

Indigenous Wellness

Wellness from an Indigenous perspective varies and is complex. It looks at the individual as a whole person balanced through their spirit, body, mind and emotions. This individual does not exist independently but is seen as an interconnected being in the broader network of life.

At Foundry we've taken time to meaningfully engage with this perspective to reimagine a framework that was created by Indigenous Peoples and to *begin* to build a path forward as an organization. Like all things, this framework is living and will grow to reflect the unique needs of Indigenous Peoples across the province as we continue to work towards individual and collective healing.

Indigenous wellness is surrounded by Youth, Caregivers, Ancestors, Communities and Kinship to recognize that none of these areas can be brought to life without the engagement and co-creation of our collective wisdom. To begin to restore and seek out balance, we must begin to acknowledge our interconnectedness with all living things.

Indigenous Wellness Framework

We want to acknowledge that there are many other Indigenous frameworks that exist within the British Columbia health care system, . The Indigenous Wellness Framework at Foundry takes the form of a Star Quilt and was inspired by the *Witness Blanket*. We created this framework to recognize the unique space that Foundry works, where boundaries are blurred and supporting Indigenous youth and caregivers comes first and foremost. For many, the blanket is seen as a universal symbol for protection (Newman, 2019). It provides comfort while also being a symbol of the power and strength of countless Indigenous Peoples. It is meant to be a visual representation of the dichotomy for Indigenous Peoples accessing the British Columbia health care system, showcasing both the healing and the strength of Indigenous Peoples to continue to challenge colonial systems to be more culturally safe.

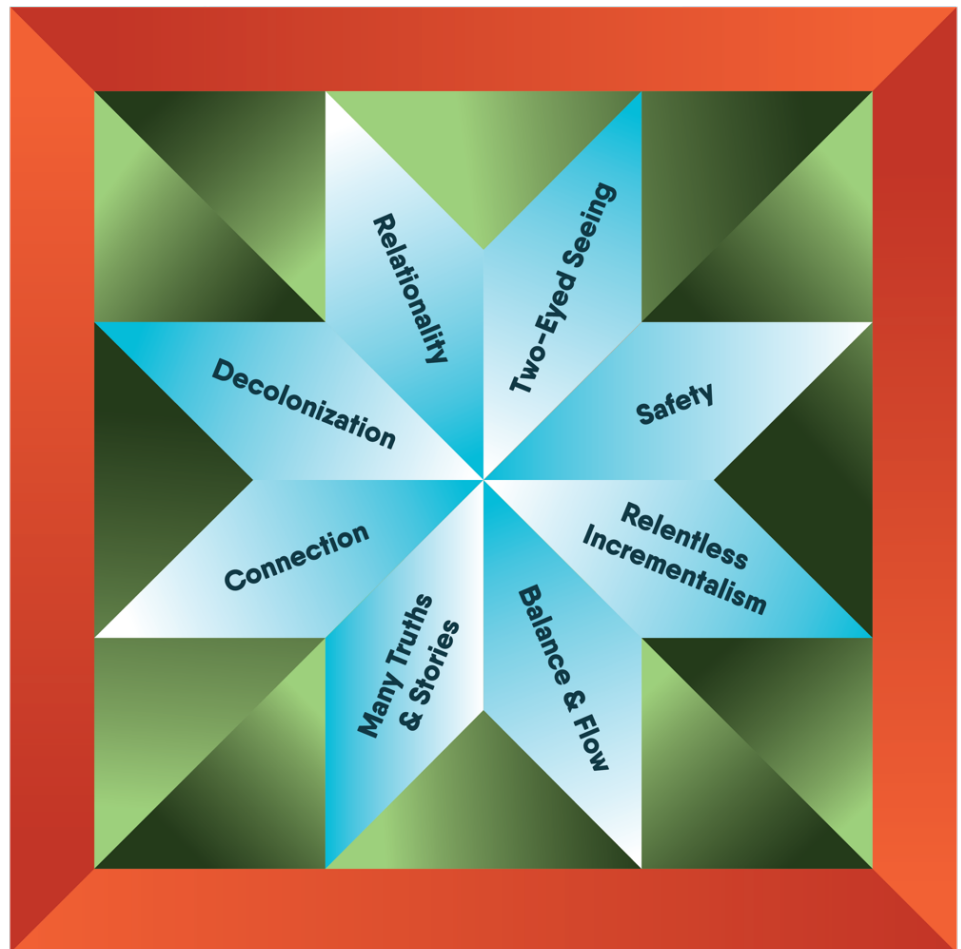
Having the framework take the form of the Star Quilt showcases these attributes while weaving in the Indigenous wellness values at Foundry that embody these eight points. These eight values are what we stand for: connection, safety, relationality, balance & flow, Two-Eyed Seeing, many truths & stories, decolonization and relentless incrementalism. They are foundational for our service development and service delivery. Below, each value is described in relation to another value to showcase their reflective and interconnected nature.



It is Everyone's Responsibility

Connection and Safety -

All the work we do at Foundry is meant to connect with youth, families, centre staff and our communities. The intention behind this value is to recognize and acknowledge the necessity of *connections*. In this value, we acknowledge that connection is foundational for trust to develop and for people to begin feeling safe. The reflecting value is *safety* because each voice holds knowledge. Safety is also rooted in actively listening to each voice because they are different. Our work is not in isolation, nor should it be in isolation. It's important to feel safe connecting with others even in the simplest form — food, laughter, stories or just taking a walk together.



Relationality and Balance & Flow – You might be thinking “Wait, aren’t connection and relationality the same thing?” There is a slight difference. Connecting is the intentional act of being in relation like participating in community events, reaching out to a friend, actively seeking out relationships, whereas relationality recognizes that by existing we are in relation to the world around us. *Relationality and balance & flow* recognize the cyclical nature of our world and our work. What works today may not work tomorrow. We may be strong and ready today and tired or feeling defeated tomorrow. It’s all part of the journey. These values are important to recognize because it asks to acknowledge the intrinsic relations apparent in our lives.

Two-Eyed Seeing and Many Truths & Stories – *Two-Eyed Seeing* was proposed by Mi’kmaw Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall as a way of bridging the gap between Western and Indigenous knowledge. Each eye is a metaphor for each knowledge system that exists in balance, without seeking to overpower or negate the other. *Many truths & stories* acknowledges these unique ways of being and recognizes that there is no singular truth or story, with our own truths being dependent on our own lived experiences. This is



important to know because acknowledging the harms done by the health care system takes time and each step of the journey looks different. Each First Nations, Métis and Inuit individual is unique and should be acknowledged and treated as such.

Decolonization and Relentless Incrementalism – *Decolonization* has become a buzz word recently, often mentioned but difficult to define. To recognize those who have taken, continue to take and will eventually take decolonial action that is often unseen, we added the value of *relentless incrementalism*. *Decolonization and relentless incrementalism* together refer to weaving in and restoring Indigenous ways of knowing into our practice and marrying our values into our work. No matter how small these Indigenous ways of knowing seem, they matter.

Resources

Video: Committing to Change for Indigenous Youth and Families

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6ZJt3CsHM4>

Conference Poster: Cultural Agility, Safety and Humility: Committing to Change for Indigenous Youth and Families

https://foundrybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/KTE_IAYMHToniC_Presentationdocument.pdf

References

Newman, C. (2019) The Witness Blanket [Online Exhibit]. The Witness Blanket. Retrieved from witnessblanket.ca.

