

A misty autumn forest with tall trees and a path covered in fallen leaves and mossy rocks. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, creating a serene and atmospheric setting. The trees are mostly deciduous, with some evergreens visible in the distance. The ground is covered in a thick layer of fallen leaves, and several large rocks are scattered throughout, many of which are covered in vibrant green moss. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Honouring the Change

Indigenous Women, Perimenopause, and Menopause Across the Life Course

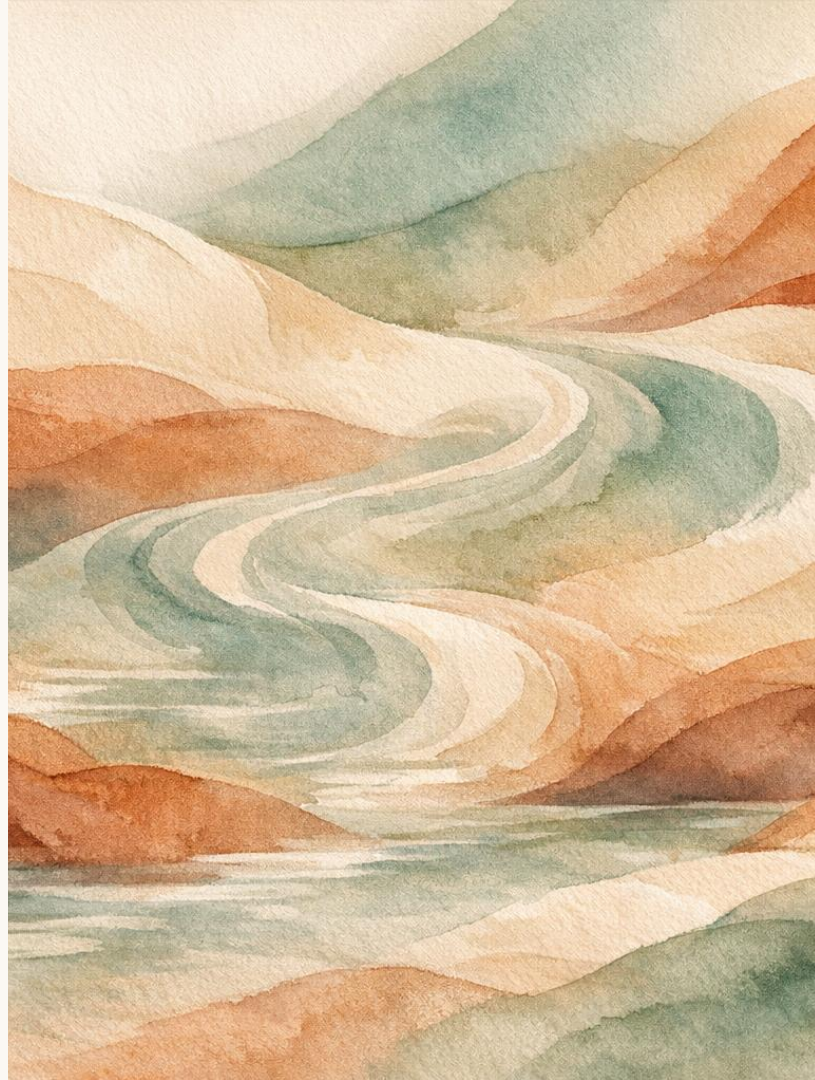
June 12, 2026 | 10:00 – 11:30 AM

Welcome

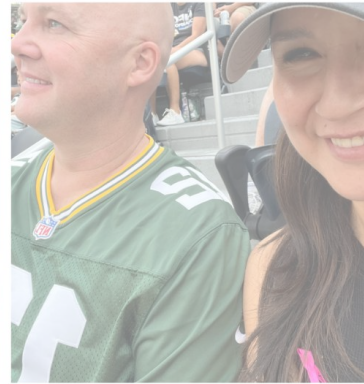
We begin by acknowledging the land, water, and ancestors who have cared for these territories since time immemorial.

This session is a space of warmth, respect, and shared learning. We honour the knowledge, strength, and experiences that Indigenous women carry through every stage of life.

You are welcome here, exactly as you are.



Introduction & Self-Location



What We Will Explore Together

Perimenopause and menopause remain under-discussed and often misunderstood, particularly in Indigenous communities where colonial disruption has shaped knowledge, care, and access to supports.

Body & Mind

Understanding the physiological and emotional changes of this life stage

Colonial Impact

How colonial systems created gaps in knowledge, care, and support

Cultural Knowledge

Indigenous perspectives on aging, womanhood, and wellness

Moving Forward

Community approaches to honour women through this transition

Understanding the Journey

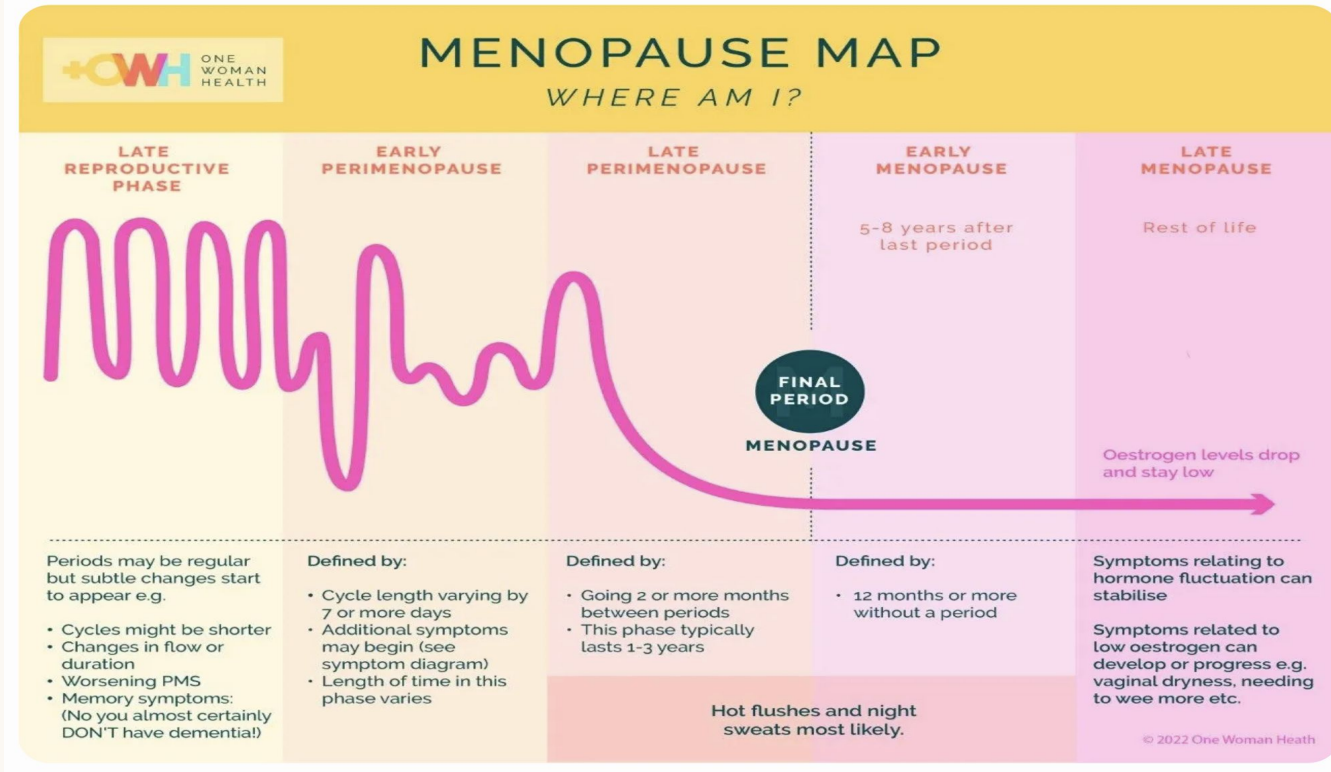
Perimenopause

- The transition phase, often beginning in the mid-40s
- Hormonal shifts bring changes to cycles, sleep, and mood
- Can last anywhere from 2 to 10 years
- Every woman's experience is unique

Menopause

- Defined as 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period
- Average age is 51, but varies widely across individuals
- Marks a new chapter — not an ending, but a shift
- Ongoing care and support matter deeply

The Menopause Journey



It might look like this...

SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE



Physical and Emotional Changes

These changes are natural. Understanding them helps us support one another.

Physical

- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Joint and muscle discomfort
- Changes in weight and energy

Emotional

- Mood shifts and irritability
- Increased anxiety or sadness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feelings of loss or grief

Relational

- Shifts in intimacy and desire
- Changing family roles
- Need for understanding from others
- Seeking community connection

What the Literature Says — and What We Already Know

The research base is small, but Indigenous women have always carried knowledge about body changes, moon time, aging, and wellness across the life course.

A gentle caution

“Limited research” does not mean limited knowledge. It means academic and health systems have not always listened, documented, or protected Indigenous women’s knowledge.

This conversation brings forward what women, aunties, grandmothers, Knowledge Keepers, and communities have long known.

1. Experiences vary

Symptoms, meanings, and supports differ across Nations, communities, and life histories.

2. More than symptoms

Menopause is physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, and cultural — not only hormonal.

3. Knowledge gaps

Many women report limited preparation, lack of shared language, and colonial shame around bodies.

4. Strength & wisdom

Sources frame this stage as freedom, teaching, Elderhood, sacred responsibility, and deepened role.

Colonialism, Weathering & Menopause

Not “stress” as an individual problem — but the embodied effects of systems over time.

Colonial disruption

land loss, residential schools, child welfare, racism, medical harm

Chronic load

hypervigilance, grief, caregiving pressure, barriers to safe care

Body response

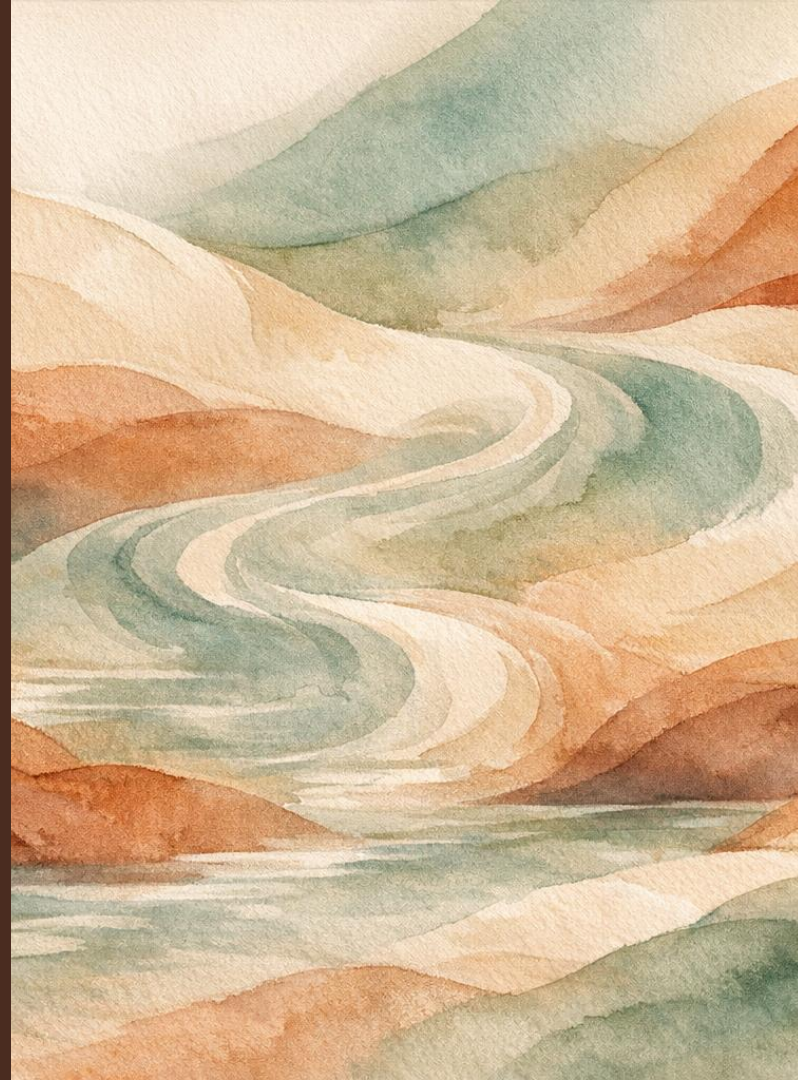
allostatic load: cortisol, inflammation, sleep and autonomic changes

Menopause may deepen

stronger symptoms, earlier onset risk, cardiometabolic vulnerability

What the literature supports:

- cumulative stress can “weather” body systems
- higher stress has been associated with earlier natural menopause in population research
- Indigenous-specific menopause evidence is limited — but social determinants and life-course studies point to better questions



Indigenous Perspectives on Aging and Womanhood

“In many Indigenous traditions, a woman who has completed her moon time is honoured as one who holds wisdom for the community.”

A Time of Wisdom

Many Nations view post-menopause as a time when women step into roles as knowledge keepers, advisors, and ceremony holders.

Wholeness, Not Loss

Indigenous wellness frameworks see this transition as part of the sacred life cycle — a deepening, not a diminishing.

Connection to Land

Healing and well-being are understood through relationship with the land, water, plants, and community — not in isolation.

Understanding and Exploring the Research

The strongest message is not that Indigenous women are silent — it is that health systems and research have not listened closely.

What we know

- Menopause can be natural, sacred, relational, and sometimes difficult.
- Symptoms can affect sleep, mood, intimacy, family life, and quality of life.
- Women want more information before and during this transition.

What we still need to know

- First Nations, Inuit, and Métis distinctions-based experiences.
- How colonial stress, weathering, and chronic disease shape symptom burden and timing.
- Safety, effectiveness, and acceptability of therapies, including HRT, in Indigenous contexts.

How we should know it

- Indigenous-led, community-governed, and OCAP®-aligned.
- Built with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, aunties, clinicians, and women with lived experience.
- Designed to return knowledge to communities, not only journals.

A research agenda rooted in Indigenous women's lives asks: What supports us to move through this change with dignity, safety, choice, and strength?

Community-Informed Approaches

How can we better honour and support Indigenous women through this transition?

Reclaiming Traditional Knowledge

Supporting Elders and knowledge keepers in sharing teachings about women's life stages, ceremony, and plant medicines within their communities.

Culturally Safe Health Services

Training health providers in cultural safety, integrating traditional healing alongside clinical care, and centering Indigenous voices in service design.

Peer Support and Sharing Circles

Creating safe spaces where women can share experiences, learn from one another, and build connections during this life stage.

Intergenerational Connection

Bridging the gap between generations by encouraging grandmothers, mothers, and daughters to share knowledge and experiences together.



Integrating Knowledge into Practice

Opportunities for action within First Nations contexts:

- Programs** Develop menopause-specific wellness programs that braid Indigenous ways of knowing with clinical options, including HRT when appropriate.
- Services** Advocate for culturally grounded midlife health services in community health centres, nursing stations, and virtual care pathways.
- Policy** Recognize menopause as part of Indigenous women's health, chronic disease prevention, mental wellness, and healthy aging strategies.
- Education** Normalize life-course conversations about moon time, perimenopause, menopause, sexuality, mood, sleep, and heart health.
- Research** Support Indigenous-led studies on biophysiology, lived experience, and menopause therapies — with knowledge returned to women and communities.



Thank you

Thank you for sharing this space and honouring
this important conversation together.

*Every woman deserves to be seen, supported,
and honoured through every stage of life.*

June 12, 2026

Dialogue Prompts

- **What messages did you receive about menopause growing up?**
- **Were these conversations openly discussed in your family or community?**
- **What supports would have been helpful for you during this transition?**
- **What teachings about aging and womanhood have been meaningful in your life?**
- **What would culturally safe menopause care look like in your community?**

June 12, 2026

Selected Literature and Resources

For participants who want to explore the evidence base further.

Chadha, N., et al. (2016). Experience of menopause in aboriginal women: A systematic review. *Climacteric*.

Choi, B. O., et al. (2015). Stress level and age at natural menopause. *Korean Journal of Family Medicine*.

Ciccio, D., et al. (2023). Indigenous Peoples' menstrual and gynecological health. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (IJERPH)*.

Geronimus, A. T., et al. (2006). Weathering and age patterns of allostatic load. *American Journal of Public Health (AJPH)*.

Gore, M., & Morgan, J. (2025). Indigenous women's experiences, symptomology and understandings of menopause. *BMC Women's Health*.

Halseth, R., Loppie, C., & Robinson, N. (2018). Menopause and Indigenous women in Canada. *National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH)*.

Madden, S., et al. (2010). First Nations women's knowledge of menopause. *Canadian Family Physician*.

Pleta, B. A. (1997). The Health Experience of Menopause as Described by Native Women.

Sydora, B. C., et al. (2021). Menopause experience in First Nations women. *BMC Women's Health*.

Webster, R. (2002). Aboriginal women and menopause. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada (JOGC)*.

Note: Direct evidence connecting weathering to menopause among Indigenous women in Canada is still emerging. The weathering slide frames a plausible life-course pathway that should be studied with Indigenous women and communities.