

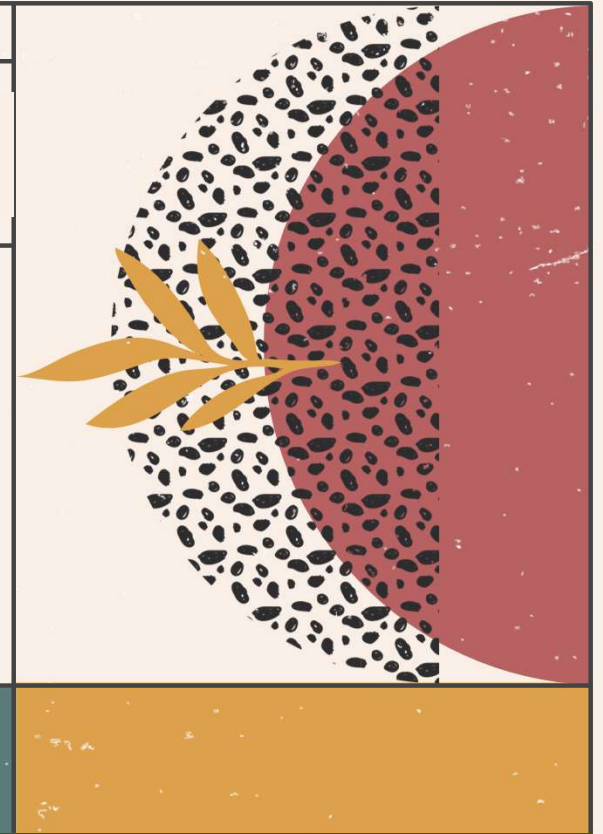
# Cultural Safety



# What is “cultural safety”?

Cultural safety foregrounds power differences within society

It requires service providers to **reflect on interpersonal power differences** and how **the transfer of power** can facilitate appropriate care for Indigenous people and arguably for all service users



Curtis, E., Jones, R., Tipene-Leach, D. et al. Why cultural safety rather than cultural competency is required to achieve health equity: a literature review and recommended definition. *Int J Equity Health* 18, 174 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-019-1082-3>

## What is “cultural safety”?

Critiquing and addressing the ‘taken for granted’ power structures and policies

- acknowledging the barriers to clinical effectiveness arising from the inherent power imbalance between provider and patient

Service providers challenging their own culture and cultural systems rather than prioritizing becoming ‘competent’ in the cultures of others.

- rejects the notion that health providers should focus on learning cultural customs of different ethnic groups.

The objective of cultural safety activities also needs to be clearly linked to achieving health equity.

- seeks to achieve better care through being aware of difference, decolonising, considering power relationships, implementing reflective practice, and by allowing the service user to determine whether an encounter is safe





“Cultural safety requires [service providers] and their associated organisations to examine themselves and the potential impact of their own culture on clinical interactions and service delivery. This requires individual [service providers] and organisations to acknowledge and address their own biases, attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes, prejudices, structures and characteristics that may affect the quality of care provided. In doing so, cultural safety encompasses a critical consciousness where [service providers] and organisations engage in ongoing self-reflection and self-awareness and hold themselves accountable for providing culturally safe care, as defined by the service users and their communities, and as measured through progress towards achieving health equity. Cultural safety requires [service providers] and their associated organisations to influence healthcare [social work, education, etc] to reduce bias and achieve equity within the workforce and working environment”.

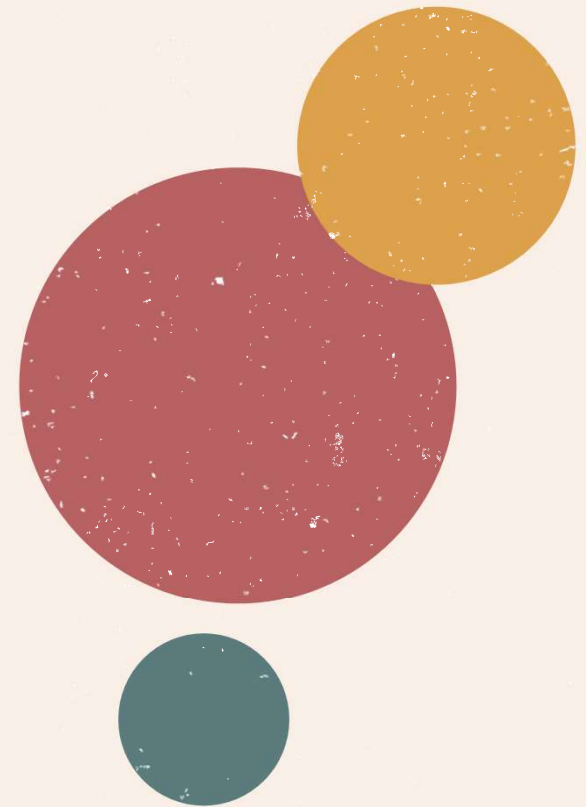
**—Curtis, E., Jones, R., Tipene-Leach, D. et al.**



## What it's not

Cultural safety is about critical evaluation of power & “business as usual” and achieving health equity, it is not:

- Well-intentioned service providers (see paradox in paper [“paved with good intentions”](#))
- Competence & knowledge alone
- Individual-level only



# Distinguishing cultural safety & competence



## Safety

On-going reflective process,  
developing a “critical consciousness”

Focus on the culture of the service  
provider and service environment

Change on individual and  
organizational level

Client and community defined



## Competence

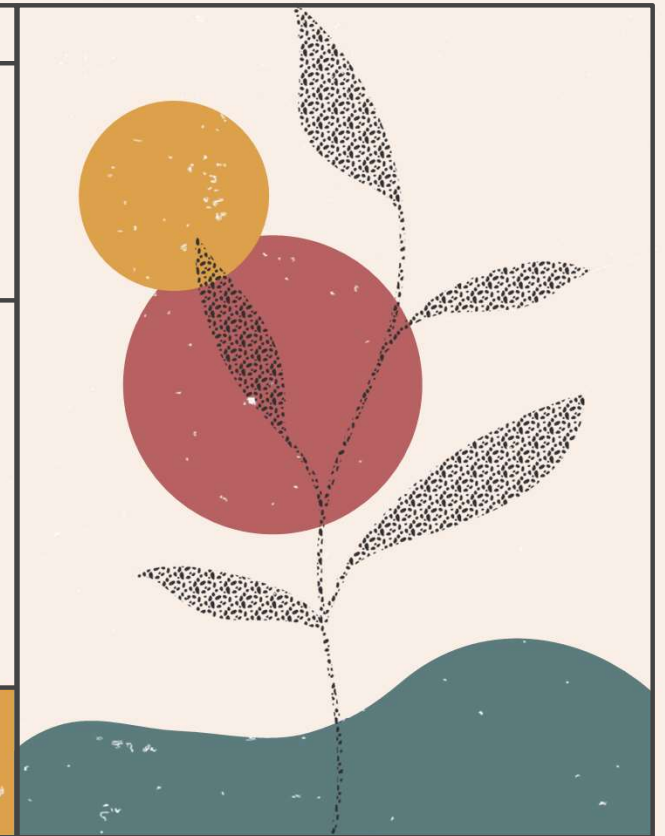
More static, developing knowledge  
and interpersonal skills

Focus on the culture of the client as  
“other”

Change on individual level

Provider and organization defined

# How it FEELS



Williams, R. (1999), Cultural safety — what does it mean for our work practice?.  
Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 23: 213-  
214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.1999.tb01240.x>

“...where there is **no assault, challenge, or denial** of their identity, of **who they are and what they need**. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning together with **dignity and truly listening**”





# How it feels

## Always defined by the recipient of care

- Respected, truly heard & actively involved
- Active not passive, empowerment
- Evaluation is key

## Building trusting relationships

- Prioritizing the needs and background of each client
- Spending more time, being consistent, reliable, and non-judgemental



Nguyen, H. (2008), Patient centred care: Cultural safety in Indigenous health. *Australian Family Physician*, 37(12) <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.351890330015262>

Gerlach, AJ, Browne, AJ, Greenwood, M. Engaging Indigenous families in a community-based Indigenous early childhood programme in British Columbia, Canada: A cultural safety perspective. *Health Soc Care Community*. 2017; 25: 1763– 1773. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12450>



# How it WORKS

Gerlach, AJ, Browne, AJ, Greenwood, M. Engaging Indigenous families in a community-based Indigenous early childhood programme in British Columbia, Canada: A cultural safety perspective. *Health Soc Care Community*. 2017; 25: 1763-1773. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12450>

Williams, R. (1999), Cultural safety — what does it mean for our work practice?. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 23: 213-214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.1999.tb01240.x>

Curtis, E., Jones, R., Tipene-Leach, D. et al. Why cultural safety rather than cultural competency is required to achieve health equity: a literature review and recommended definition. *Int J Equity Health* 18, 174 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-019-1082-3>

Muise GM. Enabling cultural safety in Indigenous primary healthcare. *Healthcare Management Forum*. 2019;32(1):25-31. [doi:10.1177/0840470418794204](https://doi.org/10.1177/0840470418794204)



# Helpful reading

## Examples from Canada:

Greenwood, M., Lindsay, N., King, J., & Loewen, D. (2017). Ethical spaces and places: Indigenous cultural safety in British Columbia health care. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 13(3), 179-189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180117714411>

Gerlach, AJ, Browne, AJ, Greenwood, M. Engaging Indigenous families in a community-based Indigenous early childhood programme in British Columbia, Canada: A cultural safety perspective. *Health Soc Care Community*. 2017; 25: 1763-1773. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12450>

Muise GM. Enabling cultural safety in Indigenous primary healthcare. *Healthcare Management Forum*. 2019;32(1):25-31. doi:10.1177/0840470418794204

## Examples from Montreal:

Fast, E., Drouin-Gagné, M.-È., Bertrand, N., Bertrand, S., & Allouche, Z. (2017). Incorporating diverse understandings of Indigenous identity: toward a broader definition of cultural safety for urban Indigenous youth. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 13(3), 152-160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180117714158>



# Helpful Reading

## Principles and guidance:

Williams, R. (1999), Cultural safety — what does it mean for our work practice?. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 23: 213-214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.1999.tb01240.x>

Curtis, E., Jones, R., Tipene-Leach, D. et al. Why cultural safety rather than cultural competency is required to achieve health equity: a literature review and recommended definition. *Int J Equity Health* 18, 174 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-019-1082-3>



# THANK YOU! MERCI!

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