

Facilitation Guide



A COMMUNITY-INFORMED APPROACH TO
CANNABIS PUBLIC EDUCATION
AND AWARENESS

UNE APPROCHE COMMUNAUTAIRE DE
L'ÉDUCATION ET DE LA SENSIBILISATION
DU PUBLIC AU CANNABIS

Native Women's
Association of Canada



L'Association des femmes
autochtones du Canada

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Purpose

This presentation is designed to **build capacity among health and social service providers to offer culturally safe care for Indigenous women (in all their diversity) who use cannabis.**

By the end, participants should understand key harm reduction strategies, anti-stigma approaches, and Indigenous perspectives on cannabis use.

Audience

There are three distinct presentations, each tailored to different health and social service provider audiences. They are labelled as follows:

- **Primary Care Providers:** This group consists of: *Physicians; both specialists and sub-specialists, and Nurses; NP, RN, LPN, RPN*
- **Allied Health Professionals:** This includes (but is not limited to): *audiologists, dietitians, medical laboratory technologists, medical radiation technologists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, respiratory therapists, and speech-language pathologists.*
- **Social Care Providers:** This includes (but is not limited to): *social workers, addiction support workers, community support workers, Indigenous support workers, and crisis intervention workers.*



Setting

This presentation can be delivered either **virtually or in-person**, depending on the needs of the audience and facilitator.

- **In Person** : Allows for more organic discussion and engagement. The facilitator should ensure an accessible and comfortable space with seating arranged to encourage participation.
- **Virtual** : Suitable for reaching a wider audience. Facilitators should test technology in advance, encourage participants to use cameras if comfortable, and utilize chat features to maintain engagement.

There is **no limit on group size** but facilitators should be aware that :

- In smaller group settings, participants may feel more comfortable asking questions and sharing experiences.
- While in larger groups, there may be less engagement. The facilitator will need to incorporate intentional and structured opportunities for this, if that is their intention.

Timing

The core presentation is designed to run 1 hour, but facilitators should plan for 1.5 hours to allow for :

- Set-up and an opening
- The presentation itself
- Additional engagement activities (if included)
- Discussions, questions, and closing reflections

Facilitators can adjust the flow based on their audience, setting, group familiarity with one another, and knowledge of the topic.



How to Use This Guide

This facilitation guide is designed to help anyone deliver this presentation with confidence. Each slide is accompanied by a script which can be followed as written or adapted to fit the facilitator's style and audience.

This presentation was originally developed for a **virtual, large-group webinar** setting intended to be primarily informative rather than interactive. As such, it includes many prompts for personal reflection but does not incorporate small group discussions or breakout rooms.

However, if facilitators wish to enhance engagement, they are encouraged to:

- **Add breakout rooms (virtual) or small group discussions (in-person)** to facilitate peer dialogue.
- **Invite participants to share their reflections** verbally or in the chat (if comfortable).
- **Modify reflection prompts** to work as group discussion topics rather than just individual exercises.



Ensuring Safety, Support, and Access to Resources

This presentation includes discussions of trauma, racism, discrimination, substance use, and harm reduction, which may be difficult or activating for some participants. Facilitators should create an environment that prioritizes safety, self-care, and access to support.

- **Encourage Self-Care:** Let participants know they are welcome to take a break at any time if they need space to process or step away from the discussion.
- **Offer a Break:** If possible, schedule a short break to allow participants to pause, reflect, or practice self-care.
- **Acknowledge Difficult Topics:** Before discussing sensitive content, let participants know that some topics may bring up strong emotions and that support is available.
- **Provide Support Resources:** Share crisis and support lines at the beginning and end of the session so participants know where they can access help, if needed. If possible, provide culturally relevant resources, such as Indigenous-specific crisis lines or community organizations.
- **Be Mindful of Participants' Needs:** Some participants may prefer to listen rather than engage in discussion, while others may want space to share. Facilitators should be flexible and responsive to different levels of comfort and participation.

By recognizing the emotional impact of these discussions and offering appropriate support, facilitators help ensure a respectful and safe learning environment for all participants.



Incorporating Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Facilitators are encouraged to integrate Indigenous approaches to learning. Depending on the setting, this may include:

- **Land Acknowledgements:** Recognizing the lands on which the session is taking place and acknowledging the ongoing presence and contributions of Indigenous Peoples. This should be done meaningfully, with personal reflection where possible.
- **Involvement of Elders or Knowledge Keepers:** If available, inviting an Elder or Knowledge Keeper to open the session, share wisdom, or offer closing reflections can add depth and cultural grounding to the presentation.
- **Use of Ceremony:** If appropriate, facilitators may incorporate elements of ceremony, such as smudging, a moment of silence, or a prayer. Consulting an Elder or Knowledge Keeper can help determine what is culturally appropriate.
- **Grounding Exercises:** Simple practices such as deep breathing, a moment of reflection, or setting shared intentions can help create a safe and focused learning space.
- **Emphasizing Relational Learning:** Indigenous ways of knowing prioritize storytelling, lived experience, and reciprocal dialogue. Facilitators may choose to incorporate these aspects depending on the situation.

Facilitators should consider the needs and preferences of their audience and adapt these elements accordingly. The goal is to create a space that is welcoming, culturally safe, and reflective of Indigenous perspectives on health, healing, and knowledge-sharing.



Handling Questions & Difficult Topics

This presentation covers **Indigenous experiences with racism and discrimination in healthcare settings as well as discussions of trauma, substance use, and harm reduction.**

These topics can be deeply personal and may bring up strong emotions or difficult discussions. Facilitators should aim to create a space that is respectful, inclusive, and non-judgmental, recognizing that participants may have varying levels of knowledge and lived experience.

Tips for Handling Questions

- **Acknowledge each question:** It is important for participants to feel heard and valued. Even if you do not have an immediate answer, you could say something like, «Thank you for your thoughtful question».
- **If you are unsure of the answer,** acknowledge the question's importance and offer to investigate it afterwards and follow up with additional resources.
- **Use person-first, non-stigmatizing language:** For example, use terms like «people who use substances» instead of «addicts» or «drug users». Throughout the presentation, there are prompts to reflect on language, such as using «sharing power» instead of «empowerment» or «activate» instead of «trigger». Small shifts in language can help create more inclusive and respectful discussions.
- **Addressing harmful language or stigmatizing comments:** If a participant uses language that is harmful or stigmatizing, remain calm and redirect the conversation using an educational approach.
 - You can say something like: « *I want to take a moment to acknowledge the words we use and how they shape our understanding of this topic. Instead of [restate harmful term], we encourage using [preferred term], as it is more reflective of dignity and respect*»
 - If the comment is particularly harmful or discriminatory, you may also remind participants of the importance of maintaining a respectful and safe space for discussion.



Addressing Difficult or Sensitive Topics

- **Be mindful of how discussions may impact people.** Some participants may have personal or intergenerational experiences with trauma, discrimination, or substance use.
- Some participants may be unfamiliar with harm reduction or Indigenous perspectives (such as lived experiences of racism, stigma, or discrimination) as it pertains to cannabis use. It is helpful to **acknowledge that discomfort can be a natural part of unlearning biases and developing cultural humility.**
- If a discussion becomes too difficult to navigate, facilitators can **pause, acknowledge the sensitivity of the topic, and offer to continue privately** or share additional resources.



Materials & Technology Requirements

To ensure a smooth presentation, facilitators should check the following in advance:

Required Materials :

- **Presentation slides:** Digital copy for virtual sessions or printed slides for in-person facilitation.
- **Facilitation guide:** Digital copy or printed, for reference.
- **Handouts or supplementary resources:** Optional, depending on facilitator preference.
- **Elder gifts (if applicable):** If an Elder or Knowledge Keeper is invited to open or participate in the session, offering a gift such as tobacco, cloth, or another meaningful item is appropriate.
- **Smudge materials (if applicable):** If smudging is part of the session, ensure you have a shell or fireproof vessel, sage (or other medicines), matches or a lighter, and a feather (if relevant).

Technology Needs

- For **virtual sessions** :
 - ↳ Reliable internet connection
 - ↳ Screen-sharing capability
 - ↳ Functioning microphone and camera
 - ↳ Virtual platform features (ex. chat, breakout rooms)
- For **in-person sessions** :
 - ↳ Projector and screen
 - ↳ Laptop with presentation loaded
 - ↳ Microphone (for larger rooms)



Backup Plan

- **Have a printed or offline copy of the slides:** This ensures the presentation can continue smoothly in case of technical difficulties.
- **Be prepared to adjust engagement strategies:** For example, if chat features are unavailable, shift to verbal discussion.
- **Adapt to participant dynamics:** Some groups may have highly engaged, talkative participants, while others may be quieter or prefer to stay off-camera. Facilitators should be flexible in their approach, allowing space for discussion when engagement is high but also gently redirecting (if needed) to stay on track. For quieter groups, consider inviting responses in different ways, such as using the chat or prompting self-reflection before opening the floor.

Concluding Remarks

Thank you for using this facilitation guide. Your role as a facilitator is integral in creating a respectful and inclusive environment for participants to learn and engage with the material. The goal of this presentation is not only to inform but also to foster understanding, empathy, and action in addressing the unique needs of Indigenous women (in all their diversity) who use cannabis.

Your facilitation can make a lasting impact. Please don't hesitate to adapt the content to better suit your audience. Remember to always be open to learning alongside them.

Thank you for your commitment to creating positive change and supporting culturally safe, compassionate care.





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