



Decolonizing Healthcare: Métis Experiences

Decolonizing healthcare is an important step in healing Métis people and communities. It means understanding and acknowledging the historical, political, and social forces that have shaped the healthcare system in Canada—particularly the colonial policies that have impacted the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples, including the Métis.

What does decolonizing healthcare mean to me? The Indian Act and other colonial laws created systems that undermined our cultures and led to the marginalization of Métis ways of healing. Understanding these systems is the first step in taking control of our health and making informed decisions about the care we receive today. This knowledge can help us, as citizens of the Métis Nation, make thoughtful choices that impact our healthcare and wellness. It can also provide medical professionals with a better understanding of who we are so that they can deliver better patient-centric care.



We Come With the Medicine

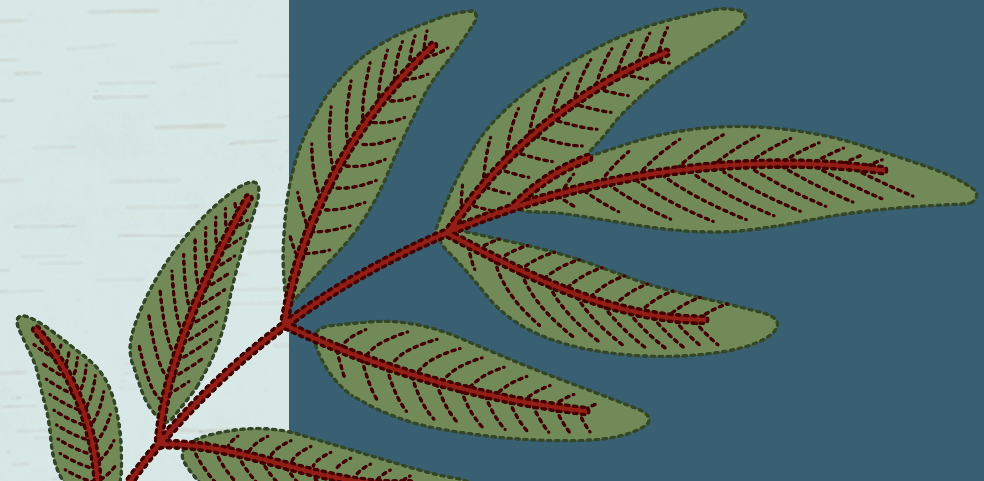
This saying reminds us that healing is both an individual and communal process. Being Métis is a protective factor. By embracing our Métis roots—whether it's the medicines we gather from the land, the songs we sing, or the stories we share—we can find pathways to healing that are meaningful to us.

Disclaimer: These worksheets are for educational purposes only. For medical advice, consult a trusted healthcare provider who respects your cultural values and needs.

Weaving Together Our Health, Culture, and Community

Decolonizing healthcare is about reasserting our right to care that reflects our Métis identity, values, and experiences. It's about honouring the traditional knowledge that has sustained us for generations while embracing modern healthcare practices that respect and incorporate our culture.

Our stories, culture, and community are the heart of our health. Let's heal together.



Community is Care: The Role of Elders

In Métis culture, storytelling is more than just an art—it’s medicine. Stories also remind us of the importance of community. As we share our experiences, we weave the fabric of community care, reinforcing that healing is not just an individual responsibility but a collective one.

Elders play a crucial role in our healing journey. Their knowledge and stories offer a path to resilience against colonial impacts. Elders remind us that true healing is a communal process and that our stories hold profound wisdom that can guide us.



Embracing Métis Knowledge

For centuries, Métis healing practices, grounded in our relationship with the land, our Elders, and the spirit of community, have been disregarded by mainstream healthcare systems. The “Western” medical model, which emphasizes individualism and physical symptoms, has become dominant, leaving behind traditional Métis views on health, medicine and well-being. To decolonize healthcare, we can bring these traditions and ways of knowing back into our health journeys, weaving them with contemporary care to support the whole person—mind, body, heart, and spirit.

A holistic approach to wellness recognizes that our health is about the interconnectedness of all aspects of our being. This approach also acknowledges the pain and trauma experienced by Métis communities due to colonialism. Understanding how oppression, displacement, and the loss of cultural practices affect our health allows us to address the root causes of illness and not just its physical symptoms. Holistic and culturally-sensitive care models ask how these experiences impact our overall health as a person.

Decolonizing healthcare for Métis people is an essential step toward healing. It means creating spaces where Métis voices are heard, where our cultural values and traditions are respected, and where we are empowered to heal in ways that honour our ancestors. For Métis, healing is a collective process that requires individual and community efforts grounded in cultural traditions and practices.

“Stories are the medicine that fill in the gaps of the self and show us who we are.”

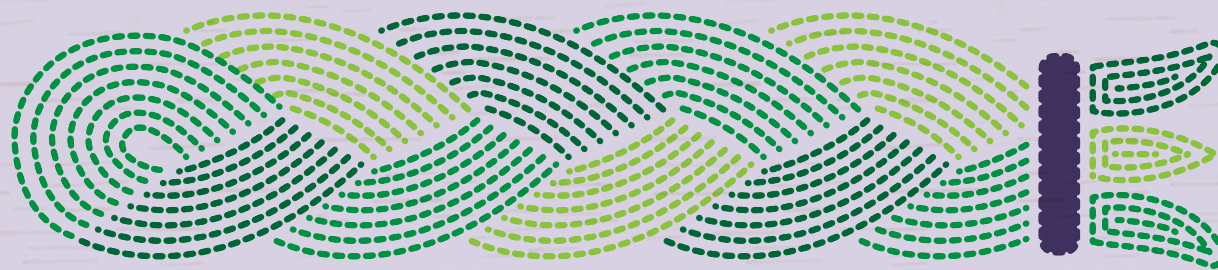
Catherine Richardson, Belonging Métis

Weaving Culture into Care

Just as the willow tree bends and sways with the wind yet remains strong, we too, as Métis people, adapt to challenges while remaining rooted in our traditions. The willow is more than a tree—it symbolizes medicine, discipline, community, and healing. Its branches provide materials for basket making, a vessel to gather berries with, and remedies in times of need.

When considering your health and wellness, ask:

- ✳ How can my healthcare team weave Métis culture into my care plan? What do I need to feel seen, respected, and understood?
- ✳ What steps can I take to reconnect with my Métis roots? Does this involve land-based practices, traditional medicine, or seeking support from my community?
- ✳ What does decolonizing healthcare mean to me? How has the healthcare system impacted me and my family? What changes or improvements would I like to see?
- ✳ How can culturally sensitive care support my sexual and reproductive health journey?
- ✳ When have I felt that a healthcare provider truly respected my Métis identity? What actions or approaches did they take that made a difference in my experience? What did that look like? How did it impact my experience?
- ✳ If I could share one story with my healthcare provider, what would it be? How could this improve my care?



Reach out to Your Community to Learn and Share What You Know

If you are struggling with your health, seek out your community. Whether through Elders, Knowledge Holders, or family, your community holds valuable insights that can support your healing journey. As Métis people, we understand the importance of shared knowledge—our collective strength will carry us forward.

Being Métis is a protective factor in our health because it connects us to our culture, community, and traditions, all of which are sources of strength, resilience, and healing.

This resilience is deeply embedded in who we are as Métis people. By embracing and honouring our Métis identity, we have the tools to navigate life's challenges and to heal in a way that is true to who we are.

Considerations for Healthcare Providers: Honouring Métis Knowledge

To provide better care to Métis clients, healthcare providers must move beyond just addressing physical symptoms. They must listen to and understand the cultural and historical context of Métis people's experiences.

Healthcare providers can begin by learning about Métis culture and acknowledging the impact of colonialism on the health of Métis communities. They should create culturally sensitive care spaces where Métis patients feel respected, understood, and empowered to make decisions about their health.

Decolonizing healthcare requires active engagement with the communities you serve. Healthcare workers need to listen and understand our needs; they must co-create solutions that reflect our cultural values and beliefs. By doing so, we can shift from a disease-centered approach to one focused on health and well-being, which empowers Métis patients and their communities.

Storytelling is a strengths-based approach to wellness that honours the resilience and experiences of Métis people. How can you incorporate storytelling into your practice to acknowledge and uplift the unique journeys of Métis, fostering healing and empowerment.

Every person who walks into your practice brings their own unique stories and experiences. Here are a few reflection questions to help healthcare providers develop a new narrative and care approach when working with Métis clients:

- ✳ What is the narrative of medicine in your practice, especially when addressing sexual and reproductive health? Does this narrative consider the whole person— their identity, community, culture, and connection to land?
- ✳ Does your language in clinical documentation respect the way Métis people talk about their health and well-being? How can your documentation adapt to better reflect their unique stories?
- ✳ How can you ensure that the “good words” you speak are done in a “good way” that fosters respect, trust, and healing for Métis?
- ✳ How can shifting from a disease-focused approach to one based on holistic health empower Métis people? In what ways can this shift enhance your practice and support the well-being of Métis families and communities?
- ✳ How do you understand who the Métis people are and what Métis culture encompasses— and how does this understanding (or lack of it) influence the way you provide care and support Métis health and wellness?
- ✳ How do you ensure that your language and actions create a culturally safe space where Métis feel truly seen, respected, and empowered in their health journey?