

# Cultural Safety and Humility in the regulation of optometrists serving First Nations and Indigenous Peoples of Canada

Our Declaration of Commitment is a signal of our shared intention to advance Cultural Safety and Humility among optometrists who are involved in the delivery of vision care services to First Nations and Indigenous peoples in Canada. This commitment reflects the high priority we, as the designated Canadian optometric regulatory authorities, place on Cultural Safety and Humility as quality and safety dimensions that are integral components of our public protection mandate.

This Declaration of Commitment is based on the following guiding principles of Cultural Safety and Humility:

- Cultural humility is a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic conditioned biases, and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a life-long learner when it comes to understanding another's experience.
- Cultural safety is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving services.
- Cultural Safety and Humility should be understood, upheld and practiced at all levels of the health care system including governance within health profession regulatory bodies and within individual professional practice.
- First Nations and Indigenous individuals, Elders, families, communities and Nations should be involved in co-development of action strategies and in the decision-making process with a commitment to reciprocal accountability.

Strong leadership on concrete actions is essential to achieving our vision of a culturally safe health care system for First Nations and Indigenous peoples in Canada. We, the undersigned representatives of Canadian optometry regulators, commit to:

## CREATE A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE BY:

- Articulating the pressing need to establish Cultural Safety and Humility as a framework to improve the delivery of vision care services to First Nations and Indigenous peoples.
- Opening an honest, informed and meaningful dialogue within our circles of influence to show that change is necessary.
- Forming a coalition of influential leaders and champions who are committed to the priority of embedding Cultural Safety and Humility into the regulation of Canadian optometrists.

- Contributing to the national vision of a culturally safe and humble health care system as a leading strategy to enhance professional regulation.
- Encouraging, supporting and enhancing Cultural Safety and Humility amongst optometrists and all health care professionals.

## ENGAGE AND ENABLE STAKEHOLDERS BY:

- Communicating the vision of culturally safe health profession regulation for First Nations and Indigenous peoples in Canada and the critical need for commitment and understanding on behalf of all stakeholders, health care professionals and clients.
- Openly and honestly addressing concerns and leading by example. Identifying and removing barriers to progress.
- Monitoring, and visibly celebrating accomplishments.

## IMPLEMENT AND SUSTAIN CHANGE BY:

- Encouraging and empowering our organizations' staffs, governors, and volunteers to develop Cultural Humility and foster a culture that strives for Cultural Safety.
- Establishing processes where organizations and individuals can raise and address problems without fear of reprisal.
- Leading and enabling successive waves of actions until Cultural Safety and Humility is embedded within all levels of health profession regulation.
- Developing and implementing Cultural Safety and Humility strategies and action plans, including the identification and removal of barriers.
- Tracking, reporting and evaluating progress for reporting purposes as well as continuous learning.
- Sharing lessons learned and opportunities this work presents for possible adaptation and/or application in other regions of the country.

## OUR COMMITMENT:

Our signatures demonstrate our long term commitment to the regulation of optometrists to promote and advance Cultural Safety and Humility for First Nations and Indigenous peoples in Canada and to champion the process required to achieve this vision. Given that this Declaration focuses primarily on learning from the journey to date in British Columbia true realization of this vision will require each optometric regulatory authority to build meaningful partnerships with First Nations and Indigenous partners to co-create plans and strategies meaningful to their contexts and communities.

FORAC's first step is to recognize the health inequities facing First Nations and Indigenous peoples when seeking optometric/vision care in order to work towards improving health outcomes. First Nations and Indigenous peoples in Canada endure a profound public health and socioeconomic burden when compared to mainstream populations. This pattern is observed throughout the world as these populations often lack the minimum essentials of life and are therefore vulnerable to high rates of preventable disability, disease and premature death.

As health care providers, optometrists must recognize these realities and be prepared to address inequities in the health and vision care system to improve patient health outcomes. Access to culturally safe care is recognized as a cornerstone of public safety and high-quality service.

The Declaration is based on the guiding principles of Cultural Safety and Humility. In order to understand these quality and safety dimensions, it is first necessary to define cultural awareness, sensitivity and competence as the preliminary steps towards cultural safety.

***Cultural awareness*** is the recognition of differences, and understanding and observing those differences.

***Cultural sensitivity*** recognizes the need to respect cultural differences.

***Cultural competence*** refers to the skills and behaviours that help a practitioner provide quality care to diverse populations.

The Declaration defines **Cultural Safety** as:

“... an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving services.”

An important tenet of culturally safe care is that it is the patient who decides what safe care means to them.

The Declaration defines **Cultural Humility** as:

“... a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic conditioned biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a life-long learner when it comes to understanding another's experience.”

### **Fulfilling the Declaration**

Twelve action strategies have been identified to support FORAC's strategic goal of fulfilling its Commitment to Cultural Safety and Humility in the regulation of optometrists serving First Nations and Indigenous peoples of Canada. FORAC is committed to involving First Nations and Indigenous individuals, Elders, families and communities in the completion of these action strategies.



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