
Policy 1026: Respect and Mediation Practices

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Respect is a cornerstone of community and relationship building. This policy emphasizes the importance of honoring First Nations protocols, promoting Indigenous languages, and fostering understanding through traditional practices like sharing circles and smudging. By integrating cultural awareness and restorative approaches, we aim to create a respectful, collaborative, and healing environment for all.

Guidelines & Procedures

Respect

Respect is a core virtue that includes caring about people and treating them with dignity.

Review of Protocols

Protocols of the First Nation should be respected, including seating arrangements, order of speaking, and the wisdom of elders.

Indigenous Languages

The use of Indigenous languages should be promoted throughout the process.

Relationship Building

An extended period of time may be devoted to sitting together, talking, and laughing about everything but the issue at hand. This is known as "Indian time" and is cyclical, understanding life to be always in motion.

Diverse Team of Practitioners

A team approach can include multiple lenses, experiences, and expertise to support both the parties and the resolution process.

Mediation Practices

Mediation is a voluntary, non-coercive, and confidential process where an impartial third party helps the parties reach a fair and mutually acceptable settlement.

First Nations use a variety of traditional and modern methods to resolve disputes, including:

- **Circles:** A traditional gathering space where participants can share, heal, and make decisions. Circles are facilitated by a respected trained community member, such as an elder or mediator. Participants take turns speaking by holding a talking stick and/or Eagle feather, which discourages interrupting and helps to create a balance of power.

The goal of these methods is to restore peace among the affected parties. They emphasize collaborative deliberation and building respectful relations.

Role of the Mediator

The mediator's job is to help the disputants resolve the problem through a process that encourages each side to:

- Air disputes
- Identify what has caused the need for mediation.
- Explain the rules and expectations of conduct during the mediation.
- Ensure the mediation circle is conducted in an orderly manner (no swearing, shouting, or pointing fingers)
- Agree on a satisfactory solution for both parties.

Steps for Mediation:

1. Begin mediation by listening to each person's story separately.
2. Explain the rules and expectations of the mediation: no shouting, pointing fingers, or swearing, with the goal of finding a solution and moving forward.
3. Bring the parties together to meet face-to-face. Review the rules and expectations again and summarize what was learned from each story.
4. Allow equal opportunity for each party to speak and explain their perspectives.
5. Brainstorm mutually beneficial solutions, and once agreed upon, summarize the agreement.
6. Optionally, use a smudge to conclude the process.
7. Seal the agreement with a handshake.

Awareness Training on Ithiniwin

It is imperative that non-First Nation individuals are provided with awareness training on Ithiniwin. Approximately one day of training should be sufficient to create awareness of NCN Ithiniwin. Either prior to or upon arrival to the NCN community, individuals should be informed of Cree ways, which include ceremonial practices, traditional harvesting, beadwork, language, smudging, and sharing circles.

This training fosters understanding and reconciliation, helping visitors to appreciate the spirit of the community while sharing their own knowledge.

Conducting Circles

1. All participants in a circle should not be under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or cannabis. This is especially important for students, particularly those who are underage.
2. Circles should be conducted by individuals who have earned the teachings of circles through ceremony and are connected to Ithinisiwin.
3. Elders should be involved in the circles to provide wisdom and guidance.
4. Community resources may be involved with unanimous consent, ensuring that participants feel comfortable and not intimidated.
5. Elders or facilitators must be provided with all relevant details about incidents or conflicts, including reports, texts, and videos. Nothing should be withheld.
6. All participants must agree to confidentiality, ensuring no information is taken out of the circle.
7. No food, cell phones, radios, or other devices should be present during the circle to prevent interruptions or distractions.
8. Medicines such as sage, cedar, sweetgrass, and tobacco will be lit in the circle for smudging. Participation in smudging is voluntary, and prior teaching on smudging should be provided.

Resolution at Administrative Level

Conflicts or incidents should first be addressed at the personnel or administrative level. It is crucial to respect communication protocols and allow administrative teams to resolve issues respectfully before escalating further.