supports into place



Us & Them or ALL of us, Braided Together

It's about ALL of us – mutually learning and supporting children's development

Together!

- *Partnerships* involving mutual respect, collaboration, & reciprocity are the wheels for moving culturally safe practices forward



It's about *us*!

Braiding histories & futures across cultural boundaries (post-nationalism)

Self-reflexivity – locating ourselves in terms of culture of origin, culture of choice, gender, age, income, education, creed

Individuals, families & communities, like ourselves, are diverse & hybrid.

Reflexive practice – understand the cultural embeddedness of our practice goals, methods, 'norms', frustrations, & what we construct as positive outcomes

Example:

English dialects – Do we interpret differences as defects?

Do we promote assimilation through insistence on *the one and the only way*?

Some First Nations ask us to preserve children's home dialects of English while also teaching them to code switch into the English of the dominant culture ('school English')



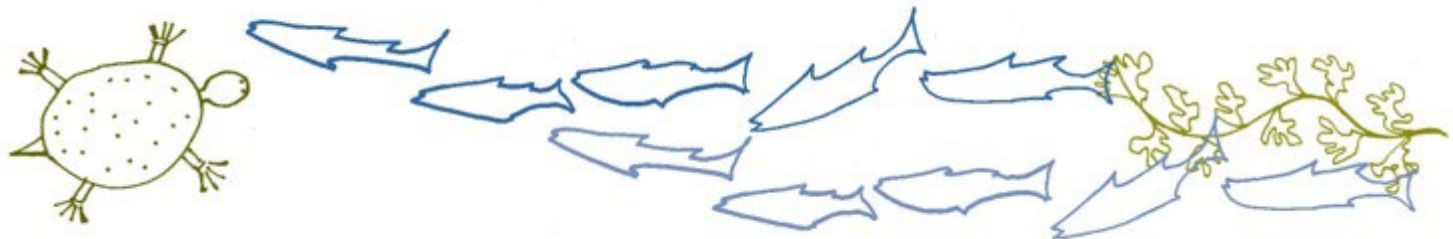
Positive purpose: Making it matter

- Ensure there are real benefits that will follow from monitoring, screening or assessment.
- If few or no services, invest more in community-based capacity development than in screening & diagnosis
- Work with primary caregivers to enable them to support speech, language, hearing
 - parents, guardians, other family members
 - ECEs, Infant Development, Supported Child Development practitioners, nurses, teachers
- Navigator model (D. Olds) ensures a firm handshake between client and services needed

Positive purpose: Key recommendations

Five themes constructed from various surveys and studies:

- Make services family and community driven
- Increase investment in a population-based approach
- Strengthen community capacity
- Understand cultural differences in expectations about development of oral language, the value of talk, and language socialization in Indigenous communities compared to non-Indigenous families
- Build and maintain trusting relationships



Positive purpose: Promising pathways

Approaches that focus on:

- Whole child
- Whole family
- Whole community
- Strengths
- Collaboration
- Positive partnering



Joining a learning community that braids together diverse people with diverse ways of knowing, doing and being



Cultural safety is respectful engagement that supports & protects many paths to wellbeing

“Finding our way to supporting wellness among diverse communities of children and families requires many pathways. No one approach, no one program model, will reach or work for everyone.”

Meadow Lake Tribal Council Administrator





*"I still don't have all the answers,
but I'm beginning to ask the right questions."*

Find out more. . . .
visit www.ecdip.org

