

CULTURAL DIVERSITY: UNDERSTANDING BETTER TO PROVIDE BETTER CARE

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Diversity enriches us. Listening brings us closer.

Reconciliation calls on all of us to act.

Tomorrow marks the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, an opportunity to reflect on our role, as healthcare professionals, in creating more inclusive, respectful and culturally safe care environments.

Did you know that some of your colleagues work every day to develop care practices that are adapted to the realities of Indigenous communities?

Within the Integrated Services for Indigenous Communities (SICA) at the Douglas Mental Health University Institute, professionals support Indigenous patients and their families by placing trust, listening and cultural safety at the heart of their practice.

As Honour Parent-Racine, a social worker with SICA, explains :

“Reconciliation requires us to take a critical look at the systems in which we work and to reflect on how we can contribute to creating care that is safer, more respectful and culturally appropriate.”

– Honour Parent-Racine, a social worker with SICA.



As the West Island Cultural Diversity Committee, we would like to recognize and thank everyone who, every day, contributes to making our healthcare environments places where every person feels welcomed, heard and respected.

Alexandra Boisrond - Local President APTS SQ-ODIM-U

Creating Safer care, creating safer Pathways

Home: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in Health Care



My name is Honour Parent-Racine, and I'm a social worker liaison with the Integrated Services for Indigenous Services (SICA) at the Douglas Mental Health University Institute. The service works within a multidisciplinary team that includes administrative agents, psychiatrists, nurses, and social workers.

We serve Inuit and Cree communities, with a focus on creating safe and supportive admissions and discharges from the hospital back to their homes in the Nunavik and James Bay regions.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation gives us an opportunity to remember and acknowledge the harms caused by the residential school system, 60's scoop and current child welfare system and the lasting impacts of colonial policies on Indigenous peoples, families, and communities. It is also an opportunity to reflect on how these histories continue to shape people's experiences with institutions today, including the health-care system.

For those of us working in health care, reconciliation requires us to look critically at the systems in which we work and consider how we can contribute to creating safer, more respectful, and culturally responsive care. This month has allowed me to pause and reflect on the injustices that have harmed many Indigenous communities and on how the systems we work within can contribute to those injustices. These systems can perpetuate colonialism, sometimes in ways that are not immediately visible.

This is why services like ours are so important. Part of our role is to raise awareness and provide psychoeducation about the realities of the North, allowing us to better adapt our interventions to the realities and needs identified by the people and communities we serve. This can lead to better outcomes, not only in how a person receives care, but also in recognizing that they are the experts in their own healing journey.

This work also reminds me of the importance of cultural humility. Working with Inuit patients does not mean assuming that I understand their experiences. It means remaining curious, listening without assumptions, and recognizing that each person brings their own history, culture, strengths, and understanding of what healing means to them. Sometimes, a listening ear and gentle guidance can empower individuals to create meaningful change.

Having a trauma-informed lens allows us to better understand the person in front of us while recognizing the strengths and resilience they have developed to overcome their challenges.

Through this work, it is also imperative to recognize the importance of connections to community and family. Advocating for access to land-based healing and connection to one's community can contribute to healing in many ways. These connections are particularly important when supporting patients in their transition from hospital back to their communities and can help create the conditions for a safe and meaningful transition home.

For me, this work is a reminder that providing care is not simply about addressing an individual's immediate needs, but it is also about listening, understanding the realities that shape their lives, and working alongside them to create care that respects their knowledge, strengths, culture, and healing journey.

Reconciliation in health care can begin with something as simple as listening. It means being willing to learn, to question our assumptions, and to recognize that the person sitting in front of us has knowledge about themselves, their community, and their healing that we may not have. Our role is not to be the expert in someone else's healing, but to walk alongside them, provide support, and help create the conditions for them to move forward in a way that is meaningful to them.



That is one of the lessons I
continue to take from this work:
creating safer care also
means creating safer
pathways home.

*Honour Parent-Racine, Honour Parent-Racine, a
social worker with SICA*

