

Indigenous Cultural Safety, Wellness and Reconciliation in Research

1. Introduction

This policy aligns with the [PHC Indigenous Cultural Safety policy](#) and seeks to embed Indigenous cultural safety, wellness, and reconciliation into research practices and working culture at Providence Research and affiliated entities. This includes everyone who is part of the research endeavour at Providence Health Care. It supports the attainment of Providence Research's vision, mission, strategic goals, and priorities as stated in the 'Discovery Forward: Providence Research Strategic Plan 2021-2026'.

1.1. Purpose

This policy is designed to advance reconciliation efforts with Indigenous Peoples by establishing an environment that is culturally safe for Indigenous Peoples as researchers, co-investigators, and study participants.

This policy serves to:

- Foster meaningful partnerships with host First Nations and Indigenous Peoples, groups, and organizations in health research.
- Establish and promote a culture of accountability, anti-racism, and empowerment dedicated to better interactions with Indigenous peoples and communities.
- Encourage a supportive and educative environment for reconciliation-focused research, education, and training.

1.2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals, research teams, groups and entities affiliated with Providence Research, inclusive of anyone conducting or part of PHC's research endeavours. All individuals, research teams, groups and entities within the Providence Research community are obligated to be familiarized with and follow the PHC Indigenous Cultural Safety policy (Policy #B-00-11-10254).

1.3. Exceptions

None

2. Policy

2.1. Context

Providence Research is actively integrating Indigenous perspectives into its research and objectives, identifying the necessity for comprehensive resources, training, and a clearer platform for relevant processes and expectations.

In pursuit of genuine and meaningful efforts to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, Providence Research has implemented the following actions.

- Training in First Nations Data Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) Principles for the Providence Research leadership staff and Research Ethics Board (REB) members.
- Conducting PHC Practice-Based Research challenge project to assess the perspectives of the Research Ethics Board (REB) members following OCAP training.
- Working with the PHC Indigenous Wellness and Reconciliation team to constitute an Indigenous Research Advisory Council

However, Providence Research acknowledges and remains cognizant of the significant gaps and barriers to Indigenous representation in health research and education, recognizing the need to establish guidelines and responsibilities concerning Indigenous Cultural Safety, Wellness, and Reconciliation.

2.2. Guiding Principles

The following values are the fundamental principles that should guide the entire Providence Research community toward incorporating and practicing Indigenous cultural safety, wellness, and reconciliation:

- **Rights Recognition:** Providence Research and affiliated entities acknowledge their duty to be respectful and responsible as uninvited inhabitants in the unceded ancestral homelands of the First Nations who have been in these territories from time immemorial, and to respect the rights of First Nations as Rights and Titleholders in the work we do. Providence Research and affiliated entities acknowledge their duty to uphold the rights of all Indigenous people living in BC. Though resources are available to explain the distinction, staff and affiliated entities may reach out to the PHC Indigenous Wellness and Reconciliation team for further guidance.
- **Respecting Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom:** There is a long history of western research practices and outcomes that contribute to epistemic racism and the devaluing of Indigenous knowledge systems. We will dismantle western-based biases and honor the guidance, perspectives, wisdom, and knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples in relation to the mission and vision of Providence Research.
- **Improving Cultural Safety and Humility:** Providence Research and affiliated entities must commit to the continuous improvement of their environment and operations such that it

fosters cultural safety and humility within the research community. The Providence Research community encourages ongoing self-reflection, learning, and dialogue to challenge systemic biases and dismantle healthcare barriers that infringe upon the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- **Pioneering Integrity, Respect, and Trust:** Providence Research and affiliated entities must conduct operations to the highest standard of integrity, respect, and trust in its interactions and partnerships with Indigenous peoples and communities. It is important to affirm our responsibility for encouraging transparent and accountable research practices that respect Indigenous rights to data, data sovereignty, and intellectual property, while working towards health care equity.

2.3. Dimensions

This policy encourages incorporating anti-racism, cultural humility, and Indigenous identity-affirming practices within the organization's value dimensions to embed Indigenous cultural safety, wellness, and reconciliation into everyday operations. As part of collective efforts towards reconciliation, all individuals affiliated with Providence Research must be familiar with the principles and dimensions endorsed in the PHC Indigenous Cultural Safety policy. All individuals affiliated with the Providence Research community are encouraged to educate themselves on, reflect upon and address inequities in health research and outcomes that remain prevalent in Canada. All individuals at Providence Research and affiliated centres, regardless of their employment type, must conduct themselves in a culturally safe and anti-racist manner, aligning with the dimensions below.

2.3.1. Respect

Research dedicated to Indigenous health should be respectful so that Indigenous people to feel valued, dignified and accepted in a research setting.

2.3.2. Safety

Research dedicated to Indigenous health should prioritize the safety of Indigenous Peoples and study participants to provide an experience free from racism and discrimination, enabling them to feel protected from harm and risks.

2.3.3. Identity

Research dedicated to Indigenous health should positively acknowledge and affirm Indigenous identity of Indigenous individuals involved in research in any capacity.

2.3.4. Equity

Research dedicated to Indigenous health should encourage substantive equity to allow access to equitable outcomes and opportunities and facilitate appropriate data and information collection practices.

2.3.5. Empowerment

Research dedicated to Indigenous health should recognize the role that equal, respectful, sensitive, cooperative, and reciprocal partnerships have in supporting and empowering Indigenous Peoples, communities, and ways of knowing.

2.3.6. Empathy

Research dedicated to Indigenous health should encourage the practice of empathy and incorporating it in everyday operations. Empathy represents an important step towards understanding Indigenous issues and reconciliation within the health care system, as well as building trust and positive connections.

2.3.7. Reciprocity

Research dedicated to Indigenous health should recognize the role reciprocity plays in establishing and maintaining a respectful, cooperative, equal and trust-based partnership with Indigenous Peoples, facilitating shared, transparent, and honest learning, curiosity, interest and knowledge advancement.

2.4. **Governance and Leadership**

Providence Research and affiliated entities should meaningfully contribute to and uphold Indigenous reconciliation and self-determination. At Providence Research, there is a strong emphasis on integrating Indigenous perspectives, practicing anti-racism, and embedding Indigenous cultural safety and humility at every level of governance and leadership.

All leaders at Providence Research and affiliated entities are responsible for practicing and upholding Indigenous cultural safety such that staff are encouraged and empowered to educate and advance their knowledge about Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous human rights.

All individuals at every level are responsible for educating themselves, encouraging and empowering others, and sharing knowledge about colonialism, Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous narratives, and systemic barriers facing Indigenous Peoples and individuals within the health care and research field. A working culture that focuses on Indigenous empowerment, anti-racism, and anti-colonial attitudes must be fostered.

To embed Indigenous perspectives, anti-racism, and Indigenous cultural safety, and humility, a collaborative, cooperative, and reciprocal relationship must be cultivated with Indigenous Peoples. This ensures that the organization's governance and leadership efforts towards Indigenous reconciliation, wellness, and cultural safety are representative of the recommendations, guidance, and perspective of Indigenous Peoples.

2.5. **Partnerships**

As part of collective efforts towards reconciliation, Providence Research recognizes the importance of learning how to best reflect the rights and needs of Indigenous Peoples within its research.

As responsible inhabitants in the unceded, ancestral homelands of the First Nations who have been in what is now known as BC from time immemorial, the Providence Research community must honor the guidance, perspectives, wisdom, and knowledge systems of those First Nations and seek out ways for them and for Indigenous Peoples to become meaningful contributors to the design, review, and evaluation of research activities and outcomes that involve Indigenous Peoples.

Providence Research commits to establishing impactful partnerships with local sovereign First Nations, Indigenous organizations, scholars, and study participants. Providence Research seeks to collaborate with Indigenous allies and integrate Indigenous health research ethics into its overarching research philosophy.

Providence Research commits to enhancing organizational capacity to advance Indigenous research and make efforts towards a culturally safe and respectful environment by ensuring communication and appropriate consultation and engagement with Indigenous Peoples through all stages of the research and related initiatives.

In collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, Providence Research commits to establishing and supporting the Indigenous Research Advisory Committee that seeks to empower Indigenous Peoples by structurally embedding Indigenous governance and decision-making, research methodologies, and principles throughout research cycles.

2.6. Human Capacity

To aid efforts for Indigenous cultural safety and reconciliation, system-wide actions must be initiated to coach, educate, and train staff on Indigenous wellness, cultural humility, Indigenous history and context, and safety. Staff learning can be facilitated through system-wide actions such as workshops, tools, coaching, practical practice-based supports, resources, and events.

To establish a culturally safe and anti-racist environment that aids Indigenous reconciliation and wellness, it is important that hiring, talent management, and professional competencies development at Providence Research incorporate Indigenous-specific perspectives and expectations in their operations and guidance.

Supervisors and team leaders are responsible for identifying areas within their department that require specific or relevant competencies to help navigate working with Indigenous Peoples and knowledge systems, they should communicate and seek assistance from the PHC Indigenous Wellness and Reconciliation Team as well as the Indigenous Research Advisory Committee to build such competencies into performance management.

To ensure Indigenous cultural safety, humility, worldviews, and anti-racism are incorporated within research activities & operations, principal investigators and their research team(s) should consult the Indigenous Research Advisory Committee and the PHC Indigenous Wellness and Reconciliation Team to ensure culturally appropriate guidance and insight in integrated into practices for Indigenous health care and research.

All individuals at Providence Research are encouraged to work with Indigenous Peoples, along with seeking assistance from the Indigenous Research Advisory Committee and the PHC Indigenous Wellness and Reconciliation Team, to integrate Indigenous practices, principles, and methodologies into activities and operations, where appropriate.

To build a culture that endorses safety, humility, and anti-racism for Indigenous staff, leaders, and researchers, culturally safe processes must be established to ensure review of and feedback on workplace cultural safety. This includes reporting incidents of wrongdoing per the PHC Policy on Safe Reporting and providing safe channels and pathways (formal and informal) for staff and study participants to report incidents of racism, discrimination, or cultural unsafety.

To ensure safety within research and core facilities, policies, practices, and guidelines for Indigenous self-identification must be regularly reviewed to ensure people feel safe and comfortable to self-identify as Indigenous. Research Teams must ensure that Indigenous study participants are given appropriate and adequate information on how their data will be used.

2.7. Research and Evaluation

All research and projects undertaken by Providence Research and affiliated entities must abide by Chapter 9 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada. It is expected that the research agenda followed by the Providence Research community engages and partners with Indigenous Peoples to determine key goals, priorities, and opportunities.

At Providence Research and affiliated entities, all individuals are expected to be respectful of traditional healing, medicine, oral narratives, oral knowledge, and wisdom in health care and must actively seek to integrate Indigenous knowledge and principles into research activities, under the guidance of Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, leaders, or community members.

At Providence Research and affiliated entities, reconciliation and wellness efforts take the form of recognizing, affirming, and respecting the right of Indigenous Peoples to data, data sovereignty and Intellectual Property in Indigenous data management.

Indigenous Data Governance seeks to ensure a distinctions-based approach is adopted when Indigenous data is identified, collected, analyzed and/or interpreted within research. Research teams must recognize and honor the commitment to upholding Indigenous data sovereignty by engaging Indigenous peoples, communities, and organizations in the validation of identified, collected, analyzed and/or interpreted Indigenous data.

To aid Indigenous data sovereignty, Providence Research and affiliated entities must uphold principles of informed consent, mutual agreement, transparency and data privacy dedicated to Indigenous Peoples. Providence Research seeks to design and develop data consent model(s) and agreement(s) with the appropriate rights-holder(s) and representative organization(s).

Providence Research and affiliated entities will seek to identify data collection, research and evaluation opportunities which address epistemic racism, platform Indigenous knowledge, and illuminate root causes of health disparities.

To identify and provide quality improvements in research activities and standard practices, the Indigenous Research Advisory Committee reserves the authority to review and recommend changes relevant to enhancing Indigenous cultural safety, humility, anti-racism, worldviews, and engagement within research activities.

The Indigenous Research Advisory Committee reserves the authority to engage and collaborate with Indigenous Peoples, organizations, study participants and host Nations to ensure due integration of their considerations into the review process.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 General Responsibilities

- All individuals at Providence Research and affiliated entities must adhere to the principles and procedures specified in this policy.
- All individuals at Providence Research and affiliated entities are encouraged to enhance their knowledge of Indigenous cultural safety through ongoing education and learning opportunities. These initiatives aim to foster an applied understanding of Indigenous cultural safety practices in their roles.
- All Leaders and Managers are expected to consistently enforce this policy across the Providence Research community. Leaders and Managers are responsible for reviewing all instances of concern or complaints regarding staff compliance with Indigenous cultural safety practices.
- In the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, leaders and managers are tasked with:
 - Leading by example in building relationships with local host First Nations Indigenous Peoples and organizations.
 - Establishing and maintaining positive connections with Host Nations and key Indigenous service organizations. The Indigenous Wellness and Reconciliation team can be used as a source of guidance and facilitation.
 - Integrating Indigenous perspectives into research activities and practices.
 - Actively identifying and dismantling colonial-era barriers within health research to promote culturally safe care practices.
- All individuals affiliated with Providence Research are tasked with addressing historical gaps and actively working towards fostering an environment that respects and promotes Indigenous cultural safety and wellness.

3.2 Research Teams

- Research teams affiliated with the Providence Research community must acknowledge and address the extensive and regrettable history of unethical, racist, and sometimes illegal research involving Indigenous Peoples as uninformed study participants. This awareness should guide all projects and studies.
- Research teams are expected to:
 - Demonstrate respect for Indigenous knowledge systems and communication methods.

- Approach the analysis, summary, and communication of findings with cultural sensitivity and reflexivity.
- When proposing or conducting research involving Indigenous Peoples, it is essential to:
 - Adhere to principles such as OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) and support Indigenous Data Governance.
 - Plan projects with an anti-racist and anti-colonial lens from the outset, identifying and addressing issues as early as possible.
- Research teams must ensure any research conducted at Providence Research and affiliated entities respects Indigenous perspectives and avoids perpetuating harmful practices, contributing positively to Indigenous Peoples and knowledge systems.

4. Compliance

All principal investigator(s), research team(s), and affiliated personnel, self-identified and non-self-identified Indigenous staff are required to comply with the policies and procedures outlined in this document. Compliance with these policies contributes to effective reconciliation efforts with Indigenous Peoples by establishing a research environment that is culturally safe for Indigenous Peoples.

In case of non-compliance with this policy, staff at Providence Research and affiliated entities are encouraged to bring forth their concerns without fear of reprisal or retaliation. To report concerns regarding wrongdoing, refer to the PHC policy on Safe Reporting.

5. Supporting Documents

5.1 Related Policies

- PHC Policy on Indigenous Cultural Safety (Policy#B-00-11-10254)
- PHC Policy on Indigenous Data Governance Framework
- Providence Research Policy on Research Impacting Indigenous Groups (to be developed)
- PHC Policy on Indigenous Data Governance (to be developed)
- PHC Policy on Safe Reporting (Policy#B-00-11-10119)
- PHC Intellectual Property Policy (Policy#B-00-11-10262)

5.2 Guidelines/Procedures/Forms

- None

6. Definitions

“Affiliated Entities” refers to all research centres, clinical academic research groups and any other teams affiliated with Providence Research in any research-focused capacity.

“Anti-Colonial” refers to active resistance against existing colonial built and operating systems and institutions that have harmed and/or continue to harm Indigenous Peoples, and their empowerment, wellness, and safety.

“Anti-Racism” refers to the practice of actively identifying, challenging, preventing, eliminating and changing the values, structures, policies, programs, practices, and behaviors that perpetuate racism. It involves creating conditions of greater inclusion, equity, equality, and justice.

“BC” refers to the abbreviated form of the province of British Columbia.

“Cultural Safety” refers to the process of creating an environment that is physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually safe for Indigenous Peoples to express themselves. A culturally safe environment recognizes the role existing systemic barriers and colonial history play towards inequity and seeks to eliminate structural discrimination and racism against Indigenous Peoples.

“Distinctions Based Approach” refers to adhering to an approach, and appropriate respect for Indigenous laws and jurisdictions, that understands that the scope of rights enjoyed by an Indigenous People is contextual and that relations and dealings with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit will be conducted in a manner that is appropriate for the specific context, recognizing and respecting the distinct and different rights, laws, legal systems, and systems of governance of each.

“Identity-Affirming” refers to the process of recognizing, accepting, and emphasizing intersectionality within identities such that individuals feel safe, protected, and welcomed to express their identities.

“Indigenous Peoples” refers to the first inhabitants of a geographic area. In Canada, Indigenous Peoples include those who may identify as First Nations (status and non-status), Métis and/or Inuit.

“Indigenous Wellness” refers to a holistic view of health as a balance between physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing that considers various determinants that affect Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Wellness indicators are unique to each community and account for the unique needs and barriers of each community. Indigenous Wellness may also include practices and traditions followed by individuals and communities for healing.

“Informed Consent” refers to the process of providing a research participant with adequate information to allow for an informed decision about their participation in the research prior to enrollment. Informed consent involves obtaining voluntary agreement of the research participant after they are briefed on the research purpose, reasonably foreseeable risks and potential benefits, and other information deemed necessary by the Research Ethics Board.

“PHC” refers to the abbreviated form of Providence Health Care.

“Providence Research Community” refers to all individuals, staff and entities involved or affiliated with Providence Research in any capacity or part of research endeavours at PHC.

“Research Team” refers to professionals affiliated with Providence Research that are focused on contributing to research efforts and outcomes of the organization. A research team comprises of principal investigators, researchers, fellows, research students, and (clinical and non-clinical) staff, students, and trainees.

“Research Setting” refers to any environment, place, or location where any type of research activity is conducted by personnel affiliated with Providence Research or PHC.

“Safe Report” refers to a report of real or suspected wrongdoing that has occurred or is occurring in connection with the organization, made using any formal mechanism available in the organization for receiving these reports.

“Study participant” refers to individuals voluntarily participating in a research study. A patient, resident, community member, or family can become a participant in an eligible research study.

“Wrongdoing” refers to a real or suspected wrongful act or misconduct by Staff and includes, but is not limited to, the examples of conduct provided in Section 1.2 of the PHC Safe Reporting Policy.

7. References

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (December 2022). “Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada. Tri Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

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Food and Drug Administration. (August 2023). *Informed Consent: Guidance for IRBs, Clinical Investigators, and Sponsors*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Provincial Health Services Authority. *Culturally Connected*. Government of British Columbia.

Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba. (2010) “Glossary” in “Plain Talk 9: Cultural Competency”. *Education Toolkit: It’s Our Time*. Assembly of First Nations.

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8. Appendices

Upon establishment, the Indigenous Research Advisory Committee Terms of Reference should be read as part of this policy.

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