

Cultural safety and humility when visiting community

Considerations for health care professionals

December 5, 2022

What this document is for

Health care professionals visiting Indigenous communities are encouraged to reflect on a variety of cultural and practical considerations. If your work calls upon you to enter a community, here are some questions to support your preparations.

Please note: *These questions are not intended to be exhaustive, and not all questions will necessarily apply to every situation. As you develop your approach, please keep in mind that every community is different. Visitors are encouraged to do their own explorations and consult information sources as needed. As you read these considerations, you are encouraged to cultivate the mentality of a kind, inviting guest who is there to offer, not to take.*

Protocols

- Have you been **invited** into the community? If so, by whom?
- Have you consulted with the **Nations or communities** you're visiting to see what **protocols** and **practical steps** they suggest? Note that Nations may have **protocol departments or officers** who can be contacted prior to arrival.
- Suggestions to inquire with community staff about include but are not limited to:
 - **Gift-giving protocols**, such as when it is appropriate to give a gift. Gift-giving can be a form of reciprocity and may be expected when someone is asking for advice, information or participation. Ask if you should give and what is appropriate to give.
 - **Witnessing protocols**, such as receiving gifts or food as a witness. Ask about the expectations if you are a witness.
 - **Protocols in sacred spaces**, such as things you cannot or should not do while in a space that may be used for ceremonies or is considered a sacred site.
- There are **many other protocols** that you can ask about. If you don't anticipate needing to know the protocols above on your trip, think about what else you may need

to know instead. Some communities may not have protocols for what you are asking about, or they may not want to share them. Inquiring ahead is a form of respect and cultural humility.

- Have you **checked** with the community whether this is a **good time to visit**? Even after scheduling your meeting, activity or recreational event, please keep checking whether it is still an appropriate time to visit or if the community has experienced losses. If a loss or other painful incident happens in the community during a multiple-day visit, out of respect please ask whether the remainder of the event should be rescheduled.

Transportation

- What are the **methods for travelling** into the community? Are these transportation methods constrained by seasonality?
- Is **taxi** or **car rental service** available there?

Communications

- Is **wi-fi** or **cell service** present in the community? If not, what can you do now to prepare?
- Is there a fire or tsunami **evacuation plan**? If so, please become aware of it so that you can familiarize yourself with the route once you arrive.

Accommodations, stores and supplies

- Have you found **accommodations** for yourself?
- Do you know when **stores** close in the community?
- Are you able to bring some of your own personal **supplies** (e.g., snacks, incidentals) ahead of time?