



Dr. Catherine Cook

The Culture of Well-Being: Promoting Mental Health Among Aboriginal People Through Cultural Competence

Enhancing cultural competence has been an important strategic direction of the health care system and integral to the collaborative care process in order to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people. This is particularly important in mental health and primary care services. Exploring issues that affect the emotional wellness and mental health of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in culturally distinct ways leads to the conclusion that embracing cultural identity can be an important healing tool.

Dr. Cook will share insights and learning from a variety of projects that have attempted to enhance the cultural competence of health care providers within a regional health authority including primary care and mental health settings. She will highlight the importance of focusing on connecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit persons to effective resources and services that support and nurture emotional wellness and demonstrate how mental health contributes to a culture of well-being through the development of resource materials that reflect the culture and world view of indigenous people. She will explore the construct of cultural safety that draws attention to issues of power and vulnerability resulting from a history of colonization and invite participants to consider how they may be able to facilitate cultural safety within mental health service delivery.

Dr. Catherine Cook is Métis and practices as a family physician. After several years of clinical practice in northern First Nations communities, Cook worked with the J. A. Hildes Northern Medical Unit and First Nations and Inuit Health (FNIH). She has provided service as a regional medical officer of health to the NOR-MAN and Winnipeg regional health authorities. Cook is currently the executive director of Aboriginal Health Programs at the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, where she is responsible for the ongoing development and implementation of the Aboriginal Health Strategy. She has maintained her appointment with the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Medicine and is the Acting Head of the newly established Section of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Health in the Department of Community Health Sciences at the Faculty of Medicine.