

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of purple flowers, possibly lupines, with a soft, out-of-focus effect. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some showing distinct petals and stamens. The overall color palette is a range of purples, from deep, dark tones to lighter, more vibrant hues.

Our Bodies, Our Knowledge: Indigenous Midwives and Abortion Access

Miranda Kelly, Stó:lō and mixed settler ancestry birthworker

Samantha Leclerc, Inuk registered midwife

Cherylee Bourgeois, Michif exemption midwife

Nathalie Pambrun, Michif registered midwife



Image credit: The Fireweed Project

Availability ≠ Accessibility



- Abortion is safe, legal, and publicly funded in Canada
- *1 in 3* people able to get pregnant will have an abortion in their lifetime
- Availability ≠ accessibility → barriers remain
- First Nations, Inuit and Métis people face unique and disproportionate barriers in accessing abortion care
 - **Fireweed Project:** Indigenous peoples' experiences accessing abortion care in Canada
 - **STORY Project:** Indigenous peoples' experiences accessing abortion and contraception care in BC

Colonial Context

- Ongoing colonialism shapes sexual & reproductive health (SRH)
- History of forced/coercive abortion, sterilization, contraception
- Undermining Indigenous reproductive sovereignty
- Christian/patriarchal medical systems stigmatized FNIM medicines
- Result: internalized stigma, shame, barriers to SRH care



Image credit: The Fireweed Project

A background image featuring a bee on a cluster of pink flowers, with a soft, warm-toned overlay.

Providing Holistic, Culturally-Safe Abortion Support

1. Location & Comfort

2. Holistic Post-Abortion Support

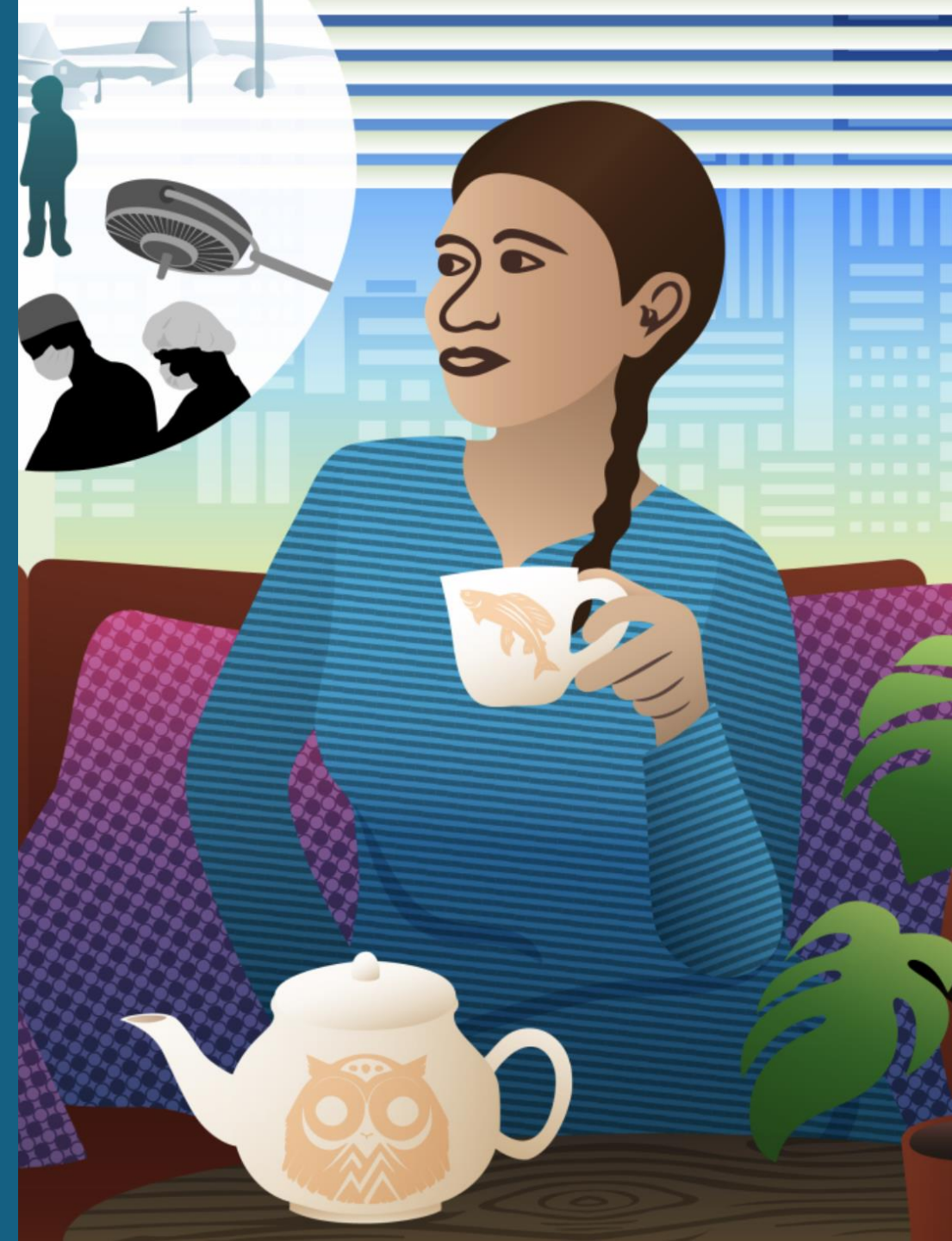
3. Accessibility, Availability, Awareness

4. Appointment Support

5. Culturally-specific Care

Location & Comfort

- Autonomy to choose where abortion happens
 - Hospital/clinic vs. community or at home
- Improve clinical environments:
 - Warmer lighting, colours, music
 - Privacy & dignity





Holistic Post-Abortion Support

- Mental, emotional, physical, spiritual aftercare
- Optional follow-up: phone calls, appointments, counselling
- FNIM providers & approaches for culturally relevant healing



Illustration by Freda Retana



Accessibility, Availability, Awareness

- Easier access to reliable, stigma-free information
- Resources in clinics, schools, public health settings
- Awareness campaigns to normalize abortion & reduce stigma
- Protect and inform the public against harmful “crisis pregnancy centres”

Appointment Support

- Allow support person (midwife, doula, family member, Elder)
- Help with:
 - Travel & logistics
 - Advocacy during appointment
- Reduce fear & isolation during procedure





Culturally-specific Care

- Incorporate cultural practices: cedar brushing, smudging, medicines, ceremony
- Option to speak with Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or faith leader
- Care must reflect diverse Indigenous knowledge & belief systems
- Aligns with TRC Call to Action #22 (integration of Aboriginal healing practices)



Learnings (Implications)



Key Takeaways

- Abortion is legal but not always accessible or safe for FNIM people
- Accompanying FNIM offers solutions grounded in lived experience — value the knowledge of birthworkers

Calls-to-Action

- Invest in Indigenous midwifery & full spectrum doula care
- Expand culturally safe models of care
- Build stigma-free, community-centred abortion services

Vision for Culturally-Safe Abortion Care

- Accessible where & when needed
- Safe, supportive before–during–after
- Respects diverse knowledge systems
- De-stigmatized within communities
- Created by and for Indigenous people



Resources for Indigenous Clients

Scan to
Download



Booklet from the Fireweed Project



This booklet offers information and resources to support those seeking an abortion: from important background info on abortion access to the emotional and spiritual recovery afterward.

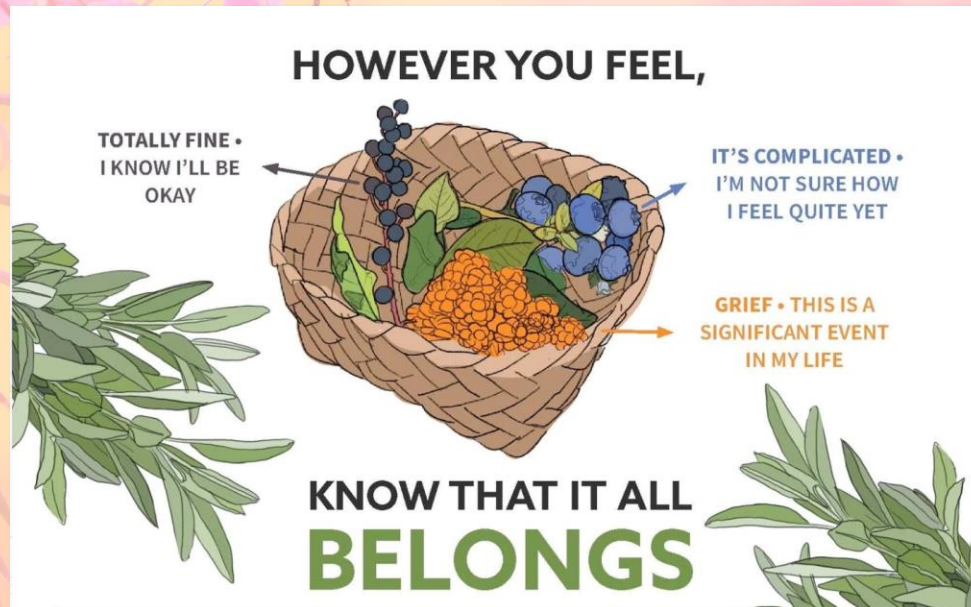


Resources for Care Providers

Scan to
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Various Patient Handouts
from the Fireweed Project



Guidebook from the
CART-Access Project



ENABLING INDIGENOUS PRACTICES IN PROCEDURAL ABORTION

A guidebook for
healthcare professionals

Financial contribution:



Health
Canada

Santé
Canada



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The background of the image is a close-up photograph of purple flowers, likely from a plant like Salix or a similar species, with many small, delicate blossoms. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, and the overall color palette is a range of purples, from deep magenta to lighter, almost white, tones. The lighting is soft, creating a gentle, ethereal atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image, in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

Maarsii

Nakurmik

Ts'ítoletset