CRE

Centre for Indigenous Policy and Research

Engagement Framework

Table of Contents

Purpose

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call to Action 66, a key deliverable of our pilot program, CRE has begun to build *The Network*, which entails establishing "...a national network to share information and best practices." The Engagement Framework will be an important component of this initiative as it will outline our engagement protocols and principles with Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth in all relationships and partnerships. This piece has been co-developed with staff and youth through respectful engagement. The priority is to establish an active, ethical reconciliation process that includes guidance around data sovereignty, consent, and respectful and reciprocal relationship building between parties participating in engagement initiatives. Distinctions-based Indigenous worldviews will be cemented within the framework, in addition to ensuring the framework is flexible and fluid. Ultimately, CRE will be a conveyor in delivering meaningful engagement and consultation.

This document will serve as an external framework as well as an organizational wide policy, supported by a multitude of CRE policies and frameworks, that examine protocols as they relate to engagement involving Indigenous youth and government/non-government organizations and communities. The framework will ensure that partnerships are both culturally safe, reciprocal in nature, and reflective of CRE's mission and values. Our approach to engagement is to ensure and prioritize capacity building, thought leadership, self-determination and healing.

Guiding Principles

- ➢ **Reciprocity:** Ensuring relationships built are reciprocal in nature and have the best interest of Indigenous youth in mind. Respecting the value in their voice and perspectives.
- ➢ **Cultural Humility:** Ensuring that *Network* members and partners prioritize the safety of Indigenous youth. Ensuring work is distinctions-based and culturally relevant. Focused on embedding anti-oppressive and harm reduction practices in all of the work we do.
- ➢ **Data Governance:** Ensuring the sovereignty and privacy of data collected respects Indigenous rights to their own information.
- ➢ **Engagement Referrals:** Ensuring engagement opportunities offered to members of *The Network* exceed our minimum standards for meaningful and respectful engagement and are in line with our *Framework.*

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is integral to effective engagement initiatives. Though it will be touched on when discussing data sovereignty, it is also important on a much broader level in the context of engagement. Reciprocity is something that has, and continues to be embedded in most Indigenous cultures. It goes deeper than an exchange of favours and speaks to the importance of exchanging with others for mutual benefit and is often the basis for relationships within Indigenous communities and organizations.

As noted, reciprocity is deeper than an exchange of favours. This is even more true when non-Indigenous organizations or governments are requesting Indigenous people to participate in engagements and consultations. Far too often, these requests are simply a check box; something necessary for them to 'accomplish' in order to continue with the work they need, or want to do.

At CRE we prioritize reciprocity in all of the work that we do- and even more so as we develop *The Network* and aim to increase the standards for engagement with Indigenous youth. No longer will it be acceptable

for youth to simply be expected to provide their knowledge or insights without reciprocity or respect. The extra work required to facilitate respectful and meaningful engagements is worth it to begin to set firm expectations across the board that will support the safety of Indigenous youth. Some examples of what we consider to be important parts of reciprocity and will guide the work that we do include;

- ➢ **Pre-Engagement:** Reciprocity begins before contacting youth. It starts with research. Ensuring that everyone involved in the project has done their due diligence to understand the historical and contemporary contexts of the specific Indigenous communities they hope to engage with. This helps to set the tone from the beginning that the relationship will go both ways. Some examples of documents and resources that are important to read can be found in Appendix A.
- ➢ **Considering Time:** Where possible, it is also important that there is enough time and notice provided to those you are requesting to engage with, to properly prepare for and participate in engagement initiatives.
- ➢ **Acknowledging Capacity**: Not all Indigenous communities, youth, or organizations have the capacity, nor should be expected to have the capacity to drop everything to participate in engagement initiatives. When determining methods of engagement, consider offering multiple dates and formats for participation. Keeping accessibility in mind, it is important to create opportunities for youth of all professional and educational backgrounds and seek to ensure adequate opportunities for capacity building are available where possible.
- ➢ **Compensation:** We believe all youth deserve to be financially compensated for sharing their perspectives. Any engagements run by CRE will provide financial compensation to youth. When CRE is responsible for referring youth to other engagements; honorariums will also be provided by CRE. Where possible, we recommend that all engagement opportunities do the same. If this is not possible, consider other ways you can compensate youth for their time and energy.
- ➢ **Ongoing Communication:** Relationships do not end when engagement sessions do. Reciprocal engagements ensure that time is put into developing and maintaining the relationships. Ideally, meaningful engagement is early, often and ongoing.
- ➢ **Flexible and Fluid:** Where possible, engagement initiatives should be open to suggestions and changes to better respect all parties involved.
- ➢ **Accountability:** In a process that aims to enhance meaningful and respectful engagements, we commit to being held accountable to honouring our commitments . This process is ongoing and this is an evergreen document- always open to suggestions from the community and members of *The Network* to ensure that it best reflects our collective priorities. As we continue to learn together; we commit to being responsive to any input brought forward by the community.

Ensuring adequate steps are taken to create meaningful engagement opportunities for Indigenous youth is an important first step to ensure their priorities are advanced and perspectives are reflected in policies and decisions that matter most to them.

Cultural Safety

At the core of engagement initiatives is cultural safety. Ensuring all parties involved seek to create spaces that are respectful of individual and community traditions, protocols and contexts is vital to set up these processes for success, as well as to create long-term relationships. Cultural safety is a form of harm reduction and is the outcome of meaningful and respectful relationships and processes.

Distinctions-Based

A main component of cultural safety is ensuring that the work that we do and support is distinctions-based to avoid the harmful effects of pan-Indigeneity.

Distinctions-based approaches to engagement with Indigenous youth must consider that there is not a single pan-Indigenous identity or Indigenous culture shared among all Indigenous youth in Canada. Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes that "[A]boriginal peoples of Canada" include "Indian [First Nation], Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada." Non-status Indians are also recognized under Section 35 (2). It is encouraged that during the research and sharing of information process, careful consideration be drawn to the historical, cultural, linguistic and spiritual distinctiveness of all First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples and communities in Canada. CRE encourages participants to avoid generalizations or pan-Indigenous approaches to research and knowledge sharing processes. Such practices may inaccurately reflect the historical account of Indigenous communities and the contemporary socio-economic factors affecting Indigenous youth from the community being researched.

CRE strives to provide information and opportunities that are accessible, accurate and culturally relevant. Effective strategies may include:

➢ **Recognition:** Acknowledging and understanding that all Indigenous communities have a historical and cultural distinctiveness from other Indigenous communities in Canada.
➢ **Community-Engaged Partnerships:** Conducting community-engaged partnerships by which members of communities and those leading the engagement collaborate throughout the process towards shared outcomes. Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or community members with lived experience pertaining to the project should be included to ensure work is done in a respectful, and relevant manner.
➢ **Proactive Learning**: Networking with a large diversity of Indigenous communities, organizations and individuals on an ongoing basis and not just to prepare for engagements in order to self-educate and be prepared to better support the advancement of Indigenous rights and perspectives.
➢ **Don't Be The Expert:** Seek support from Indigenous person(s) with specific education, knowledge, and experience of the issue being explored. For example, all Indigenous peoples and communities have distinct histories, language, cultural practices, spirituality and relationships to land. Within the context of research pertaining to the early phase of engagement processes with First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities, the accuracy of information could be achieved by conducting interviews with individuals who have cultural, spiritual and traditional ecological knowledge of their community. Where possible, use sources from credible Indigenous authors and researchers.

The onus should not be on the Indigenous youth, community or organization to educate those requesting participation in engagement initiatives. It is important for those requesting to put in the work to understand the communities they hope to work with before the relationship is established.

Anti-Oppression

CRE's work as an organization is grounded in principles of truth, reconciliation, justice, and youth wellness, and empowerment. A key part of protecting and advancing this wellness and empowerment is

ensuring an ongoing commitment to anti-oppressive practices. Anti-oppression is a commitment to continuously seek to understand and address all the various intersecting levels of oppression in our societies. Ensuring that as an Indigenous organization, anti-oppressive practices at CRE are grounded in the diverse teachings and perspectives our communities bring to the table- and are always fluid and open to change.

CRE recognizes the extensive reach of oppression - that colonialism, white supremacy, racism, anti-blackness, xenophobia, cisheteropatriarchy, ableism, fatphobia, and classism build upon each other to manifest and maintain an oppressive social binary. CRE recognizes that this oppression manifests itself in many ways, including violent, oppressive, and exclusionary systems of justice, healthcare, education, employment, and social services.

CRE further recognizes the necessity of anti-oppression work and frameworks to create safer spaces of engagement and protect the youth participating in programming. Moreover, CRE recognizes that systemic oppression has infiltrated each system that we exist within on various levels, and that anti-oppressive practices require ongoing learning, unlearning, reflection, and growth. CRE recognizes, respects, and values the lived experience and contributions of various marginalized staff, youth, and partners and acknowledges their incredible resilience, resistance, and survival.

CRE therefore commits to anti-oppressive practices in all areas of our work, including in the context of this framework, partnership development and youth engagement;
➢ CRE commits to seek out partnership with groups engaged in anti-oppression work with, for, and led by youth for mutual support and benefit.
➢ CRE commits to ongoing growth and improvement to practicing anti-oppression and ensuring safer spaces for youth engagement and participation.
➢ CRE commits to using communications, programs, and events as opportunities to challenge bias, discrimination, and oppression whenever possible.
➢ CRE commits to being an active positive example for youth and community members and to continuously highlight good practices of anti-oppression, especially where that practice questions privileges or confronts systemic barriers.
➢ CRE commits to ensuring programs, including program materials, activities, and facilities, are fully accessible.
➢ CRE commits to value and respect youth participants' life experiences and to meet them where they are in their learning and acting on anti-oppression.

Harm Reduction

Many of the youth that we work with have a wide range of realities that need to be considered with an intersectional, strengths-based approach. Youth deserve respect and have the autonomy to make their own decisions; harm reduction is a principle that centers mitigating potential harm. As a result of historical and contemporary impacts of colonization and intergenerational trauma, it is important for us to do what we can to create spaces for Indigenous youth that are as safe as possible. Furthermore, it is important that we are creating spaces of understanding that are fluid and flexible so Indigenous youth navigate these environments more confidently and comfortably.

From a programming perspective, It is intended that the harm reduction component of this document seeks to create a culture of care, empathy, understanding, resilience and inclusion. This includes use of appropriate language and working with communities on their terms, and engaging with them how and when they are ready.

It also aims to acknowledge limitations and recognize what is within our scope of care, and the importance of being able to recognize when the needs of the participants go beyond the capacity of our programming.

Online Engagement

Since the majority of the work we do is online, and many engagement initiatives will also take place online, it is important to consider the differences between online and in person spaces. There are many challenges in relationship building and engagement initiatives over an online platform, however the central purpose to this work is to ensure that our community still receives the best care and consideration when these spaces need to be online. To do this, we need to ensure that respect, consideration, accessibility and, above all, the safety of the participants can be maintained at all times.

Not everyone will be comfortable engaging through an online platform, but there is a lot we can do to make these spaces as safe and accessible as possible. Centering relationships and culture through an online platform should always be a consideration. Where possible, time should be set aside to get to know the youth before and during engagements. Seeking out relationship building meetings before needing participation in engagements is also good practice. Learning about the diverse backgrounds youth come from and creating spaces that are representative of their lived experiences and identities is also crucial if we hope to set a precedent of respect and safety. CRE will also always ensure that Elder(s) are present to open, and support people or Elders are available where content is triggering. We recommend everyone that leads engagements does the same to support the well-being of participants.

From a more technical side; understanding how to navigate online spaces requires extra planning and consideration. For example, though in person engagements may be able to take all day, online spaces are not built for that. As a result, it is good practice to run engagements that do not exceed a few hours (including break times), and happen over multiple sessions instead of all at once. Interactivity online is also more challenging than in person. Ensuring there has been proper training for facilitators on how to use technology to its fullest potential to create as much interaction with participants is key.

Accessibility of online spaces is also important to address in advance of engagements. Ensuring that youth have access to the internet, understand the platform and tools that will be used, and know how to access technical support if needed before and during the session needs to be dealt with as early as possible. This will also require considerations for alternate forms of engagement when online spaces may not be an option for youth so as to ensure maximum participation and reflection of youth voices.

Data Governance

Data Sovereignty

Historically, Indigenous communities in Canada had minimal, if any. control over their personal information and how that information has been utilized. In 1996, the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples noted that "Aboriginal people have not been consulted about what information should be collected, who should gather that information, who should maintain it, and who should have access to it".[1]

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[1] Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP): Volume 3 – Gathering Strength. Ottawa; 1996. Available from: http://data2.archives.ca/e/e448/e011188230-03.pdf

In what we refer to as Canada, there is a strong movement to reclaim Indigenous identities through control of information and the sharing of knowledge through an Indigenous lens. Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) means managing information in a manner that is consistent with the laws, practices and customs of the Indigenous community or organization in which the information is collected and processed. In other words, data sovereignty is the right of each Indigenous nation, community or organization to govern the collection, ownership, and application of its data. Data sovereignty is important because when Indigenous people and communities become their own data stewards, they undertake leadership role in the direction of community interests and well-being.[2]

The importance is to ensure that Indigenous people are the primary beneficiaries of their data. A significant amount of work has been done to highlight the importance of this. For the purpose of this document we specifically refer to OCAP principles and the 4R's of Indigenous research to guide our work.

OCAP® was established in 1998 during a meeting of the National Steering Committee (NSC) of the First Nations and Inuit Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, a precursor of the First Nations Regional Health Survey (FNRHS, or RHS).[3] OCAP® stands for *ownership, control, access, and possession*.[4][5]

- ➢ **Ownership:** Ownership refers to the relationship of First Nations to their cultural knowledge, data, and information. For instance, when communities become their own data stewards, they can take on a leading role in the direction of their community well-being and in the very definition of that well-being
- ➢ **Control:** First Nations own, protect and control how their information is used. First Nations peoples, their communities and representative bodies are within their rights to seek control over all aspects of research and information management processes that impact them.
- ➢ **Access:** First Nations must have access to information and data about themselves and their communities, regardless of where the information is held.
- ➢ **Possession:** While ownership identifies the relationship between a people and their information in principle, possession or stewardship refers to the physical control of data. Possession is a mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected.

CRE encourages that all research, evaluations and engagements are to be conducted referencing the 4 R's of research: respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility:

- ➢ **Respect** is a need to recognize and respect First Nations cultural norms and values (Harris & Wasilewski, 2004; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001; Restoule, 2008; Styres & Zinga, 2013). Respect can be demonstrated towards communities by valuing their distinct culture and diverse knowledge and experiences.
- ➢ **Relevance** is learning what is important to different communities, which means going beyond books (Goody, 1982; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001). Learning that is relevant should be relationship centered and focused on meaningful communication and shared understanding.
- ➢ **Reciprocity** means that research must be mutually beneficial to researchers and participants instead of solely to the researcher (First Nations Centre, 2005; Wilson, 2008). Reciprocity can be accomplished through a two-way process of learning and sharing.

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[2] Steffler J. The Indigenous Data Landscape in Canada: An Overview. Aboriginal Policy Studies. 2016; 5(2), 149-164. p. 151.
[3] https://fnigc.ca/ocap#:~:text=OCAP%C2%AE%20was%20established%20in,(FNRHS%2C%20or%20RHS).
[4] Statistical Journal of the IAOS 35 (2019), First Nations data sovereignty in Canada at page 58.
https://content.iospress.com/download/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji180478?id=statistical-journal-of-the-iaos%2Fsji180478[3]
Steffler J. The Indigenous Data Landscape in Canada: An Overview. Aboriginal Policy Studies. 2016; 5(2), 149-164. p. 151.
[5] https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/nihbforum/info_and_privacy_doc-ocap.pdf

➢ **Responsibility** is achieved through active and rigorous engagement and participation. The researcher has the responsibility to recognize and uphold First Nations values, practices, and ways of knowing (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001).

In addition to the above, there is also a fifth 'R'; **Relationships**. Relationships are meant to be reciprocal on behalf of the researcher and collaborator. Work should foster growth of relationships to the community.[6]

Data Privacy & Consent

As CRE grows and collects more and more information, staff, participants and stakeholders become vulnerable to data misuse, phishing, ransomware, and hacking. Our Data Privacy Policy will amount to an efficient and secure data collection, storage and analysis process protecting the confidentiality of program participants, partners, staff and the Board of Directors.

By following the principles of *The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA) [7], CRE is committed to protect the personal information collected through program evaluation activities, as well as ensure partners and participants who provided personal information may request to retrieve, change or destroy their responses, when feasible. Furthermore, CRE is committed to only supporting engagement processes that share in these priorities.

PIPEDA is Canada's main privacy law for private sector organizations. All private-sector organizations operating in Canada must comply with PIPEDA, as well as nonprofit organizations engaged in commercial activity. CRE does not engage in commercial activity and as such does not have to comply with PIPEDA rules. Still, it is in CRE's best interest to follow the Act as a best practice guide to protect the vulnerability of its program participants. PIPEDA can be summarized by ten fair information principles[8], which CRE shall follow as best as it can:

➢ **Accountability**: The organization is responsible for the personal information that it collects and must appoint a "Privacy Officer" who will ensure the organization complies with PIPEDA.
➢ **Identifying Purposes**: The organization must identify the purpose for the information that it collects.
➢ **Consent**: The organization must obtain consent for the collection, use or sharing of personal information.
➢ **Limiting Collection**: The organization must only collect personal information for purposes identified by the organization.
➢ **Limiting Use, Disclosure, and Retention**: The organization must only use and share personal information for purposes identified by the organization. Personal information shall be retained only as long as necessary to fulfill the identified purposes.
➢ **Accuracy**: Personal information collected by the organization must be accurate, complete, and up-to-date.

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[6] Tessaro, Restoule, Gaviria, Flessa, Lindeman, and Scully-Stewart, Canadian Journal of Native Education, Volume 40, The Five R's for Indigenizing Online Learning: A Case Study of the First Nations Schools' Principals Course, At 139. Information located online at the following:
https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/91087/1/The%20Five%20R%27s%20for%20Indigenizing%20Online%20Learning%20-%20A%20Case%20study%20of%20the%20First%20Nations%20Schools%27%20Principals%20Course.pdf
[7]https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/privacy-laws-in-canada/the-personal-information-protection-and-electronic-documents-act-pipeda/
[8]https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/privacy-laws-in-canada/the-personal-information-protection-and-electronic-documents-act-pipeda/p_principle/

- ➢ **Safeguards**: The organization must implement security measures to protect personal information that it collects.
- ➢ **Openness**: The organization must make its personal information policies and practices readily available to individuals.
- ➢ **Individual Access**: Program participants have the right to access and change the personal information collected by the organization.
- ➢ **Challenging Compliance**: Program participants are allowed to challenge the organization's compliance with PIPEDA by making a complaint to the organization's Privacy Officer.

When it comes to engagement, all principles are important, however we will place significant emphasis on the principle of consent to ensure that Indigenous partners and participants are being respected and have ownership over decisions made and directions taken as they impact them. CRE is not interested in supporting engagement initiatives that do not respect the inherent rights of Indigenous people and communities.

Engagement Referrals

In order to ensure we do our best to support engagement processes that follow the principles and priorities of this framework- CRE will ensure that all engagement requests go through a vetting process. Each organization or government department/agency who would like to be connected with relevant members of *The Network* will need to submit a Request for Engagement form. The purpose of this form is to encourage relevant, respectful, and reciprocal engagement with Indigenous youth. In order for the request to be shared with *The Network*, applicants will need to complete the form which includes a variety of questions that seek to understand the full context of the request, the project, and the commitments that the applicant will make to ensure the process respects our priorities. Staff will review each applicant and only those that meet these requirements will be linked with interested members of *The Network*. Any that do not meet requirements will be provided with an opportunity to apply again once identified issues have been resolved.

Contact Information

As noted in this Framework, this process is ongoing and will be an evergreen document- open to suggestions from the community and members of *The Network* to ensure that it best reflects our collective priorities. As we continue to learn together; we commit to being responsive to any input brought forward by the community. Any updates to the Framework will be shared with *The Network* and posted on our website at canadianroots.ca/thenetwork.

If you have any questions or input on how we can improve this framework, please reach out to us via email at network@canadianroots.ca

Appendix A: Recommended Resources

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG, 2019):
- ➤ Interim Report: Our Women and Girls Are Sacred
- ➤ Reclaiming Power and Place: Volume 1A
- ➤ Reclaiming Power and Place: Volume 1B

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015):
- ➤ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action
- ➤ Honouring The Truth, Reconciling for the Future- Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
- ➤ What We Have Learned- Principles of Truth and Reconciliation
- ➤ The Survivors Speak- A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
- ➤ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1- Origins to 1939
- ➤ Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 2- 1939-2000
- ➤ Canada's Residential Schools: The Inuit and Northern Experience
- ➤ Canada's Residential Schools: The Metis Experience
- ➤ Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials
- ➤ Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy
- ➤ Canada's Residential Schools: Reconciliation

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007)
- ➤ UNDRIP
- ➤ UNDRIP for Indigenous Adolescents

Royal Commision on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996):
- ➤ Volume 1- Looking Forward, Looking Back
- ➤ Volume 2- Restructuring the Relationship
- ➤ Volume 3- Gathering Strength
- ➤ Volume 4- Perspective and Realities
- ➤ Volume 5- Renewal: A Twenty-Year Commitment

Additional Resources:
- ➤ Cultivating Canada- Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity
- ➤ Canadian Youth Reconciliation Barometer
- ➤ Successful Stakeholder Engagement: Focus on Mental Health and Substance Use Clients
- ➤ 12 Common Mistakes in First Nation Consultation