



Southwest Ontario  
Aboriginal Health  
Access Centre

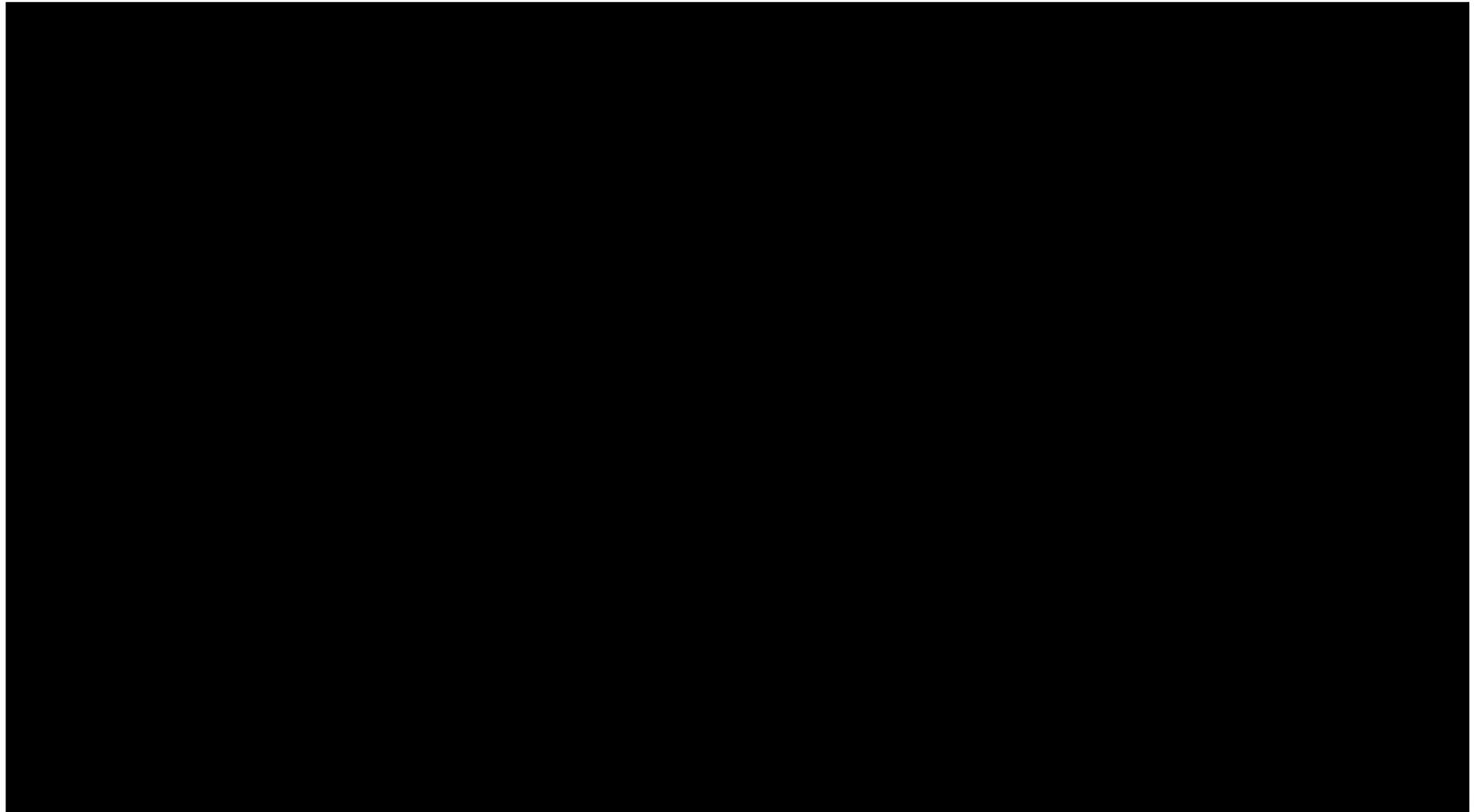
# Connecting Past and Present

**A Brief history of Colonization and  
how to support Indigenous Cultural  
Safety as Health Care Providers**



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# 500 Years in 2 Minutes (Wab Kinew)





# Creating Understanding and Respect

Until recently, most Canadians did not learn history from the point of view of Indigenous people:

- Forced relocation from traditional territories to make way for settlers (the start of the Reserve system)
- Indian Act
- Residential schools
- Placement of thousands of Indigenous children in non-Indigenous families for adoption (called the Sixties Scoop)

Similarly, until recently, very little information about Indigenous people was provided in the curriculum at medical schools and other post-secondary programs for health professionals.



# The History

- “1800-1900’s the policy of the federal government of Canada was to clear the land of the Aboriginals and open the west to Euro-Canadian agricultural settlements”
- Indian Act (1876) provides legal framework to control Indigenous life and culture
  - **still exists to this day**
- Department of Indian Affairs (1880) manages Indigenous people under the Indian Act
  - Now called the **Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.**



# Residential Schools

- Operated 1892 - 1969 through arrangements between the federal government and the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches
- Government of Canada officially ended involvement in 1969 but schools continued to operate until the 1970's-1980's with the final one closing in 1996
- Intent was to “Kill the Indian in the child”



# The Legacy

- For Indigenous people, the legacy of Canadian history includes persistent inequities in determinants of health, health status, and health outcomes
- May also include mistrust of non-Indigenous institutions (e.g., governments and public services)
- Many Indigenous people prefer not to access mainstream health care services
  - Cultural safety (e.g., stereotyping/racism)
  - Not aligned with cultural values/practices (Western approach to health care can feel alienating)



# Why is cultural awareness important?

- Providers want to care for their patients but may be unaware of the reasons someone does not follow a treatment protocol or doesn't return for appointments (e.g., mistrust)
- Even if they don't exhibit any systemic racism, health care providers who don't know the historical context of Indigenous people may make decisions that are not completely informed and may in fact do harm.



# Moving towards Cultural Safety

- Health care providers are encouraged to think about their own cultural beliefs and biases, their power and privilege, and how these might unconsciously play out in their interactions with Indigenous people
- Providers may believe that learning the facts about Indigenous people is enough, but what's really needed is a process of looking inside, self-reflection, and unpacking their own attitudes, understandings, and actions about Indigenous people



# Tools for Success

- Be aware of your own personal biases and unintentional assumptions about Indigenous people and how this might impact how you practice.
- Take the time to develop a relationship and build trust with your client (e.g., utilize an existing service that already has developed a relationship with the client to bridge your work).
- Pay attention to how the client is choosing to communicate with you. Sometimes a pause or silence will actually leave space for a good relationship to develop.
- Understand that many Indigenous clients will have faced some sort of trauma in their lives and this will impact how they relate to you as a provider. Please be patient.



# More Tools for Success

- Practice wholistically – Mental, Spiritual, Physical and Emotional.
- Understand that most Indigenous clients will view the world through a lens of family and community.
- Educate yourself on local First Nations communities – don't assume they are all the same.
- Connect to local Indigenous agencies; seek direction and partnerships



# Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) Initiative

- Provincial initiative focused on system transformation, facilitated by SOAHAC
- Online, facilitated training is one component
  - 8 hours
  - Self-directed
  - Anti-racism training
  - LHIN-sponsored for some HSPs
- [www.soahac.on.ca/ICS-training](http://www.soahac.on.ca/ICS-training)