Dr. Bernice Downey:

In this country, there's been a great emphasis on cultural competency, cultural safety, and so forth  
with Indigenous populations. We're now at a point where it's not just enough to know who you're working with, or even that they're a First Nations Inuit or Metis background. It's also important to more or less empower that person, facilitate, what I call, a therapeutic relational space with an individual, so that they can talk about their health needs from their own context.

Whether they're First Nations Inuit or Metis. If they've educated themselves, and they are able to integrate that concept into their practice, then it empowers the Indigenous person to take on more personal agency with respect to their health care.

Cancer Care Ontario's Aboriginal Navigators provide support and advocacy for First Nations, Inuit and Metis patients and families by facilitating and coordinating access to cancer services for palliative and supportive care, addressing cultural and spiritual needs, and networking with FNIM And Non-FNIM partners to make the cancer journey a culturally safe experience for FNIM patients and families.

Joanna Vautour:

Wherever the patient is going, I will go. I support patients through screening, diagnosis, treatment, palliative, end of life, and survivorship. My role is to support the patient, but I also see my role as supporting the health care team, to let them know what's happening in the home. And also to relay that information that, often patients, sometimes we feel like, is this the right question?

And I tell the patients, please feel free to be open. Ask me any question you want, and I'm always validating. No, those are important questions, and this is who we can talk to, and let's talk to your doctor or your nurse about it. It's the communication and taking the time. And I can understand that, and I've seen, the programs and the centers, and how busy they are, and so for me with my role,  
I see it as my responsibility to fill in that gap, and I think that's why the Aboriginal Patient Navigator roles were created.

Dr. Bernice Downey:  
  
In addition to supporting our clients and their families to understand the health messaging that they're receiving, we all do a bit of brokering, as Joanna was talking about, and clarifying things, and making it easier for them to understand. Addressing the language barrier. So that is all part of a more standard approach to health literacy. But in addition to that, in our roles, both as the Aboriginal Navigator, and as the Regional Aboriginal Cancer Lead, we also raise awareness and are still exploring how the notion of Indigenous knowledge, the teaching, the relational aspect to care, and a holistic perspective to health,  
how that needs to influence the work that we're doing too.

Joanna Vautour:

You know, I think that it's recognizing the Aboriginal Health Care professionals, that are in the hospitals, but also in the community. There are a lot of community organizations that are providing heath care.  
And health care is not just the physical health, it's the spiritual, the mental, and the emotional, and they play an important role in improving health outcomes.

Dr. Bernice Downey:  
  
I believe it's a critical piece of the puzzle in terms of patient education, health care provider education, and an opportunity to, what's most important, is improving the cancer care experience for First Nations Inuit and Metis.