

The background features a light teal gradient with several overlapping geometric shapes. A large, dark teal inverted triangle is positioned in the upper right. A thick, olive green inverted triangle is in the lower right. A horizontal olive green bar spans across the middle. The text 'Safe Language Guide' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font, positioned on the left side of the page.

Safe Language Guide

DELANEY *the engagement people*

Let's bring intention to our language.

Words matter. They can heal,
they can harm.

Together, let's identify “less
safe” words and the preferred
alternatives.

Please lean into your own
experience.

Source: Canadian Mental Health First Aid, Reference Guide

STIGMATIZING	RESPECTFUL
It drives me crazy .	It bothers/annoys/frustrates me.
This is nuts .	This is interesting/strange/peculiar/funny .
This individual suffers from depression.	They live with/are experiencing depression.
Mentally ill or insane person.	Person living with a mental health problem or illness .
Committed suicide, successful suicide.	Died by suicide
Failed or unsuccessful suicide attempt.	Attempted suicide
Substance abuse .	Substance use or substance use disorder .
Everyone who is a junkie ...	Everyone who uses substances ...
They used to be an addict .	They are in recovery .
Residential schools .	Residential institutions .
That's schizophrenic ...	That does not make sense .
Additions from Delaney and past participants	
Residential treatment	Bed-based treatment
Addict	Person who uses substances
Homeless	Person experiencing homelessness
Foreigner	New comer
Stakeholder	Interested and affected party
Vulnerable/marginalized	Seldom heard/equity seeking
On/Off Reserve	On/Off Nation
White Paper	Concept Plan/Research Document
Tree Hugger	Environmental Advocate
East Indian	South Asian
Anti Vaxxer	Vaccine hesitant
Disabled	Person with a disability, person who identifies as disabled
Circling the wagons	Confer with others

STIGMATIZING	RESPECTFUL
Autistic	Person with autism
Master Plan	Plan of Action
Hearing Impaired	Deaf or Hard of Hearing
Best practices	Innovative concepts / promising practices
Strawman	Draft Plan / High Level Plan
Retarded / mentally disabled / special needs	High needs
“That gave me PTSD...”	That triggered me...I felt a strong emotional reaction/connection...
Crazy	Interesting, intense
Slaving away	Working hard
Equity seeking	Equity Deserving
Traditional knowledge	Indigenous Knowledge

GENDER (MIS) IDENTIFICATION	
Female (in the context of humans)	Women
Gay (meaning something someone doesn't like. If someone identifies as gay, that is fine)	
Guys, girls, ladies	Folks, friends, colleagues, participants
<p>Being considerate to avoid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadnaming someone • Misgendering someone • Outing someone • Infantilizing women (ie girls) • Heteronormativity • Transphobia • Homophobia • Biphobia/bi erasure 	

Source: @decentering_whiteness

NATIVE APPROPRIATED/COLONIZER PHRASES	
Instead of...	Use...
Let's have a powwow about this.	Let's meet about this.
This is my spirit animal.	This is my daemon/familiar.
They went on the war path.	They're dedicated to this.
They went off reservation.	They're acting on their own.
Lowest man on the totem pole.	Lowest rung on the ladder.
This is my totem.	This is something I identify with.
Circle the wagons.	Let's get ahead of this.
Do a rain dance.	Hope for rain.
Too many chiefs, not enough Indians.	Too many bosses, not enough staff.
Find your tribe.	Find your people.
Indian giver.	Settler/colonizer giver.