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UNGAVA TULATTAVIK HEALTH CENTER
CENTRE DE SANTÉ TULATTAVIK DE L'UNGAVA

FACT SHEET 12 — CULTURAL SAFETY

Beyond Good Intentions

Cultural Safety Team

Reference Guide on Nunavik and Cultural Safety

Sheet 12 of 16





AN ORDINARY INTERACTION...

Most interactions with our clients begin with good intentions: to help, inform, provide care, offer guidance, or meet a need.

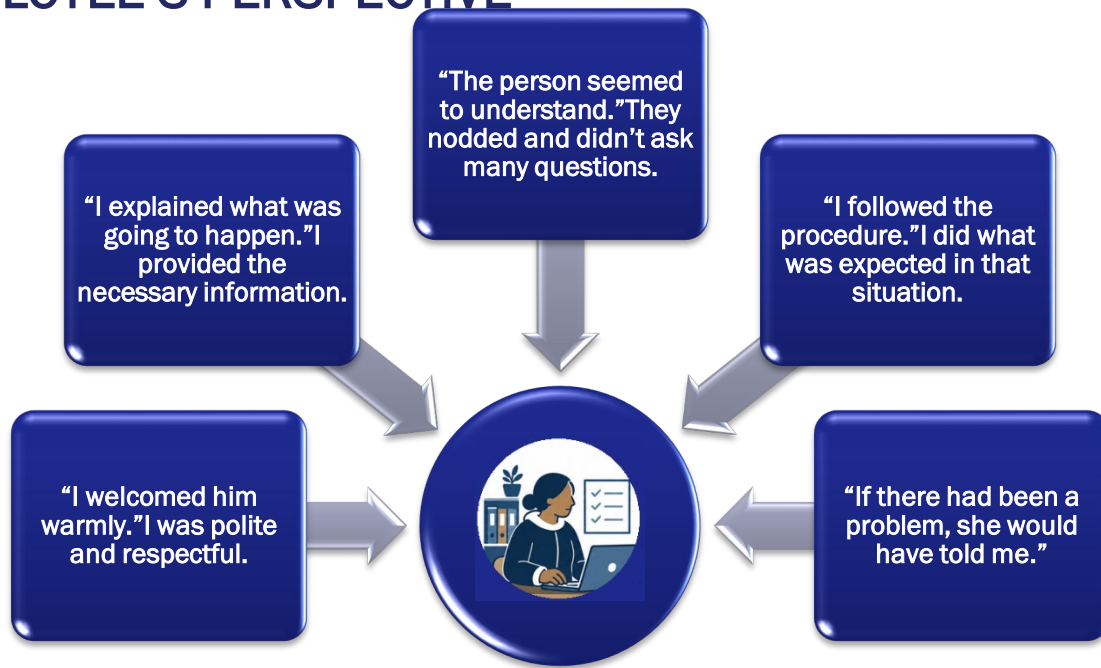
An Inuit person arrives for an appointment.
The staff member greets them, verifies their name, and explains what will happen.
The person asks few questions and nods in agreement with the explanations.
The exchange is polite. The procedure is followed.
Everything seems to have gone well.

But what do we really know about how this interaction was experienced?



FROM THE EMPLOYEE'S PERSPECTIVE

From the employee's perspective, the interaction seems to have gone as usual.



PUTTING IT INTO PERSPECTIVE

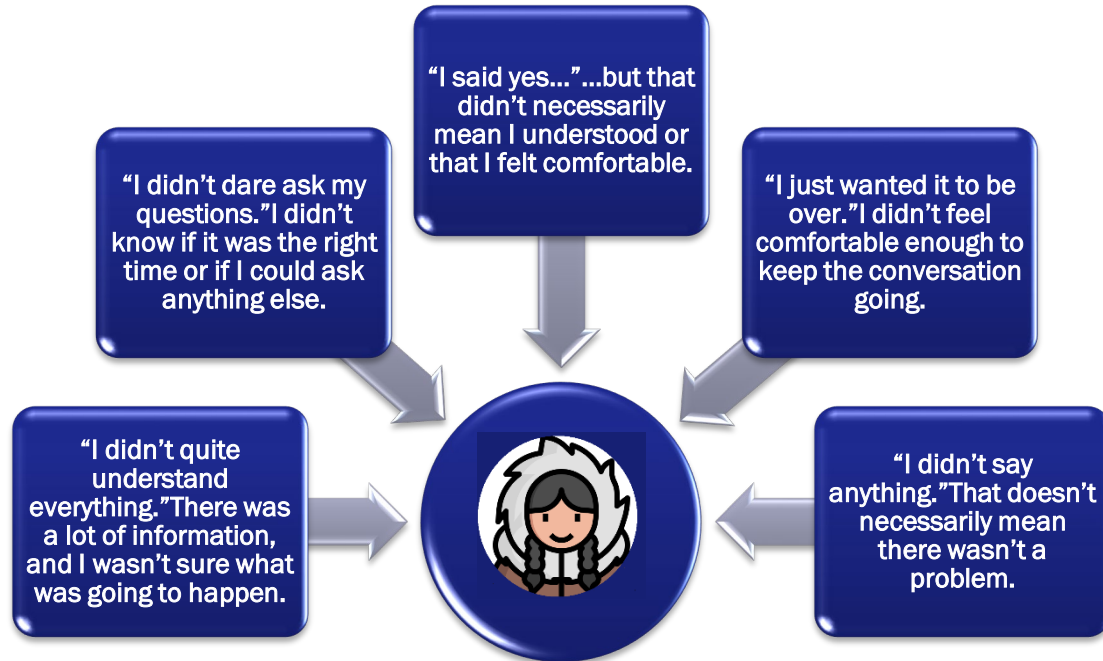
From their perspective, the employee has good reason to believe that the interaction went well.
But is that enough to know how it was experienced?



AND FROM THE PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE?

The same interaction can be experienced very differently by the person receiving the service.

Here's one possible experience—not a presumptive interpretation.



PUTTING IT INTO PERSPECTIVE

Both people may honestly describe the same interaction—and yet have had two different experiences.

What we do matters. How it is experienced matters, too.



SAME INTERACTION. TWO EXPERIENCES.

The employee was polite.
He provided the information.
He followed procedure.
His intentions were good.



However, the person may have left
without fully understanding everything,
without asking their questions, or
without feeling comfortable enough to
express their needs.

Cultural safety focuses on the experience of the person receiving the service.

It requires us to pay attention not only to what we do, but also to power dynamics, communication, context, and how our services are experienced.



PUTTING IT INTO PERSPECTIVE

It is not up to the professional or the organization to declare that a service is culturally safe.

The perspective of the person receiving the service is essential to determining this.



WHAT WE BRING TO THE INTERACTION

An interaction is never completely neutral.

The person receiving the service comes with their own history, experiences, and expectations.

So do we.

Our role gives us access to information, rules, and sometimes decisions that the person in front of us may not necessarily have control over.

**OUR POSITION
WITHIN THE
ORGANIZATION**

**OUR WAYS OF
COMMUNICATING**

What we consider to be a clear explanation, an appropriate response, or effective communication.

US

**OUR
EXPECTATIONS**

What we think a patient, a client, a family member, or a colleague “should” do.

**OUR PROFESSIONAL
HABITS**

Our ways of managing time, scheduling appointments, setting priorities, and interacting with others.

**OUR
EXPERIENCES**

What we have learned, experienced, and observed influences how we interpret a situation.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Cultural safety is not just about learning facts about the Inuit.

It also requires us to consider **what we ourselves bring to the encounter** and how that might influence the way we understand, make decisions, and act.



POWER IS NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE

In an interaction with a health or social services agency, the two people do not always start from a position of equal power.

This imbalance can exist even when the staff member is respectful, well-intentioned, and eager to help.

THE EMPLOYEE CAN...

Know the rules

and know how the service works and what is possible.

Have access to information

including records, procedures, resources, and people to contact.

Take control of part of the process,

such as appointments, forms, references, priorities, or next steps.

Use the system's terminology:

professional terms, acronyms, and communication styles with which they are familiar.



THE PERSON CAN...

Not knowing the rules

Not knowing what she can ask for or who to contact.

Relying on the information provided

Without necessarily knowing what's missing or what other options are available.

Having little control over certain steps

Waiting, traveling, returning, being transferred, or meeting with multiple service providers.

Having to navigate a language that isn't their own

Not only in terms of language, but also in terms of the system's codes and how it operates.

This imbalance doesn't mean anyone is acting wrongly.

It means we need to be aware of it.

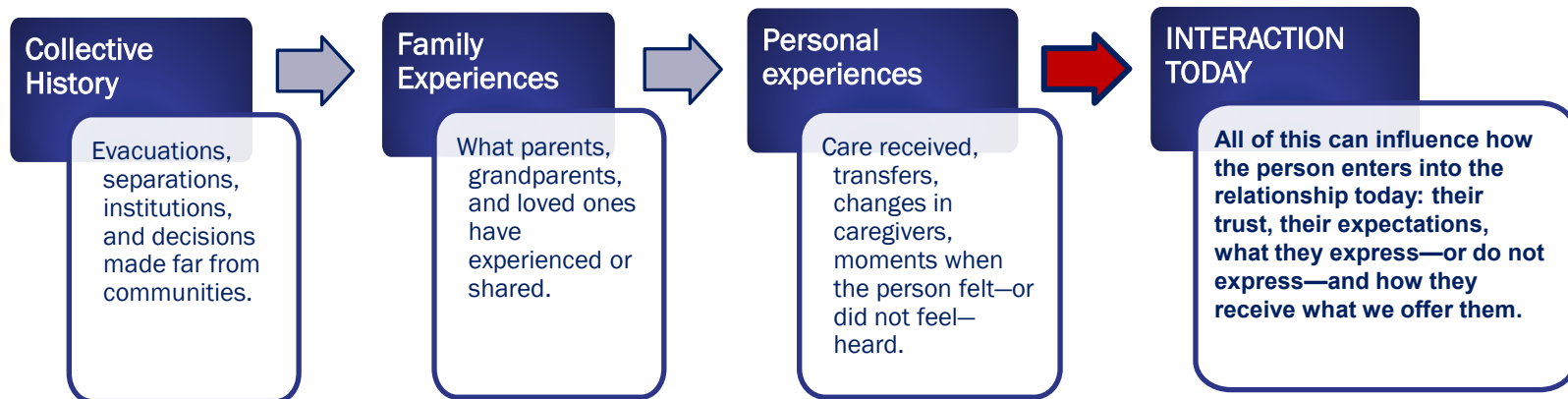
IN PERSPECTIVE

Cultural safety requires us to recognize this power and to seek, whenever possible, to restore information, choices, and a meaningful role to the person in decisions that affect them.



TRUST DOESN'T START TODAY

Each interaction takes place today, but the relationship with the healthcare system does not necessarily begin today.



We are not responsible for the person's past experiences. Nevertheless, they can influence how our interaction is experienced today.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Trust cannot be taken for granted simply because our intentions are good or because we represent a healthcare service. It is built—sometimes one interaction at a time.

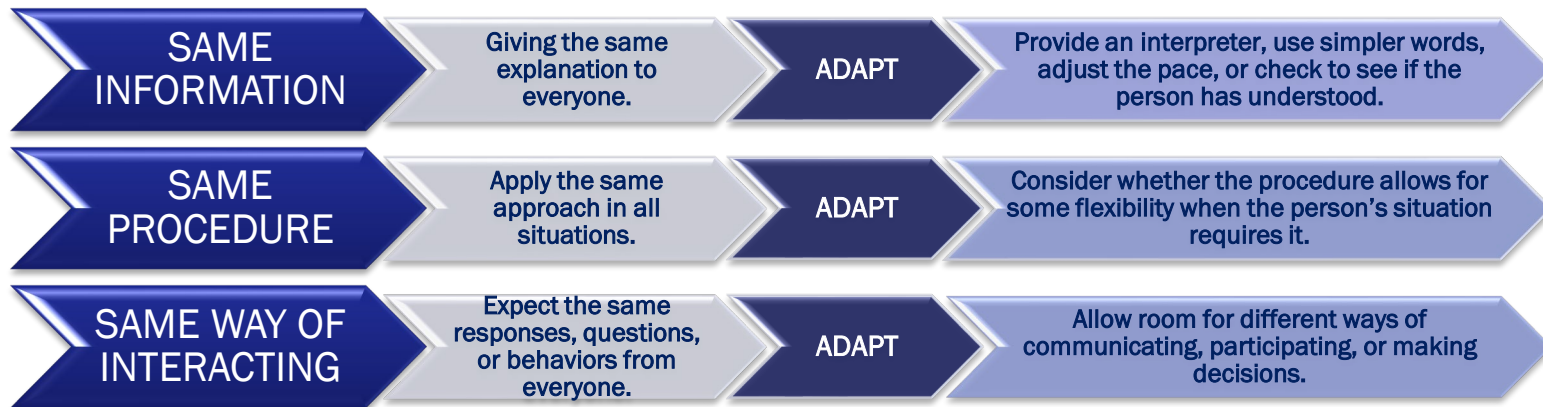


WHEN “TREATING EVERYONE THE SAME” ISN’T ENOUGH

“To be fair, I treat everyone the same.”

The intention is understandable.

But giving everyone exactly the same thing does not guarantee that everyone will actually benefit from it.



IN PERSPECTIVE

Equity does not mean offering less to some or more to others without reason.

It involves recognizing that people do not always start from the same place and that **adjustments may sometimes be necessary to provide a service that is truly accessible and reassuring.**



ADAPTING DOES NOT MEAN LOWERING STANDARDS

Adapting a service does not mean compromising professional, clinical, or safety standards.

The goal remains the same. Sometimes it's just the way we achieve it that changes.

WHAT DOESN'T CHANGE

- Quality and Safety of Care
- The information needed to make a decision
- The professional responsibilities
- Essential requirements for quality and safety

- How to explain the care and verify understanding
- Language, choice of words, pace, and the use of interpretation
- How to involve the person, their family, or the people they wish to have by their side
- Certain approaches to take when there are multiple options for achieving the same goal

WHAT CAN BE ADAPTED

So the question is not: "Should I make an exception?"

But rather: "Is there another way to achieve the same goal?"

IN PERSPECTIVE

Adaptation does not mean a reduction in quality.

When it is possible and safe, it can, on the contrary, enable the person to better understand, participate more fully, and receive a service that truly meets their needs.



IN AN INTERACTION, WHAT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?



EXPLAIN

Don't assume that the person knows how the service works.

"Here's what's going to happen next..."



CHECK

Don't confuse agreement with understanding.

"Can you tell me what you understand about the next step?"



OFFER OPTIONS

When there are several options, make them clear.

"Here are the possibilities. What would work best for you?"



ADAPT

Look for another way to achieve the same goal whenever possible.

"Is there a way of doing this that would work better for you?"



HAND OFF

We don't need to know everything or solve everything.

"I'm not the right person to answer that, but I'll help you find someone who can."

IN PERSPECTIVE

Cultural safety does not rely on a perfect understanding of Inuit culture.

It is also built through simple actions: explaining, checking, listening, offering choices, adapting when possible, and knowing when to hand things off to someone else.



CULTURAL SAFETY DOESN'T DEPEND ON JUST ONE PERSON

A single interaction can make a difference. But one employee alone cannot make a system that ensures cultural safety.

In every interaction:

- listen and explain;
- check for understanding;
- recognize one's own assumptions;
- adapt when possible;
- know when to hand things off.

THE PERSON



In the way we work together:

- share necessary information;
- ensure continuity;
- call on interpreters, liaisons, and the right resources;
- discuss problematic situations;
- support possible adjustments.

THE TEAM



In the way services are designed:

- review policies and procedures;
- identify barriers created by the system;
- incorporate Inuit perspectives and knowledge;
- support Inuit presence and participation;
- adapt services to the realities of Nunavik.

THE ORGANIZATION



IN PERSPECTIVE

Cultural safety is a shared responsibility.

It is built through our interactions, but also through our decisions, our procedures, the way our services are organized, and the role given to Inuit in defining and improving them.



AT TULATTAVIK, THIS IS ALREADY TAKING MANY FORMS

Cultural safety is a process. At Tulattavik, several initiatives are already underway to better adapt services to the realities and needs of the Inuit.

DPJ — WORKING WITH NUNAVINGMI ILAGIIT PAPATAUVINGA

Collaboration with Nunavingmi illagiit Papatauvinga to advance youth protection practices and better account for Inuit family and community realities.

TASIURTIGIIT — ADAPTING EARLY INTERVENTION

Its development is grounded in Inunnguiniq, to further anchor the approach in Inuit ways of understanding child development, learning, and support.

TRAINING OUR EMPLOYEES

Cultural safety training enables both new and experienced employees to better understand the context in which they work and to reflect on their own practices.

PILOT PROJECTS — LEARNING BY DOING

Pilot projects in the hospital department and home care allow us to practically test ways to further integrate Inuit realities and perspectives into the organization of services.

ROLLING OUT THE IQI APPROACH

IQI aims for broader change: to gradually integrate an approach rooted in Nunavik's values and realities into Tulattavik's practices, management, and service organization.

IN PERSPECTIVE

There is no single way to achieve cultural safety.

It can transform an interaction, a practice, a program, or, over time, the organization itself.



HOW DO WE KNOW IF WE'RE HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

By listening to the people who use our services.



SERVICE USERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

How did they experience the service? Did they feel heard, understood, respected, and able to participate?



INUIT EMPLOYEES

What do they see in our practices that the organization doesn't always see? What adjustments do they suggest?



COMMUNITIES

Do our services align with local realities, priorities, and expressed needs?

Cultural safety is measured not only by what we put in place, but also by how changes are experienced.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Listening does not mean we will always be able to meet every expectation.

It means that the experiences and perspectives of the Inuit must play a meaningful role in evaluating and improving our services.



UTHC RECOMMENDATION

ON THE GROUND — APTIN SEASON 3

Cultural Interventions, Clinical Care, and Emergency Situations

Produced by Kassiw Media, this observational series delves into the daily lives of Indigenous front-line workers in health and social services. It highlights their dedication, their realities, and the various ways in which culture can be integrated into care and services.

Why the UTHC recommends it:

The series follows Inuit practitioners as they support community members in a wide range of settings, from on-the-land activities to clinical care.

In particular, the series features an Inuit interpreter working with an Elder, a rehabilitation worker on the job, and a physician treating complex trauma.

Above all, it illustrates how professional expertise, relationships, language, culture, and knowledge of the local context can come together in practice.





FURTHER READING



TASIURTIGIIT — A PRACTICAL ADAPTATION

The Tasiurtigiit program demonstrates how a Quebec program, Agir tôt, can be adapted to Nunavik and guided by the Inunnguiniq philosophy, while maintaining its goal of supporting early childhood development.



NUNAVINGMI ILAGIIT PAPATAUVINGA — TRANSFORMING THE SYSTEM

A much broader approach to transforming services for children and families, grounded in Inuit values, knowledge, and practices. The organization explicitly states its goal as rebuilding services in Nunavik and ensuring that decisions regarding children's well-being are made by the Inuit.



INUNNGUINIQ — UNDERSTANDING WHAT CAN GUIDE ADAPTATION

A video from the Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre to gain a more direct understanding of Inunnguiniq and how Inuit knowledge and practices can guide the adaptation of services and interventions for children and families.

Cultural safety is built through relationships

LISTEN → UNDERSTAND → ADAPT → LEARN

We don't need to know everything to get started.

We can question our approaches, acknowledge what we don't know, listen to Inuit experiences, and work with them to explore how our approaches can be adapted.

Cultural safety is not a destination.

It is a way to continue building the relationship.

