



Empathy, dignity, and respect: Creating cultural safety for Aboriginal people in urban health care

Definitions

- **Cultural competency** is about creating a health care environment that is free of racism and stereotypes, where Aboriginal people are treated with empathy, dignity and respect.
- **Cultural safe care** involves building trust with Aboriginal patients and recognizing the role of socioeconomic conditions, history, and politics in health.

Demographics and health indicators of Aboriginal People

- Evidence indicates a continuation of gaps in health status between Aboriginal people and the larger Canadian population
- As a group, Aboriginal people have the poorest health outcomes and the shortest life expectancies of all Canadians
- As a whole, the Aboriginal population in Canada is younger than the non-Aboriginal population¹
- The birth rate among the overall Aboriginal population continues to be much higher than for the general population¹
 - Aboriginal women have on average 2.6 children over their lifetime, while the average for women in Canada as a whole is 1.5²
- Approximately half of Canada's 1.3 million Aboriginal people live in cities

Aboriginal Disparities¹

- There are significant overall health and socio-economic disparities between Aboriginal and the larger Canadian population. First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations:
 - Aboriginal children are more likely to die in the first year of life
 - have a higher burden of chronic health conditions and infectious diseases
 - are more likely live in poor health and die prematurely
 - are less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to be unemployed
 - are more likely to live in poverty which contributes to higher incidence of poor nutrition, obesity and living in overcrowded and substandard housing

It is well documented that many underlying factors negatively affect the health of Aboriginal people, including racism and negative stereotypes that are entrenched in society.

¹ Understanding and Improving Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health in Canada: Conversations about Promising Practices across Canada

² Statistics Canada, 2008 – 2006 Census