

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY:

*An environmental scan of cultural safety initiatives
in Canada - Chapter 13: Cultural safety initiatives
in the Yukon*




National Collaborating Centre
for Indigenous Health



Centre de collaboration nationale
de la santé autochtone

CULTURAL SAFETY AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS



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INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is on cultural safety initiatives in the Yukon that have been identified as part of the wider environmental scan. In keeping with the change model proposed by Greenwood (2019), this includes structural-level actions, such as legislation, tripartite and bi-lateral partnership agreements, as well as policy initiatives aimed at promoting cultural safety, humility, and anti-racism in health service delivery through, for example, advancements in Indigenous self-determination over health care planning, design, and delivery. System-level responses by national Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations with a health mandate are also considered, and include strategic action plans, position statements, professional competencies, and practice standards and guidelines. The final sections provide an overview of cultural safety educational resources and training initiatives developed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and governmental departments.

A note to the reader: In 2017, the federal government replaced Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) with two new departments, Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, to reflect its commitment to reconciliation.

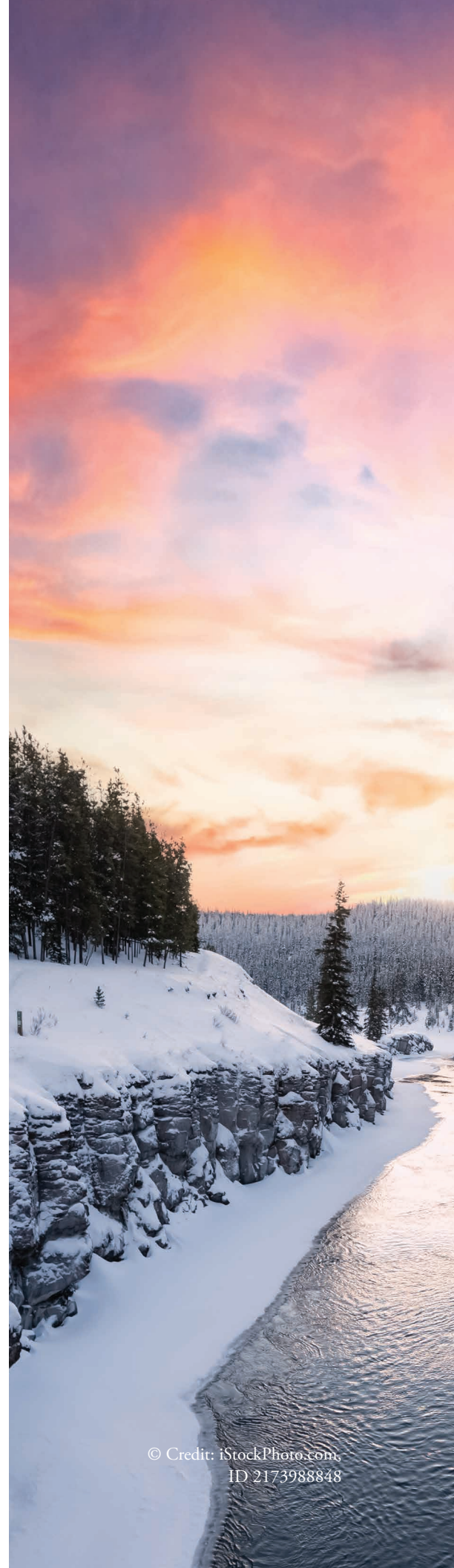
LEGISLATION

Yukon Legislative Assembly

Cooperation in Governance Act, 2005

In recognition of the unique circumstances in the Yukon and the self-governance of Yukon First Nations, this Act provides clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the Yukon Forum. The Forum provides for regular meetings between leaders of the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations, and the Council of Yukon First Nations to collaborate on areas of shared priorities.

<https://laws.yukon.ca/cms/images/LEGISLATION/acts/coopgo.pdf>



PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS



Tripartite¹ partnerships

None identified.

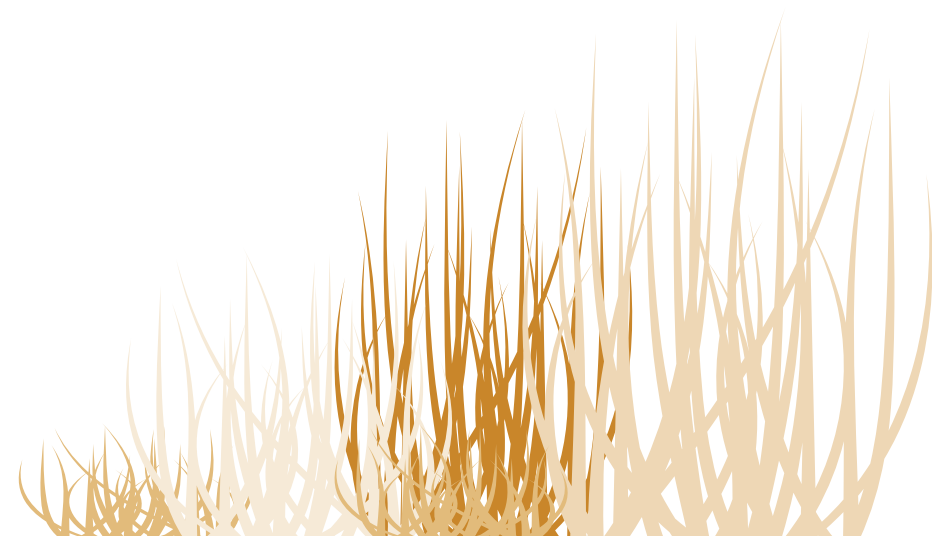
Bilateral² partnerships

Yukon Government and First Nations governments

Declaration - Working Together, 2017

In 2017, the Yukon and First Nations governments expressed their commitment to work together in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration, and to having a constructive relationship that promotes good governance for all Yukoners. This Declaration includes a commitment to meet four times annually in a Yukon Forum and to create joint five-year action plans.

<https://yukon.ca/sites/default/files/eco/eco-yukon-forum-declaration-priorities-action-plan.pdf>



¹ For the purposes of this report, tripartite activities are defined as involving any number of entities from both the federal and provincial/territorial governments plus any number of entities from Indigenous organizations or the health sector.

² For the purposes of this report, bilateral activities are defined as involving any number of entities from either the federal and provincial/territorial governments (but not both), plus any number of entities from Indigenous organizations or the health sector.



POLICY AND PROGRAM RESPONSES



Tripartite policy responses

Government of Canada (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC]), Government of Yukon, Carcross/Tagish and Kwanlin Dün First Nations, and the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN)

Yukon Tripartite Table on the Wellbeing of Yukon First Nations Children and Families, 2018

Involving ISC, the Government of Yukon's Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and the CYFN, the Tripartite Table provides an opportunity for the federal and provincial governments to work together with Yukon First Nations on a government-to-government basis to improve child and family services and drive down the number of Indigenous children in foster care. As a first step, the Terms of Reference have been signed to help facilitate information sharing and collaborative decision-making on priorities, program implementation, and resources (CIRNAC, 2019). This table provides a mechanism for facilitating more in-depth conversations around cultural safety and humility in child and family services.

Bilateral policy responses

Yukon Government and Yukon First Nations

Declaration of Working Together and Yukon Forum Action Plan, 2017

The *Declaration of Working Together* committed the Yukon Forum to creating a joint five-year action plan that identifies common priorities and ensures a pathway for implementing the plan in a collaborative and transparent way. The action plan is guided by four principles:

1. effective bilateral and tripartite collaborative relationships and processes;
2. reconciliation through Final and Self-Government Agreements;
3. strong, healthy communities; and
4. closing socio-economic gaps.

<https://yukon.ca/sites/default/files/eco/eco-yukon-forum-declaration-priorities-action-plan.pdf>

Council of Yukon First Nations, Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC), Yukon Hospital Corporation, and Yukon Government

Walk a Mile in My Moccasins – Advancing the First Nations and Métis Cancer Journey in the Yukon, 2014-2017

This initiative, funded by the CPAC and developed by Yukon First Nations, in partnership with the Yukon Government, Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon College, aimed to provide education and training for First Nations health care providers to support patients in a culturally meaningful way and ensure better continuity of care in relation to diagnosis delivery and discharge planning.

<https://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/about-us/who-we-are/first-nations-inuit-metis/foundational-work/walk-a-mile-yukon>

Territorial responses

Department of Health and Social Services

Forward Together: Yukon Mental Wellness Strategy 2016-2026

This document provides the Yukon Government's 10-year strategy for addressing mental wellness in the Yukon. The strategy aims to increase seamless mental health, trauma, and substance use services with equitable access, a full continuum approach, and needs-appropriate service delivery in a culturally competent and responsive manner. The framework identifies valuing cultural competency, cultural safety, and Indigenous knowledge as priorities for action.

<https://yawc.ca/files/forward-together-yukon-mental-wellness-strategy-2016-26.pdf>

Executive Council Office

Aboriginal Relations

This branch of the Executive Council Office is responsible for providing support and leadership to government departments on reconciliation initiatives, including policy support, building intergovernmental relationships, and negotiating and implementing agreements with First Nations.

<https://yukon.ca/en/executive-council-office>



Coroner's Inquest into death of Cynthia Blackjack, 2020

In 2020, a coroner's inquest was held into the death of Cynthia Blackjack in 2013. While her death was ruled as accidental, the inquest made eight recommendations for improving access to health services for Little Salmon Carmacks First Nations. Among these were prioritizing the hiring of a nurse practitioner; having a local Community Health Representative to advocate for patients; reviewing medical chart terminology to reduce stigmatizing language; creating a 'wellness hub' to focus on mental health and addictions treatment and social issues; establishing a dedicated medical transport for non-emergency patients; and installing lighting at community landing strips to extend flight hours for medevacs.

https://yukon.ca/sites/default/files/blackjack_jury_verdict_january_31_2020_2.pdf

Prevention and Aboriginal Women Fund, 2022

The Yukon Government committed to providing \$150,000 in funding to four Indigenous governments or organizations (Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation) for projects that aim to address and prevent violence against Indigenous women and girls. This initiative responds to the territory's Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Strategy.

<https://yukon.ca/en/news/four-yukon-based-organizations-awarded-150000-projects-addressing-violence-against-indigenous>

Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ People Strategy, 2020

Developed in consultation with family members, First Nations governments and leaders, the Yukon Government released a territory wide MMIWG2S+ strategy which responds to the National Inquiry's Calls to Justice. It outlines 31 actions in four paths, each responding directly to the four pathways highlighted in the National Inquiry's final report.

<https://yukon.ca/en/changing-story-upholding-dignity-and-justice-yukons-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-girls-and>



Putting People First: The Final Report of the Comprehensive Review of Yukon's Health and Social Programs and Services, 2020

This report presents findings from the *Taking the Pulse* initiative, which engaged extensively with Yukoners about the health and social programs and services in the territory. The report includes recommendations for improving patient-client responsiveness, experience and outcomes; experiences of health providers; as well as ensuring fiscal sustainability. It calls for major system-level changes to facilitate the delivery of services in a person-centred, holistic, preventive, safe, and respectful way. This would involve the creation of an arms-length agency (Wellness Yukon) that would take over the provision of most health and social services, with a focus on creating a holistic system that focuses on social determinants of health, preventative health, and community involvement (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC], 2020).

<https://yawc.ca/files/putting-people-first-final-report-of-the-comprehensive-review-of-yukon-health-social-programs-services-2020.pdf>

Population and Public Health Evidence and Evaluation Unit

The Yukon Government recently created a new Population and Public Health Evidence and Evaluation Division (OAGC, 2021). The Unit is responsible for system planning and research, development of and reporting against the Departmental Performance Measurement Framework, and building capacity for population and public health evidence. It will play a key role in shifting the health and social system to take a population health approach to system planning and address key public health priorities. It is expected that this new unit will help the Yukon Government implement recommendations from the “Putting People First” comprehensive review of public services.

Breaking Trail Together: An Inclusive Yukon Public Service Strategic Plan 2019-2029

Developed in collaboration between the Government of Yukon and self-governing Yukon First Nations, this 10-year strategic plan aims to develop an inclusive public service. It has three objectives:

1. responsive and barrier-free recruitment,
2. culturally safe and supportive working environment, and
3. training and development opportunities.

The strategy prioritizes the hiring of First Nations.

https://yukon.ca/sites/default/files/psc/psc-breakingtrailtogether_rpsp-2019-2029_0.pdf

Taking the Pulse: A Health and Wellness Conversation, 2019

The Yukon Government announced a public engagement initiative to review Yukon's health and social systems and programs. Findings from the review were focused on six themes: primary health care and delivery models, coordination of care within and out-of-the territory, system structure to better meet the needs of individuals with complex needs, aging in place, pharmacare and pharmaceutical benefits, and social supports.

- **Phase 1:** https://yukon.ca/sites/default/files/hss/hss-imgs/phase_1_what_we_heard.pdf
- **Phase 2:** https://yukon.ca/sites/default/files/hss/hss-imgs/yg_-_hss_-_taking_the_pulse_-_what_we_heard_phase_ii_en_fnl2_web.pdf



Government of Yukon Performance Plan, 2018

This document highlights actions that have been undertaken and were in progress by the Yukon Government, including those related to reconciliation. This includes providing access to culturally relevant programs and services, creating a representative public service that reflects the Indigenous community, and funding Indigenous women's organizations to deliver community-based safety and wellness initiatives.

<https://yukon.ca/sites/default/files/eco/eco-performance-plan-18.pdf>

Yukon Forum, 2005 -

Established by a Memorandum of Understanding in 2005, the Yukon Forum affirms the Government of Yukon's commitment to work together with First Nations in a constructive relationship on matters that promote good governance for all Yukoners. This relationship is based on building strong government-to-government relations with First Nations and collaboration on shared priorities. The Forum was renewed in 2017 with the signing of a new Declaration of Working Together.

<https://yukon.ca/en/your-government/find-out-what-government-doing/yukon-forum>

Health system responses

Council of Yukon First Nations, Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, Yukon Hospital Corporation, and Yukon Government

Walk a Mile in My Moccasins – Advancing the First Nations and Métis Cancer Journey in the Yukon, 2014-2017

This initiative, funded by the CPAC and developed by Yukon First Nations, in partnership with the Yukon Government, Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon College, aimed to provide education and training for First Nations health care providers to support patients in a culturally meaningful way and ensure better continuity of care in relation to diagnosis delivery and discharge planning.

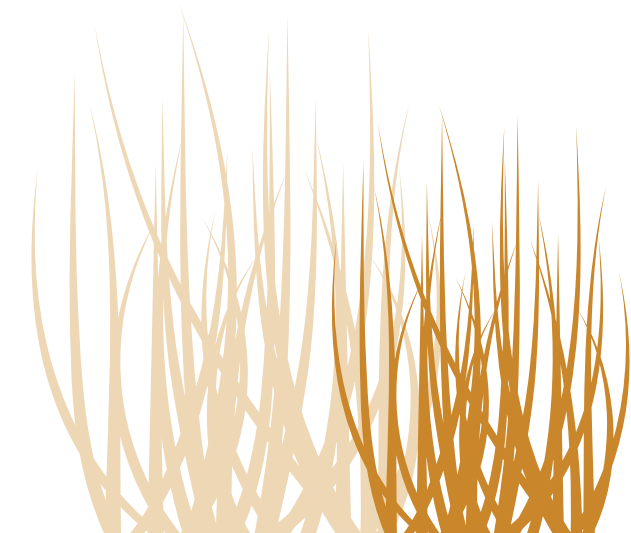
<https://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/about-us/who-we-are/first-nations-inuit-metis/foundational-work/walk-a-mile-yukon>

Yukon Hospitals

First Nations Health Programs

A number of First Nations health programs are offered at the Whitehorse General Hospital to ensure that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis residents in the Yukon receive culturally appropriate and compassionate care, including cultural programming, accessing traditional medicines, and cultural events.

<https://yukonhospitals.ca/en/whitehorse-general-hospital/wgh-first-nations-health-programs>





ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES



Professional organization and regulatory body responses

Yukon Registered Nurses Association (YRNA)

Cultural Safety Practice Standard, 2022

In 2022, the YRNA adopted a cultural safety practice for nurse practitioners and registered nurses practicing in the Yukon. The standard sets out a zero tolerance for Indigenous-specific racism and outlines key requirements for providing culturally safe care for Indigenous clients.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x3ZvBqI7M0KtHPtZ6IiCv_EyeE9dyIKE/view?usp=sharing

Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses, 2019

This document identifies standards for practice for Registered Nurses in the Yukon, including specific standards related to cultural safety and humility (Yukon Registered Nurses Association, 2019).

Foundations for Nurse Practitioner Practice in the Yukon, 2012

This document identifies core competencies for nurse practitioners practicing in the Yukon, including specific competencies related to cultural safety and humility.

<https://nperesource.casn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/NPFoundation.pdf>

Indigenous organizational responses

Council of Yukon First Nations

Funding to support cultural safety initiatives at Yukon hospitals, 2022

In December of 2022, the CYFN announced a grant of \$154,000 to support cultural safety initiatives at Whitehorse General Hospital, Watson Lake Community Hospital, and Dawson City Community Hospital, derived through Indigenous Services Canada's Anti-Indigenous Racism funding. Projects include training and development for hospital staff, honouring of First Nations cultures in institutional settings, increasing First Nations staffing, and increasing maternity supports for Indigenous patients.

https://cyfn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NR_CYFN-Funding-Supports-Cultural-Safety-Initiatives-at-Yukon-Hospitals_FNL-scaled.jpg





Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN)
and First Nations Health and Social
Development Commission

***First Nations Health and Social
Development Commission (FNHSDC)***

The CYFN works with the First Nations Health and Social Development Commission, an advisory committee to First Nations chiefs, to identify needs and alternatives to service delivery. They hold regular meetings with health directors from every Yukon community and every First Nation, as well as with representatives of the Yukon Government, to discuss key priority areas, actions and strategies (CYFN, 2023).

Council of Yukon First Nations, Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, Yukon Hospital Corporation, and Yukon Government

***Walk a Mile in My Moccasins – Advancing the
First Nations and Métis Cancer Journey in
the Yukon, 2014-2017***

This initiative, funded by the CPAC and developed by Yukon First Nations, in partnership with the Yukon Government, Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon College, aimed to provide education and training for First Nations health care providers to support patients in a culturally meaningful way and ensure better continuity of care in relation to diagnosis delivery and discharge planning.

<https://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/about-us/who-we-are/first-nations-inuit-metis/foundational-work/walk-a-mile-yukon>



Yukon First Nation Health and Social
Development Commission

***Yukon First Nation Wellness
Framework, 2015***

A partnership between the FNHSDC and the CYFN, this framework articulates a holistic approach to community wellness that reflects the perspectives of First Nations within the CYFN. The framework is guided by principles rooted in the beliefs, values, and traditions of First Nations and based on six themes: traditional ways of being and doing; place, purpose, and belonging; healthy living, promotion, and prevention; medical, health, and social services; mental health and well-being; and supporting First Nations staff.

https://www.ncchpp.ca/docs/2015_SMP_PMH_WellnessFramework_May.pdf

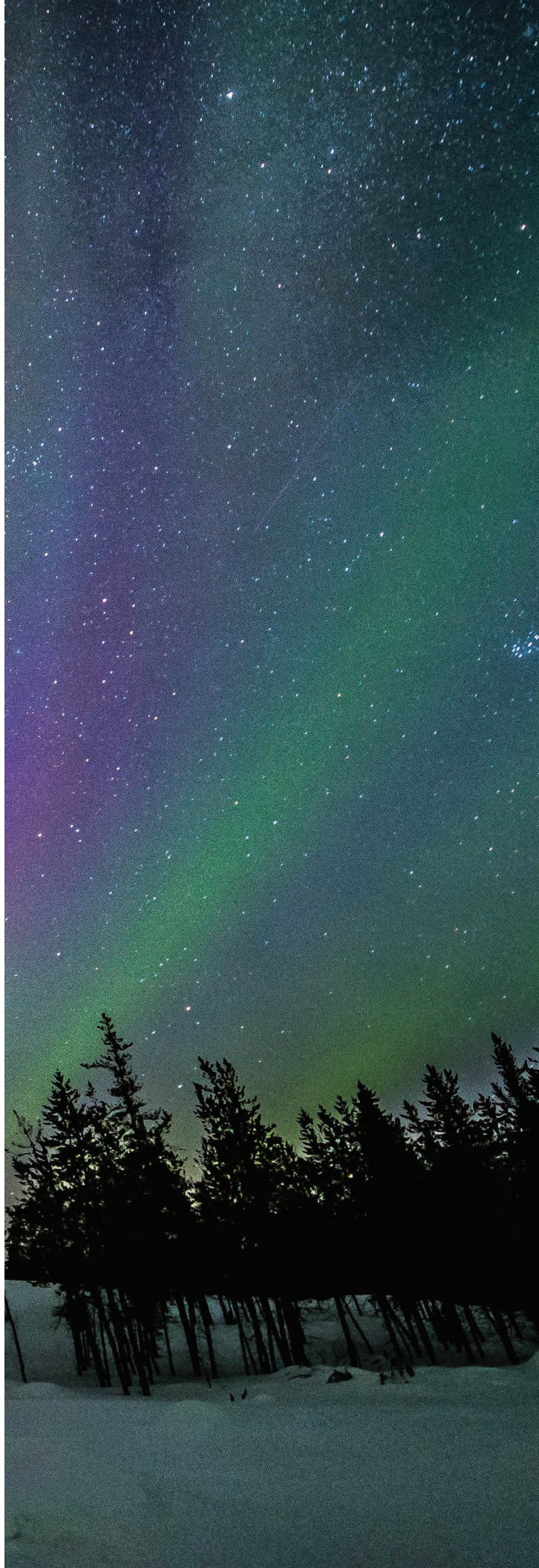
Mainstream (non-Indigenous)
organizational responses

Council of Yukon First Nations, Canadian
Partnership Against Cancer, and
Yukon Government

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<https://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/about-us/who-we-are/first-nations-inuit-metis/foundational-work/walk-a-mile-yukon>





EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND TRAINING INITIATIVES



Territorial government educational resources and training initiatives

None identified.

Health system educational resources and training initiatives

Yukon Hospitals

First Nations Health Programs video series, 2016

This video series highlights the significance of cultural understanding by showcasing made-in-territory programs as national and international best practice focused on patient services, cultural programs, and cultural competency.

- **Series Preview:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkCbPSuV0-M>
- **Cultural Competency:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YRl0R5nFwo
- **Patient Services:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kcjmnuuiunbc>
- **Cultural Programs:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uchAB71PZ18>

Professional organization and regulatory body educational resources and training initiatives

None identified.

Indigenous-developed educational resources and training initiatives

Council of Yukon First Nations

Cultural Competency Training for Yukon First Nations Family Support Workers, 2019

The CYFN, in partnership with Camosun College, offers a 10-month program for Yukon First Nations family support workers on cultural competency and history to give them the skills they need to work with families and keep children out of care (Silva, 2020).

Mental Wellness Services for First Nation Front-Line Workers in the Yukon, 2013

This resource is intended for Yukon First Nations health and social workers and aims to identify existing resources and supports for mental illness, drug and alcohol issues, and overall community wellness.

<https://cyfn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/CYFN-Mental-Health-Booklet-03.19.2013-web.pdf>

Yukon First Nation Mental Wellness Workbook, 2010

Intended as a resource for Yukon First Nations frontline workers, Health and Social Directors, and staff, this workbook was developed to support program planning, project evaluation, proposal writing, and client support. It consists of six substantive sections:

1. underlying causes of mental illness and relationship to determinants of health;
2. pillars for a Yukon First Nation mental wellness strategy;
3. tools to help planning, proposal writing, and working with clients and groups;
4. step-by-step instructions on how to develop a mental wellness strategy;
5. information on vicarious trauma that may be experienced in the workplace and how to address it; and
6. a resource directory of good ideas, toolkits, and best practices.

<https://cyfn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/MentalhealthworkbookVer1June2010.pdf>

Yukon First Nation Cultural Orientation and Protocols Toolkit, n.d.

Funded by Health Canada, this toolkit provides information and learning experiences to health and social resource workers providing services to Yukon First Nations people in their communities and institutions. The toolkit aims to facilitate learning about pre-contact lifestyles; the historic and contemporary impacts of colonialism on individuals, families, and communities; the current community realities and dynamics related to governance, programs, and services; cultural values, protocols, and practices; as well as to develop the capacity for culturally competent relationships and assist in developing two-way relationships based on mutual respect.

<https://emrlibrary.gov.yk.ca/cyfn/yukon-first-nation-cultural-orientation-and-protocols-toolkit/part-1--yukon-wide.pdf>

Other educational resources and training initiatives

Yukon University

Yukon First Nations 101

Developed in 2016 by the Yukon University in partnership with the CYFN, this course aims to enhance cultural competency among businesses, service providers, non-government organizations, and government staff who work with First Nations in the Yukon. The course is offered as both a self-paced online training program or as livestreamed training over two half day sessions (CYFN, 2016).

<https://www.yukonu.ca/programs/courses/yfn-001>



A vertical photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with vibrant orange, pink, and blue clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow. In the foreground, there are reeds and other aquatic plants in the water, which reflect the colors of the sky. The background shows a dark, silhouetted mountain range.

SUMMARY



The context for health and social services delivery is different in the Yukon than it is in other jurisdictions across Canada because there are 11 self-governing sovereign First Nations. In 2005, the Yukon Government passed the *Cooperation in Governance Act*, which established the Yukon Forum and affirms the government's commitment to working collaboratively with First Nations on a government-to-government basis. This commitment enables First Nations to lead conversations about what health policies, programs, and services should look like in their communities through multiple governance mechanisms that support communication and relationship building.

The Yukon is a small jurisdiction with an integrated health and social services system, with the Department of Health and Social Services responsible for not only setting standards and policies, conducting strategic and business planning, allocating resources and monitoring, but also delivering health and social services. A recent two-year independent review of Yukon's healthcare system ("Putting People First"), completed in 2020, recommended the creation of an arms-length agency (Wellness Yukon) to improve coordination across the health system and deliver services in a "person-centred, holistic, preventative, safe and respectful way" (CBC News, 2020, para. 8; see also Yukon Government, 2020a). It is anticipated that this new agency will assume control over the provision of most health and social services, including hospitals and long-term care facilities, to create a more holistic system that focuses on the determinants of health, preventative health, and community involvement.

The Internet search revealed one tripartite initiative that promotes cultural safety – the establishment of a Tripartite Table on the Wellbeing of Yukon First Nations Children and Families (ISC, 2020). This initiative responds to the federal government’s commitment to reform the Child and Family Services system for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in the Yukon. Terms of Reference have been developed and the Table is in the process of developing a work plan.

The Yukon Government and its various agencies and departments have undertaken numerous activities that promote cultural safety, cultural humility, and reconciliation in health and social services. For example, they established an Aboriginal Relations branch of the Executive Office to provide support and leadership to government departments on reconciliation initiatives. In addition to a five-year action plan that sets priorities for the Yukon Forum, cultural safety and humility are embedded in strategies and action plans related to *Yukon’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ People Strategy* (Yukon Government, 2020b), a strategy for building an inclusive public service (Yukon Government, 2019), and the *Forward Together* mental wellness strategy (Yukon Government DHSS, 2016). These principles are also embedded in the creation of an Aboriginal

Relations branch of the Executive Council Office and in numerous initiatives and actions that aim to enhance the coordination, integration, accessibility, and cultural safety of health services identified in a comprehensive review of Yukon’s health and social programs and services (Yukon Government, 2020b).

While these action plans and strategies have accountability mechanisms and reporting requirements, publicly available evaluation and reporting activities are limited to a few informal updates and progress reports on initiatives to address reconciliation or respond to a specific health issue. A new Population and Public Health Evidence and Evaluation Division has been created. This is expected to play a key role in shifting the health and social system to take a population health approach to system planning and addressing data gaps related to disease surveillance, health outcomes, risk factors for Yukon residents, and the effectiveness of programs from the perspective of the Yukon Government’s “Putting People First” comprehensive review of public services (OAGC, 2021).

Because of the Yukon Government’s commitment to a government-to-government relationship with First Nations, engagement activities are central to the development of policies, programs, and services that promote cultural safety and humility



in health and social services delivery. In addition to the Yukon Forum, the territorial government has undertaken several engagement activities. These include an extensive review of Yukon's health and social systems and programs, which led to the final report, "Putting People First" (Yukon Government, 2020b), and an inquest into the death of Cynthia Blackjack, a member of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The latter resulted in several recommendations to improve health services delivery in the community (Gignac, 2020; Yukon Coroner's Office, 2020).

Outside the Yukon Government, cultural safety initiatives appear to be more limited. The Internet search revealed only two initiatives by the Yukon Registered Nurses Association (2012, 2019), both related to the inclusion of specific core competencies and standards for practice related to cultural safety and humility for nurse practitioners and registered nurses.

Several Indigenous organizations undertook cultural safety related initiatives. A collaborative project aimed to enhance service provision for First Nations cancer patients throughout their cancer journey (Council of Yukon First Nations [CYFN], CPAC, and Yukon Government, 2017). The creation of the Yukon First Nations Health and Social Development

Commission (FNHSDC) provides a mechanism for engaging with health directors from every Yukon community on key priority areas, actions, and strategies. The FNHSDC also developed a Yukon First Nations framework for wellness (FNHSDC, 2015). A cultural orientation and protocols toolkit was created by the Council of Yukon First Nations (n.d.) for staff who provide health and social services to First Nations. Two resources were developed for individuals involved in the planning and delivery of mental health services to First Nations (CYFN, 2010, 2013). Additionally, a unique cultural competency training program was developed in 2019 for First Nation family support workers.

The Internet search also revealed several cultural safety initiatives implemented by other organizations with a health mandate. These included programs available in hospitals across the Yukon that help promote cultural safety and humility, such as access to a First Nations Liaison, traditional foods and medicines while in hospital, and welcoming spaces (Yukon Hospitals, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c). They also include the development of the "Yukon First Nations 101" course by Yukon University, in partnership with the CYFN. The course aims to enhance cultural competency among businesses, service providers, government staff, and others who work with First Nations in the Yukon.





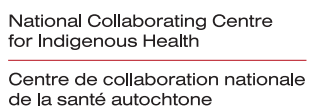
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