

# GANOHONYOKH (GIVING THANKS): INDIGENOUS PROSPERITY PROJECT

The Ganohonyokh (Giving Thanks): Indigenous Prosperity Research project inspired culturally-appropriate methods necessary for urban Indigenous prosperity growth and considers the role and impact of Friendship Centres in nurturing community prosperity. This 3 year research project, finalized in 2018, explored how 7 Indigenous Friendship Centre communities in Ontario understood the concept of prosperity. The partnering communities were: Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre (Windsor); Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (Fort Erie); Ininev Friendship Centre (Cochrane); N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre

(Sudbury); Ne-Chee Friendship Centre (Kenora); Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre (Toronto); and United Friendship Centre (Fort Frances).

**This tool embodies the key themes and guidelines gleaned from the Urban Indigenous Prosperity research findings that can inform collaborative projects. As a set of guidelines, these themes can also support Friendship Centre communities in the development of community-driven evaluation tools grounded in their own local contexts.**



## OFIFC

Ontario Federation of  
Indigenous Friendship Centres

## ONTARIO FEDERATION OF INDIGENOUS FRIENDSHIP CENTRES

Founded in 1971, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) works to support, advocate for, and build capacity of member Friendship Centres across Ontario. Friendship Centres are hubs in the community where Indigenous people living in towns, cities, and urban centres can access culturally-based and culturally-appropriate programs and services everyday. Friendship Centres receive their mandate from their communities and they are inclusive of all Indigenous people - First Nation, Status/Non-Status, Métis, Inuit, and those who self-identify as Indigenous. Friendship Centres are dynamic hubs of economic and social convergence that create space for Indigenous communities to thrive.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout the Ganohonyokh Research project, Friendship Centre communities expressed the importance of positive and authentic partnerships grounded in concepts of giving thanks, reciprocity, and everyday good living. This tool can be used by governments, organizations, groups, or individuals who are interested in partnering with urban Indigenous communities.

The questions in this tool should spark reflection on how and why you collaborate with urban Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities can also use this

tool to strengthen or assess the health of partnerships by asking partners to engage with these questions.

Indigenous research processes depend on the status of relationships. The success of collaborative Indigenous research projects that include Indigenous knowledge and/or culture-based perspectives especially depends on the quality of the relationship and the cultural awareness level of external parties. If relationships do not exist or are not actively being built, it is easy for the research process to take on a 'clinical' feel which results in communities and participants feeling isolated.

# URBAN INDIGENOUS PROSPERITY: KEY THEMES



## RESTORATION OF IDENTITY

Communities emphasized the importance of being able to express their cultural values and practice their traditions. Communities identified that connection to land, culture, and language were viewed as interconnected aspects of Indigenous identity and crucial for promoting prosperity. This also includes access to safe and culturally-grounded gathering spaces; promotion of wholistic wellbeing; access to traditional medicines and teachings; and the recognition of the impacts of intergenerational trauma.



## INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

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## SENSE OF BELONGING

Communities emphasized the importance of a sense of home and belonging for themselves, their families, communities, and Indigenous people broadly. This includes: access to safe and sustainable housing, positive support systems, opportunities to share knowledge and gifts, and feeling connected to a community. Community members described Friendship Centres and community kitchens as examples of safe, culturally grounded spaces with a positive sense of home.

Secure access to land is a key priority for supporting urban Indigenous prosperity. Communities shared the importance of having opportunities to participate in land-based activities, to practice, learn, share, and connect with their culture. Access to land promotes spiritual connection, individual and collective healing, and contributes to building healthy communities. There are also strong linkages between connection to land, a positive sense of home and belonging, and Indigenous self-determination.



## EVERYDAY GOOD LIVING

Everyday good living is a social norm and a cultural imperative that calls for mindfulness in everyday life and a deeply rooted respect for all the kinship relationships we have in life. All communities demonstrated an awareness of the notion of everyday good living as a foundation of urban Indigenous prosperity. Communities utilized concepts from their distinct cultures, such as *mino bimaadiziwin*, to articulate the importance of family and youth; positive support networks; safety; wisdom and knowledge; and access to nutritious food and land within their understandings of prosperity.

# PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TOOL



This research demonstrates an opportunity for urban Indigenous community to self-determine the requirements and boundaries for their engagement in research and evaluation projects, as well as external partnerships with other organizations, governments, and academic institutions.

This tool was created to support Friendship Centre communities in building authentic and strong working partnerships grounded in their distinct Indigenous values and priorities. Each theme from the research corresponds to a set of questions. Questions are intended for prospective partners to respond and engage in the context of their current work. Respondents can refer to the Themes Section here or the Ganohonyohk Report for more information on each Prosperity theme.

With each question, respondents should ask themselves the follow-up question: **What are the actions and/or next steps toward a better partnership in this area?** Consider this activity an opportunity for deeper learning if the answer to a question is “I don’t know” or you are unsure how to respond. Prospective partners can spend time reflecting on their positionality, referring to the report for ideas, and respectfully seeking direction from the urban Indigenous community with whom they work with. This tool should encourage prospective partners to examine their own processes to see if their structures and practices align with and support urban Indigenous understandings of prosperity.

## RESTORATION OF IDENTITY

- 1 How do you support urban Indigenous self-determination in all planning and design stages?
- 2 How are the proposed activities Trauma-Informed?
- 3 How are the tools and processes that support the project OR initiative developed?
- 4 How do the intended services impact Indigenous prosperity?

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## INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

- 1 How are the approaches to evaluation culturally grounded?
- 2 What is the urban Indigenous community role in the transfer of knowledge?
- 3 How is the project or initiative grounded in culture?
- 4 How are the concepts of Indigenous prosperity reflected in the project or initiative?

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## SENSE OF BELONGING

- 1 How is the local community infrastructure supported?
- 2 How is the diversity of local protocols reflected in the project or initiative?
- 3 How are the Friendship Centres in the area directly supported by the project or initiative?
- 4 How are safer spaces for people of all genders created and held?

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## EVERYDAY GOOD LIVING

- 1 How is the focus on Indigenous concepts of prosperity maintained through the project or initiative?
- 2 How is the intergenerational transfer of knowledge supported?
- 3 How is the explicit Indigenous control over data (including reporting) maintained through the project or initiative?
- 4 How is the project or initiative sustainable?

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The **USAI Research Framework** (2012, 2016) is a culture-based framework that is practical, community-determined, community-reflexive, and highly participatory.

The principles of Utility, Self-Voicing, Access, and Inter-Relationality act as guides and/or tools that are helpful in thinking through a research project to ensure that it is truly community-driven.

Using USAI as the methodology, this research project incorporated a flexible approach that allowed (and accounted for) contextual changes that occurred over time.

The forms of community engagement and relationship-building, research activities, community expectations, and timelines were all negotiated with each of the Friendship Centre communities over three years.