

Perkins&Will

Placekeeping Toolkit

Spring 2023 Innovation Incubator
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Toronto/Ottawa Studio

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01 Introduction



Innovation Incubator

The Toolkit is developed through the innovation incubator at Perkins&Will. Recognizing the significance of Indigenous knowledge, the Toolkit emphasizes respectful engagement with Indigenous communities. This resource is designed to aid designers and architects as they navigate the design process, providing a guide on how to effectively and considerately engage with local communities.

Incorporating their diverse perspectives informs capacity building, best practices, and collaborations between civic and Indigenous practitioners. This approach not only acknowledges the rights and sovereignty of Indigenous communities but also ensures that future development respects their cultural heritage, land, and way of life.

It is vital that this conversation remains ongoing, as there is much to learn and understand about the histories, traditions, and aspirations of Indigenous communities. Continuing the dialogue allows for a deeper appreciation of the complexities and challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in urban settings.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. We recognize and honor the diverse Indigenous Peoples who have been living on this land for thousands of years.

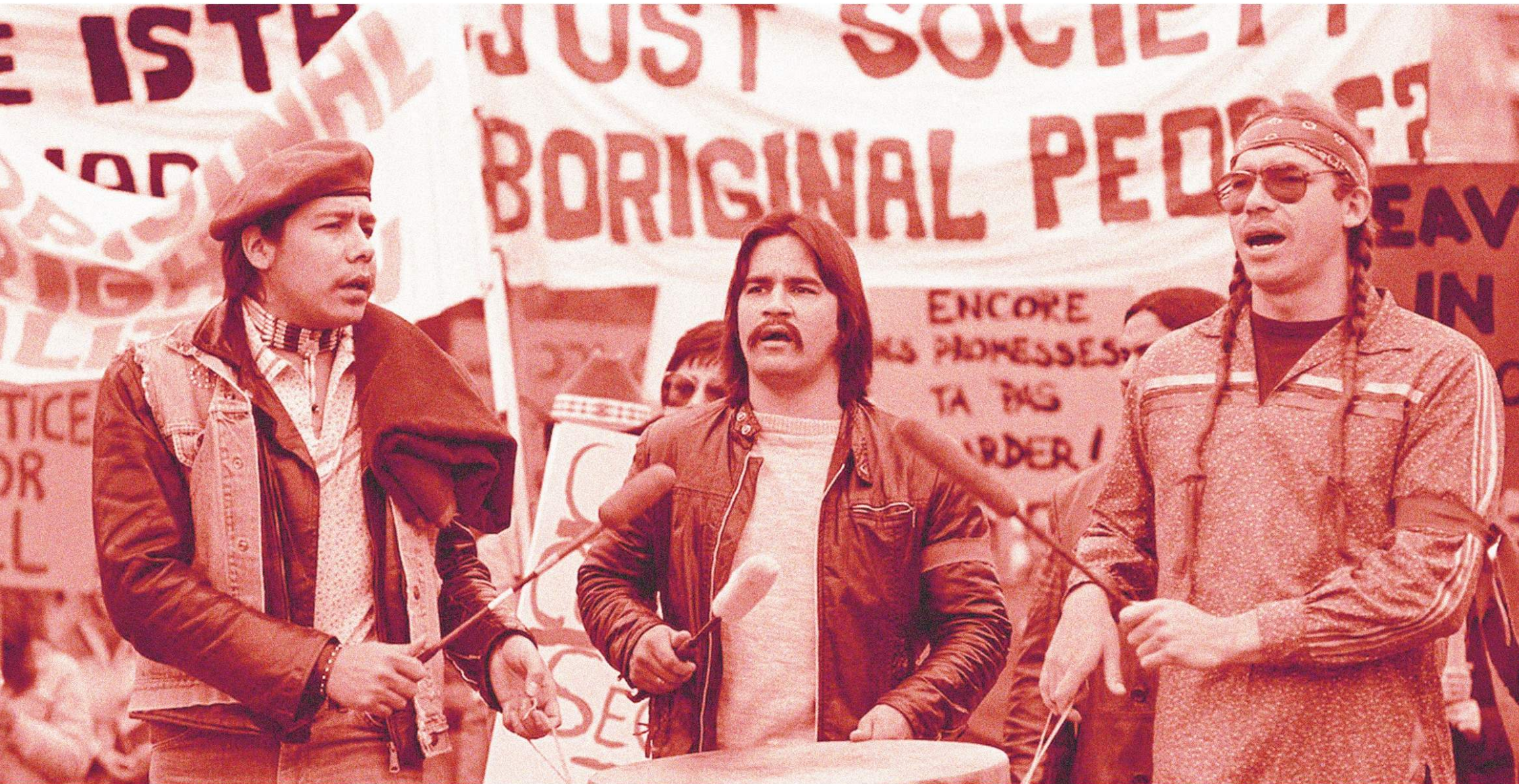
This includes the First Nations, such as the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Cree, and many others. It also includes the Métis Nation and the Inuit Peoples, each with their distinct traditions, languages, and rich cultural heritage.

We acknowledge the enduring connection of Indigenous Peoples to this land and their stewardship over it. We recognize the historic and ongoing injustices they have faced since colonization and the continued impacts of those injustices.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we commit to working toward healing, understanding, and mutual respect. We strive to learn from the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples and to support their self-determination and sovereignty.



Introduction



Background

In Canada, Indigenous people have historically been marginalized in the design and development of the built environment, as a result of colonialism, cultural suppression, and exclusion from decision-making processes.

“The last 200 years, as Indigenous communities, we’ve had little say in what our institutions have looked like.”

— Royal Architectural Institute of Canada’s Indigenous Task Force, formed in 2016, Porter

The publications “Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples: A Holistic Approach” and “United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” have started to carved the path to indigeneity inclusion. While there has been research around the issue of incorporating Indigenous knowledge into design, there are still few documents that provide guidance on best practices for collaboration. This is partly because the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into design is a multifaceted process that requires ongoing learning and engagement. It requires a deep understanding of local context of cultural practices and Indigenous values.



Indigenous Peoples
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/collection/aboriginal-peoples>



Indigenous people made huge contributions to this country. The biggest is in sharing the land and resources. People need to see that, understand that. Indigenous people should be viewed as the founding people on this land.

— Perry Bellegarde



Toronto Map - <https://www.geographynetwork.ca/website/obm/viewer.htm>

02 Learning

- *Timeline*
- *Indigenous Peoples*
- *Truth and Reconciliation*
- *Framework*

Weaving Viewpoints

The purpose of this Toolkit, is to start weaving together a range of viewpoints from various discussions on designing and preserving spaces in alignment with Indigenous values. This framework aspires to illustrate a comprehensive resource that promotes collaborative, ethical, and culturally sensitive design practices that honor Indigenous perspectives, history, and sustainability goals.

Nonetheless, the toolkit was developed by two non-Indigenous designers who sought guidance from Indigenous mentors and leaders, and actively engaged in ongoing dialogue and feedback sessions with Indigenous designers and community members. The approach aimed to ensure alignment with Indigenous values and perspectives, resulting in a resource that is inclusive, respectful, and beneficial to Indigenous design and community engagement.

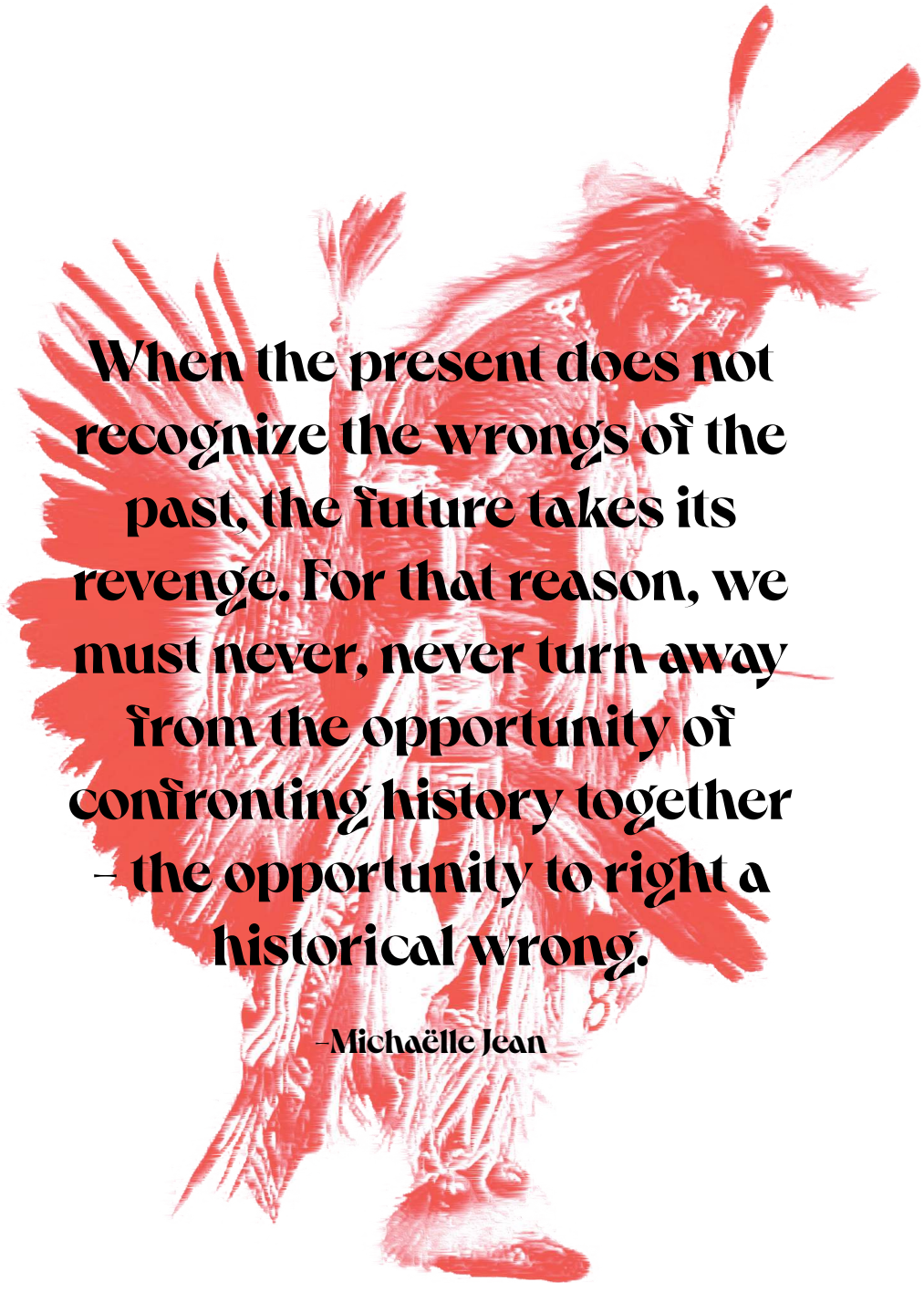
Timeline of Indigenous People in Canada

The history of Indigenous peoples in Canada is marked by rich diversity and spans thousands of years before European settlers arrived. Indigenous peoples played important roles in shaping the country, and their history involves the signing of treaties with the Canadian government, which continues to impact their lives today.

Despite historical challenges, Indigenous communities are actively working towards cultural revitalization, self-governance, and reconciliation with the Canadian government. This history is an ongoing and integral part of Canada's identity and development.

The timeline below highlights key points in the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, including their pre-European presence, the impact of European settlers, treaty-making, forced assimilation, Indigenous activism, legal battles, truth and reconciliation efforts, contemporary challenges, cultural revival, self-governance, and ongoing reconciliation.

In essence, this timeline underscores the significance of recognizing and addressing past injustices as a means to prevent future harm and conflict. It advocates for the honest confrontation of history and the collective effort toward reconciliation and justice, shaping a more inclusive and harmonious society for all Canadians.



When the present does not recognize the wrongs of the past, the future takes its revenge. For that reason, we must never, never turn away from the opportunity of confronting history together – the opportunity to right a historical wrong.

–Michaëlle Jean



Former Governor
General Michaëlle Jean
at the relaunch of Truth
and Reconciliation
Commission of Canada
Image: aaronrutten

Timeline



The Royal Proclamation 1763

King George III gives limited recognition of title to Indigenous communities and also provides guidelines for negotiation treaties



The Indian Act 1876

Consolidation of Indian policies



Inuit Relocation 1955

The federal government forcefully moves Inuit from Inukjuak in northern Quebec to Ellesmere and Cornwallis Island



1400 Doctrine of Discovery

Colonization of lands outside of Europe. Christopher Columbus arrives in the America



1867 British North America Act

Colonial responsibility for Indigenous peoples and lands is transferred to the new federal government



1885 Northwest Rebellion

Metis and their allies lead the five month Northwest Resistance against the federal government



1960 The Sixties Scoop

The first residential school began in 1830. In 1960, thousands of Indigenous children are taken from their families and placed in residential schools



Canadian Constitution Act. 1982

Aboriginals and treaty rights entrenched in the supreme law of Canada



1996 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

Report recommends a public inquiry into the effects of residential schools



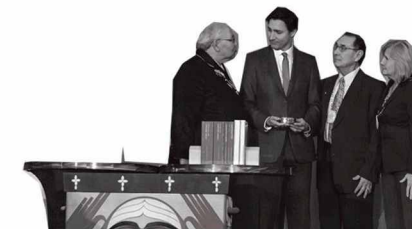
The United Nations 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

UNDRIP is adopted by the UN for individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples on principles for their survival, dignity, and well-being.



2008 Formal Apology

Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivers the formal apology to residential school survivors and their families



Truth and Reconciliation 2015 Commission of Canada & Call to Action 92

Report published. Focuses on building and meaningful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada through education.



2019 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry

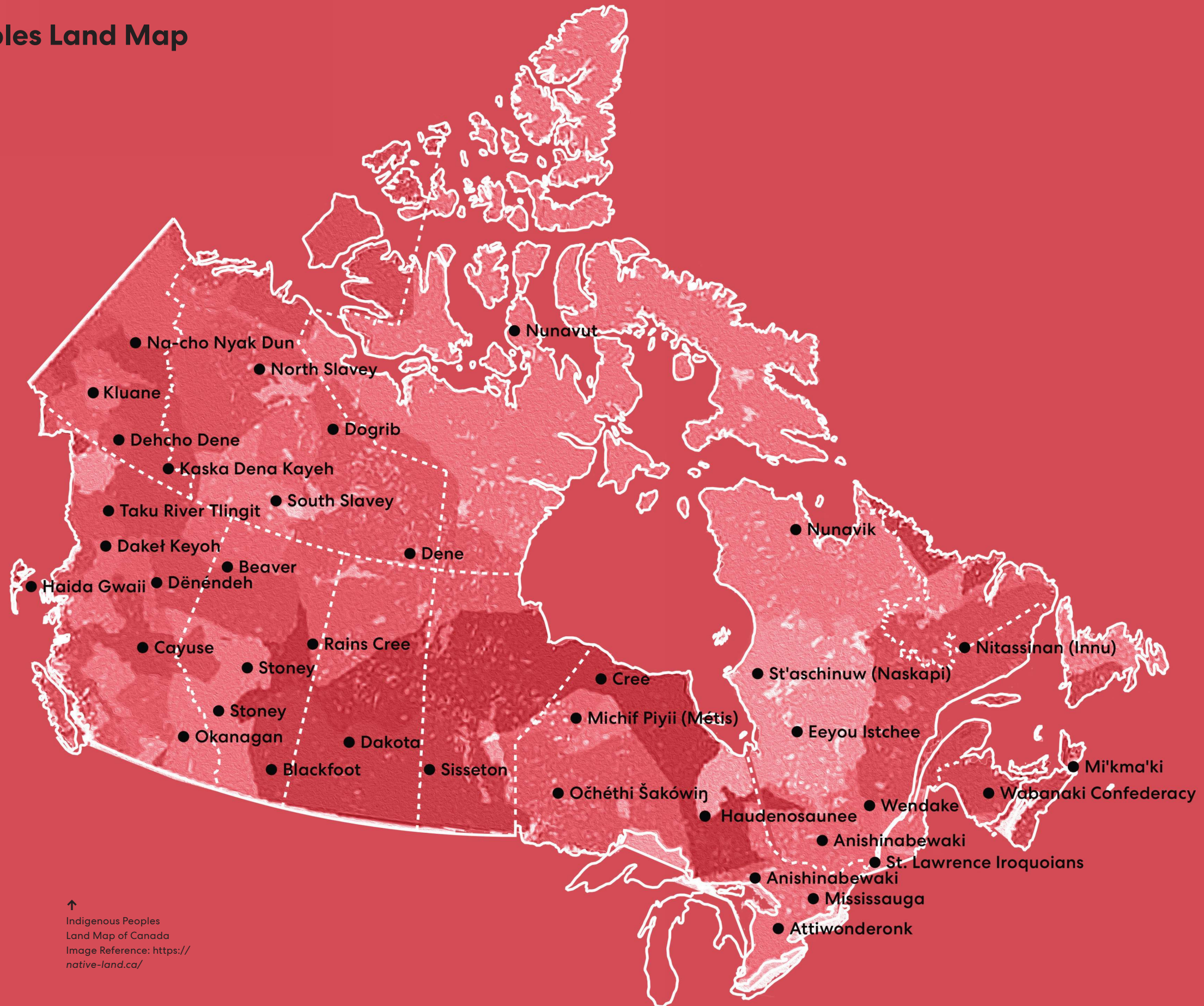
Report Published



Brief Indigenous timeline of Acts, policies, reports and events that have shaped Indigenous history in Canada.

Image reference:
<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/a-brief-timeline-of-the-history-of-Indigenous-relations-in-canada>

Indigenous Peoples Land Map



↑
Indigenous Peoples
Land Map of Canada
Image Reference: <https://native-land.ca/>

Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous People Land Map

Indigenous Peoples in Canada are the original inhabitants of the land now known as Canada. They consist of three main groups: **First Nations, Inuit, and Métis**, each with distinct cultures, languages, and traditions. Indigenous peoples have a rich history that predates the arrival of European settlers and have made significant contributions to the country's cultural and social fabric.

First Nations:

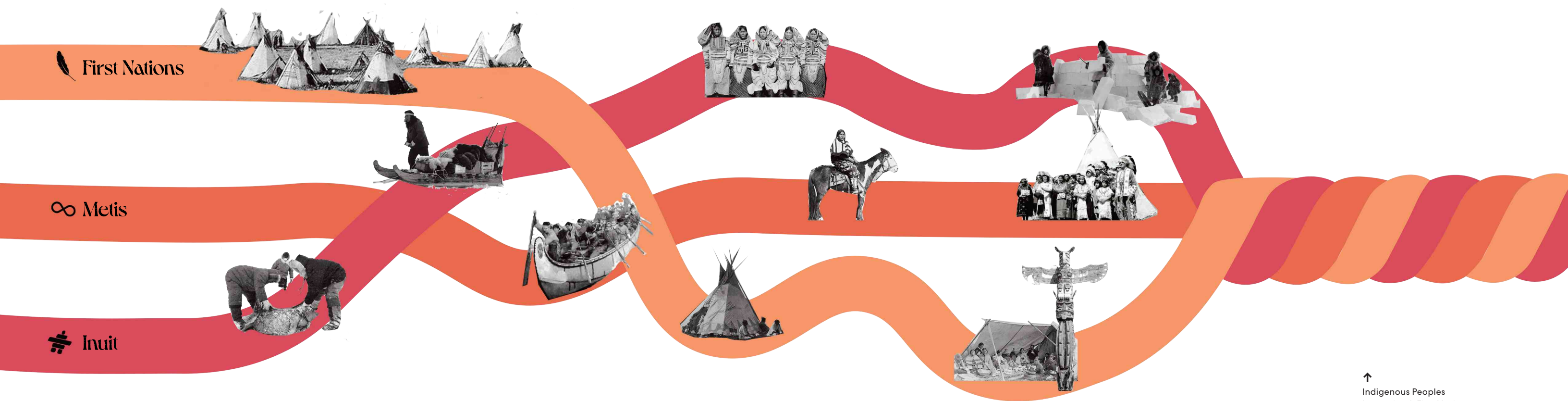
There are over 600 recognized First Nations, each with its own distinct languages and cultures. First Nations have treaty rights and land claims that are central to their struggle for self-determination and preserving their cultural heritage.

Métis:

Descendants of Indigenous and European (primarily French and Scottish) ancestry. The Métis played a significant role in Canada's history, particularly during the fur trade, hunting, trapping and navigating the vast Canadian wilderness.

Inuits:

Primarily inhabit the Arctic regions of Canada, including Nunavut, Nunavik (Quebec), Nunatsiavut (Labrador), and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories). They have a unique cultural identity, based on their intimate relationship with the land and sea. Inuit communities rely on hunting, fishing, and gathering for sustenance, and their art, language, and oral traditions are integral to their cultural preservation.



↑
Indigenous Peoples
Intertwined: First Nations,
Metis, Inuits.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings



The Seven Grandfather Teachings correspond to:

- **Wisdom** - Nibwaakaawin - (Beaver)
- **Truth** - Debwewin - (Turtle)
- **Humility** - Dibaadendiziwin - (Wolf)
- **Love** - Zaagidwin - (Eagle)
- **Bravery** - Aakwa'ode'ewin - (Bear)
- **Respect** - Mnaadendimowin - (Buffalo)
- **Honesty** - Gwekwaadziwin - (Raven or Sabe)

↑
Seven Grandfather
Teachings: *Wisdom, Truth,
Humility, Love, Bravery,
Respect, Honesty*

01 Wisdom – Nibwaakaawin:

The foundation of community lies in wisdom, exemplified by the Beaver's use of its teeth to construct dams. Wisdom benefits society, guiding crucial choices. Linked to intelligence, wisdom develops over time. Seeking Elder counsel is rooted in their perceived intellect, derived from knowledge and life experiences.

02 Truth – Debwewin:

Serving as a reminder of the Creator's teachings, the Turtle's shell carries 13 moons, representing Earth's orbits, and 28 markings, denoting lunar and feminine cycles. This shell serves as a tangible representation of events shaped by the Higher Power, serving as a reminder of the Creator's teachings.

03 Humility – Dibaadendiziwin:

Indigenous viewpoints emphasize the interconnectedness of all existence. Humility is about understanding one's place within Creation and valuing the equality of all life forms. The Wolf embodies this teaching, symbolized by its respectful gestures and communal sharing of food.

04 Love – Zaagidwin:

The Eagle was chosen by the Great Spirit due to its ability to attain great heights and provide insight to seekers. Displaying love necessitates self-love as a prerequisite to loving others. When given without conditions, love becomes mutual and reciprocated, creating a cycle of giving and receiving.

05 Bravery – Aakwa'ode'ewin:

The mother Bear's fierce protection of her cub showcases courage despite her gentle nature. This example emphasizes the bravery required to confront wrongdoings even when it leads to negative consequences, which contrasts with the tendency to overlook such issues.

06 Respect – Mnaadendimowin:

The Buffalo most important to the existence of Indigenous people as they provided shelter, clothin and utensils for daily living. In time, Indigenous communities, developed a sustainable relationship with Buffalo resulting in a relationship that was a true expression of respect.

07 Honesty – Gwekwaadziwin:

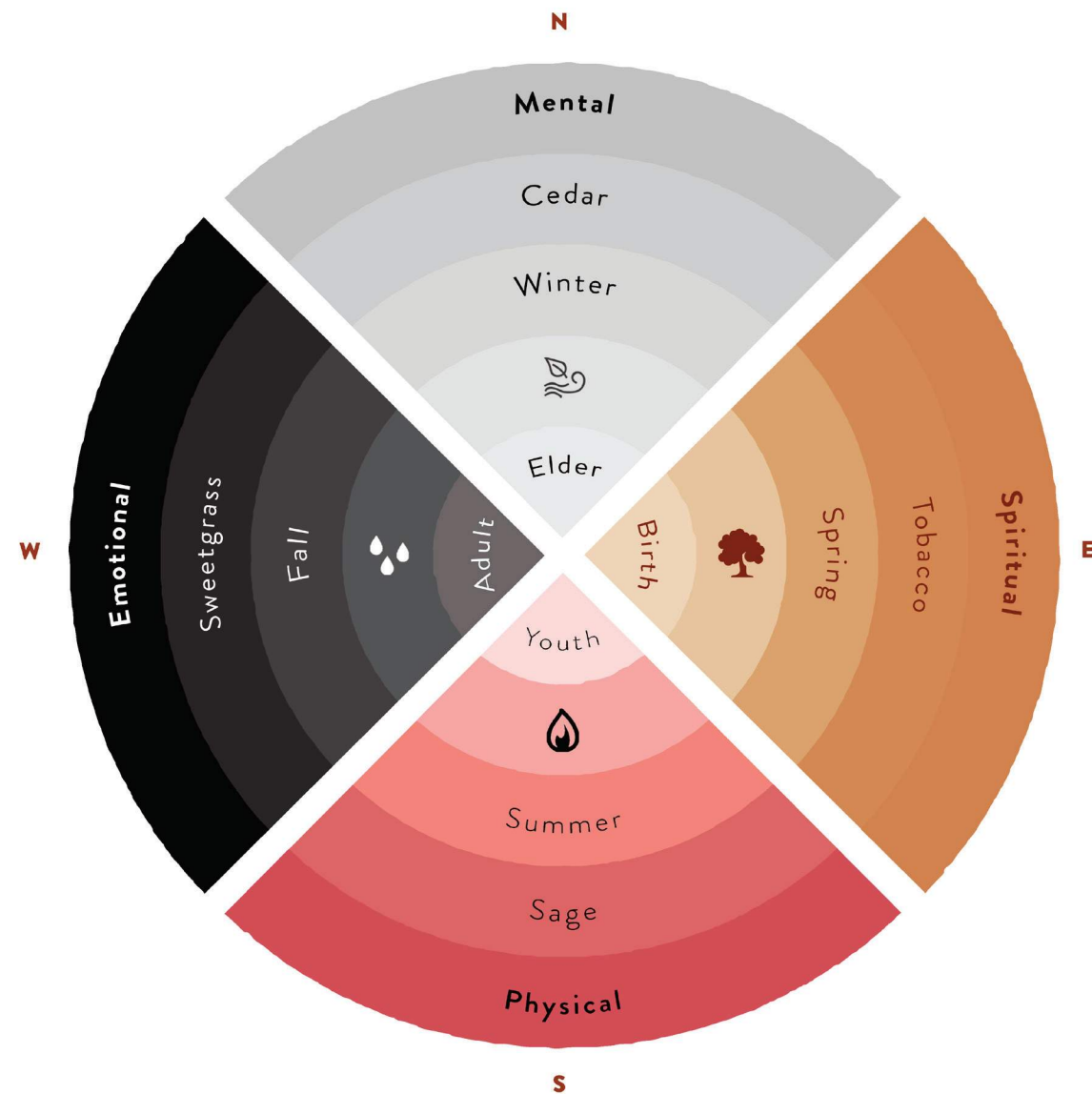
Courage is essential for being truthful in both speech and behavior. The foundation of honesty lies in being truthful to oneself primarily. When one practices self-honesty, it becomes simpler to extend that honesty to interactions with others.

What are the Seven Grandfather Teachings and why are they important?

Each teaching represents a **core value and virtue** that guides individuals in a balanced life. When integrated into the architectural field, these teachings can promote **sustainable, culturally sensitive, and holistic** approaches, leading to spaces that foster deep connections with the communities they serve.

Medicine Wheel

Teachings



The four areas of the wheel correspond to:

- the four **cardinal directions** - (North, east, south, and west)
- the four **states of being** - (Spiritual, Emotional, Physical, Mental)
- the four **sacred medicines** - (Tobacco, Cedar, Sage, Sweetgrass)
- the four **seasons** - (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter)
- the four **elements** - (Wind, Fire, Water, Air)
- the four **stages of life** - (Birth, Youth, Adult, Elder)

What is an Indigenous Medicine Wheel?

The Medicine Wheel serves as a fundamental framework for Indigenous learning process, illustrating interdependence of all aspects of life while also serving as a tangible record of significant Indigenous teachings.

The medicine wheel, a circular symbol divided into four quadrants, bears four colors—**yellow, red, black, and white**—each signifying various attributes. It's crucial to recognize that different Indigenous nations have distinct teachings for the medicine wheel, influenced by their stories, values, and beliefs. This diversity results in multiple variations of the medicine wheel.

Why are the Medicine Wheel Teachings so important?

Indigenous peoples emphasize the circular medicine wheel as a representation of the cyclical nature of existence. It serves as a constant reminder that life perpetually circulates, with spirits transitioning from Earth to the spirit world, akin to the cyclic patterns of seasons and life stages. The circle represents the **circle of life**, the **circle of self-awareness**, and the **circle of knowledge**.

Incorporating the Medicine Wheel Teachings into the architectural field not only shows respect for Indigenous cultures but also enriches the design process by infusing it with **holistic, sustainable, and culturally sensitive elements**. This can result in the development of spaces that deeply resonate with their users and foster well-being and harmony, encompassing both physical and spiritual dimensions.

↑
Medicine Wheel Teachings
Image reference: <https://tribaltradeco.com/blogs/medicine-wheel/medicine-wheel-teachings-native-medicine-wheel-system-explained>

Placekeeping

This toolkit is titled **Placekeeping** rather than **“placemaking”** to prioritize collaboration and responsibilities to a place now and into the future. Placekeeping refers to the active engagement of bringing together diverse people to shape and create a place. It involves fostering a sense of connection to local knowledge, stories, and traditions in aims to empower communities to have a voice in decisions that affect their built and natural environments. Collaboration can foster respect and appreciation for the diverse cultural perspectives that contribute to the identity of a place, and help to ensure that the built environment reflects and celebrates this diversity.

However, it is essential to recognize and respect Indigenous peoples sovereignty and autonomy to ensure mutual benefit as partners and colleagues, rather than mere subjects of research or design. Indigenous tokenism can be addressed by understanding the power of collaboration and striving for mutually rewarding relationships that go beyond mere symbolic gestures.

Indigenous tokenism involves hiring an Indigenous consultant solely to meet diversity requirements, neglecting their valuable insights and reducing their role to a diversity checkbox, rather than genuinely engaging with their expertise and perspectives.

How can Indigenous engagement avoid tokenism and foster collaboration?

→
Kangiqaualujjuaq -
Inukshuk, Community
Engagement Studio. 2020

Keys actions for transcending Indigenous tokenism

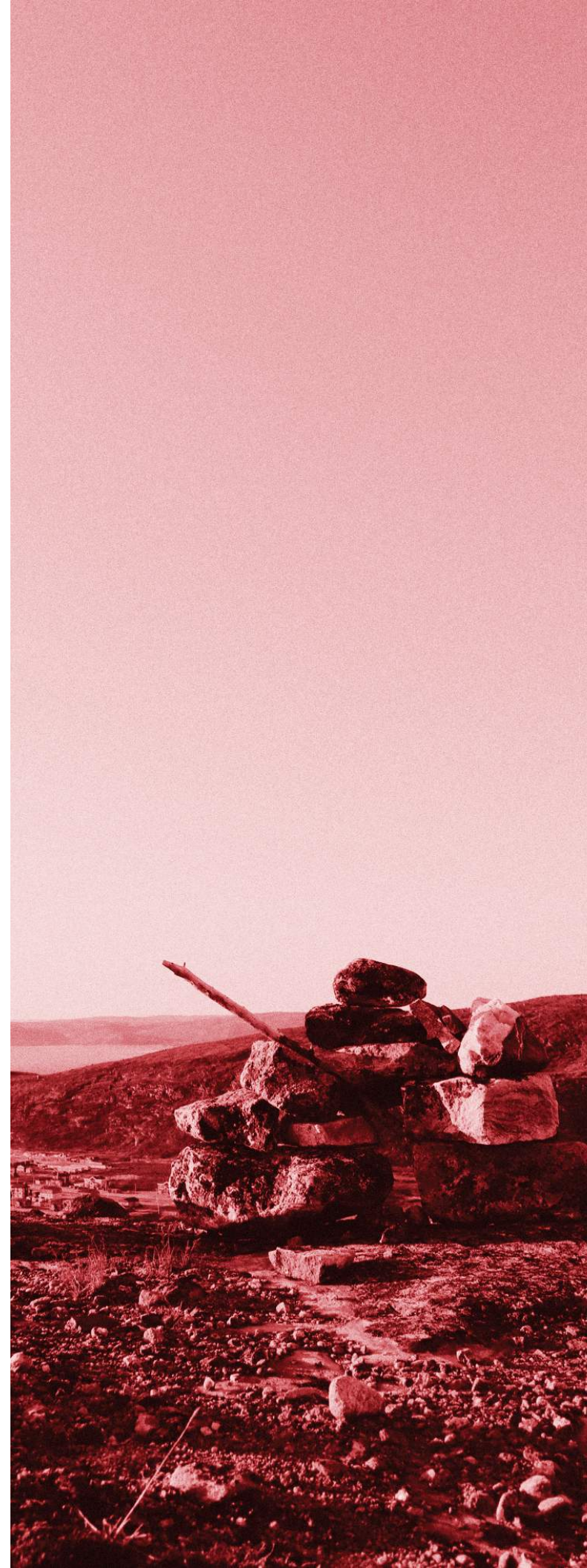
Place-Based Thinking

The bond between Indigenous groups and their lands is crucial, as the stories and history of these lands hold great potential for meaningful projects. Treating buildings as an active member of the community fosters understanding for all life by reminding ourselves that mindfulness begins well before a project's commencement and persist long after its completion and occupation.

Meaningful Engagement

Design firms can achieve balanced social, environmental and economic goal by transcending tokenism and actively pursuing engagement. This involves fostering genuine and meaningful partnerships that respect the cultural, environmental, and economic interests of all involved parties. Below are questions that can help assess delivering meaningful engagement:

1. Are workers knowledgeable about the historical treaties in the area they work and reside?
2. Do they have an understanding of the various First Nations and Indigenous groups in the region?
3. Are they aware of the significance of seasonal timelines, appropriate ceremonies, and culturally specific protocols for honoring the land and the communities whose traditional territories they are situated on?



Truth and Reconciliation

Truth and Reconciliation in Canada refers to a process aimed at addressing the historical injustices, intergenerational trauma, and cultural devastation inflicted upon Indigenous peoples due to the Canadian government's policies, particularly the Indian Residential School System. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to shed light on the experiences of Indigenous children who attended these residential schools and to facilitate a pathway towards healing, understanding, and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Background

The Indian Residential School System was a government-led initiative that operated from the 19th century until 1996. Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities and sent to these church-run residential schools. The primary goal of the schools was to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture, often through harsh and abusive methods. Children were forbidden from practicing their cultural traditions, speaking their languages, and connecting with their families. The consequences of this system were profound and continue to impact Indigenous communities to this day.



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The TRC was officially established in 2008 as a result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, a legal settlement between former students, churches, and the Canadian government. The commission was tasked with gathering testimonies from survivors of the residential school system, as well as documenting the history and legacy of these institutions. The goal was to bring to light the truth of what happened in these schools and to acknowledge the immense suffering endured by Indigenous children and their families.

←
Truth and Reconciliation
Commission:
Residential Schools

Key Objectives of the TRC:

01 Truth:

The TRC aimed to create a comprehensive historical record of the residential school system's operations and impact on Indigenous communities. This process involved gathering statements, documents, and other evidence from survivors, their families, and church and government archives.

02 Reconciliation:

The TRC sought to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Reconciliation entails acknowledging the past injustices, addressing the ongoing impacts, and working towards a future of mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration.

03 Education and Awareness:

The TRC worked to raise public awareness about the history and consequences of the residential school system. It emphasized the importance of incorporating this history into educational curricula and public discourse to foster a more informed and empathetic society.

04 Calls to Action:

The TRC issued 94 Calls to Action, which are specific recommendations aimed at addressing the systemic issues and inequalities faced by Indigenous communities. These recommendations cover areas such as education, health, justice, language, and culture, among others.



Impact and Ongoing Work:

The TRC's work has had a significant impact on Canadian society. It brought the history of the residential school system to the forefront of public consciousness and sparked important conversations about reconciliation and the treatment of Indigenous peoples. The Calls to Action provide a roadmap for governmental, institutional, and individual actions towards reconciliation.

However, reconciliation is an ongoing process, and there is still much work to be done. Implementing the Calls to Action requires commitment from all levels of government, institutions, and society as a whole to address the historical and contemporary injustices faced by Indigenous communities.

Regarding Architecture and Design, Indigenous communities have been disregarded in collaborative design and decision-making processes, resulting in a significant gap in understanding and incorporating Indigenous perspectives. The creation of the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) marks a pivotal moment in addressing historical injustices and bridging this divide.

↑
Timeline of the TRC:
Truth, Reconciliation,
Education and Awareness,
Calls to Action

TRC: Call to Action 92

The Call to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that is dedicated to Community Engagement is Call to Action 92. This Call to Action specifically focuses on building and sustaining meaningful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada through education and other means.

Call to Action 92 states:

"We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

Read more:

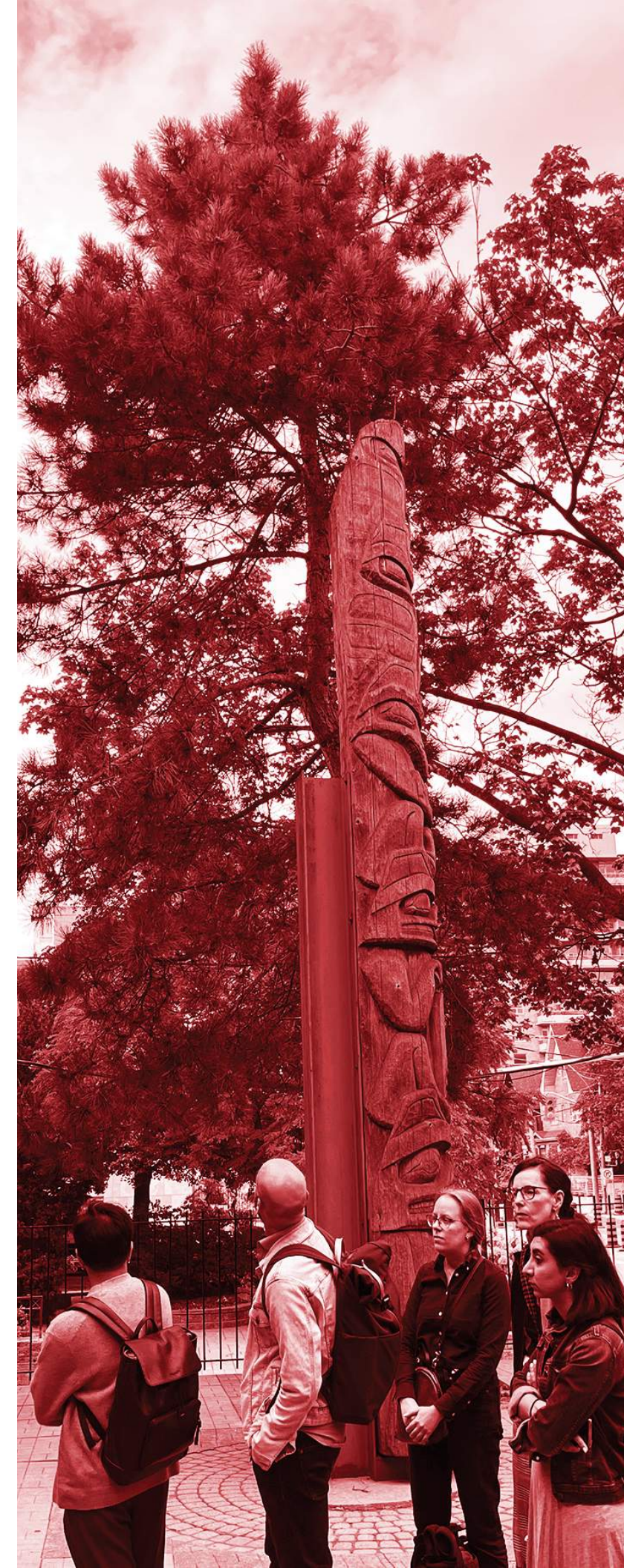
[The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report](#)

i. Commit to **meaningful consultation**, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.

ii. Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable **access to jobs, training, and education opportunities** in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

iv. Create respectful workplace environments that are free of racism, discrimination, and harassment of any kind."



During the OAA Virtual Conference Week in 2021, Eladia Smoke, an Indigenous Architect, drew attention to a significant aspect of the 2nd Session of the 43rd Parliament, which was Bill C-15. This particular bill holds promising prospects for architects, offering them additional resources to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their work.

For further information on this subject, kindly explore the following websites:

CE3: Many Voices in Harmony: Indigenous Storytelling through Architecture and the Allied Arts

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6H4qUMG8W8>

RAIC Indigenous Task Force

- <https://raic.org/raic/Indigenous-task-force>

Bill C-15

- <https://parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/bill/C-15/first-reading>

Framework

This toolkit acknowledges the historical injustices faced by Indigenous communities and seeks to rectify these imbalances through proactive and meaningful collaboration. By aligning with the principles of Call to Action 92 and UNDRIP, **it aims to facilitate a transformative shift in the architectural field. The toolkit recognizes that successful engagement with Indigenous practitioners goes beyond surface-level representation – it requires an in-depth understanding of their cultures, values, and aspirations.**

At its core, the framework emphasizes the necessity of building relationships based on trust, mutual learning, and shared decision-making. It advocates for architects and professionals to approach projects with a deep respect for Indigenous knowledge systems and to involve Indigenous practitioners from project inception to completion. This co-creation framework ensures that designs are rooted in local contexts, cultural significance, and community needs, thus yielding more impactful and sustainable outcomes.



How can Indigenous and non-Indigenous architects foster allyship in co-creating a more inclusive built environment?



←
Kangiqsualujuaq
- Building the Hut,
Community Engagement
Studio. 2020

→
Kangiqsualujuaq - Inside
the Hut, Community
Engagement Studio. 2020

03 Methodology

Listen

Effectively understanding and addressing the concerns, aspirations, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples can be a complex endeavor. However, a powerful strategy lies in the simplicity of active and attentive listening. By engaging in open and respectful conversations with Indigenous communities, we can uncover insights and clarity that might not be apparent through other means.

Indigenous communities hold diverse knowledge, shaped by their deep connection to their lands, cultures, and histories. When we genuinely listen to Indigenous voices, we not only gain a deeper understanding but also pave the way for more meaningful collaborations and partnerships. It helps us recognize the impact of historical injustices and the ongoing struggles for self-determination, sovereignty, and cultural revitalization.

Listening to Indigenous peoples should go beyond a one-time effort. It requires building trust through ongoing engagement. This approach also acknowledges the colonial history that has often silenced Indigenous voices and exploited their knowledge. By prioritizing listening, we recognize the importance of decolonization – embracing a collaborative and equitable mindset.

Methodology

Phase 1: Research

The initial phase of researching Indigenous Communities in Turtle Island involves establishing a clear research focus within the vast and diverse landscape of Indigenous cultures, histories, and issues. It necessitates comprehensive engagement with Indigenous perspectives, respecting their unique knowledge systems, and understanding the complex historical and contemporary contexts they inhabit. Additionally, this phase requires building respectful relationships with Indigenous individuals and communities,

Phase 2: Tour

The research phase involving a tour of the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto offered a distinct and enlightening exploration of the local Indigenous cultures and histories. This phase underscored the importance of establishing connections with local community members, enabling a more profound comprehension of their traditions, obstacles, and aspirations. This engagement not only enriched our research findings but also nurtured mutual respect and cultural appreciation, thereby contributing to the advancement of a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Phase 3: Conversation

The phase of engaging in internal conversations about our community engagement toolkit with fellow designers at the Perkins and Will office in Toronto represents a critical aspect of our research process. Through these collaborative discussions, we fine-tune our approach to ensure that our toolkit is finely attuned to the distinct needs and aspirations of the communities under study. This iterative dialogue serves to refine our research methodology, fostering a more comprehensive and inclusive approach that aligns with our commitment to creating spaces that authentically reflect the experiences of their inhabitants.

Phase 4: Interviews

In this research phase, we conduct structured interviews with Indigenous designers, non-Indigenous researchers, academics, and team members at Perkins&Will to explore and compare their distinct approaches to community engagement. These interviews provide valuable insights into the diversity of perspectives and methodologies employed in the field, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of effective community engagement practices in our design processes.

Phase 5: Conclusion

In the concluding phase of our research on Indigenous Community Engagement, we synthesize our findings, identify key patterns and insights, and assess the effectiveness of various strategies employed. This phase aims to provide a comprehensive overview that informs future approaches to community engagement, promoting more culturally sensitive and inclusive design practices. acknowledging their sovereignty and consent in research endeavors.

Phase 6: Continue conversation

In this ongoing phase of continuing the conversation about Indigenous allyship and engagement, we prioritize continuous learning and engagement with Indigenous communities. This phase involves workshops, and collaborative initiatives to deepen our understanding, strengthen partnerships, and ensure that our allyship efforts remain responsive and respectful.

04 Engagement

- Interview
- Guided Tour
- Community Engagement
- Key Findings
- Allyship



↑
Kangiqsualujjuaq - Boat,
Community Engagement
Studio. 2020

Collaborative Approach

In Canada, a substantial presence of architectural designers, researchers, and academics actively engages with Indigenous communities across the country. Indigenous-owned architectural firms such as **Two Row Architects**, **Eladia Smoke Architects**, and **Brook McIlroy** are a few that exemplify a commitment to community-centered work within the region. Non-Indigenous architectural firms, including **Lateral Office and Evoq**, are equally dedicated to strengthening their allyship by collaborating with Indigenous members, offering their expertise while respecting Indigenous knowledge systems. At Perkins&Will we are committed to supporting and empowering Indigenous community members by collaborating with Indigenous architects to create culturally sensitive and health-promoting built environments.

The research focuses on conducting interviews with a variety of professionals in the design community, to explore unique methodologies, challenges, and successes when collaborating with Indigenous Communities. By engaging with practitioners from various backgrounds and experiences, we aim to gain comprehensive insights into the multifaceted dynamics of Indigenous engagement in design, fostering a more inclusive and informed approach to our work in this context.

→
Kangiqsualujuaq -
School Engagement



Interviews

In response to the request of the majority of our interviewees, we have committed to maintaining the anonymity of the participants to safeguard their perspectives on these matters. Below, you will find their respective approaches to the presented questions.

1. Could you please share with us the ways in which you and/or your team immerse yourselves in the cultural heritage and lived experiences of the Indigenous communities you collaborate with?
2. What are the methods you employ to incorporate Indigenous perspectives, cultural values, and traditional knowledge into your architectural designs.
3. We would greatly appreciate your insights/ experiences to community engagement and consultation when working with Indigenous communities.

Interview 1: Indigenous Designer #1

Alex and Vennice:

How can we revamp community engagement to make sure Indigenous voices and perspectives are central to decision-making and design, fostering genuine partnership and co-creation?

Indigenous Designer 1:

Indigenous education awareness, meaningful discussions. Bringing people to these indigenous communities for better understandings.

Making sure the process is done meaningfully (does this support the Indigenous communities or community)?

How can honest discussions about uncomfortable truths help address historical injustices, encourage understanding, and promote reconciliation?

It's important to ask for permission before holding the knowledge of Indigenous peoples. Engagement are supposed to be hard/ not comfortable.

Takeaway

● *Conducting research on the community before getting involved is crucial for gaining insight. This will enable us to engage in more substantial discussions.*

Avoid making commitments about future outcomes.

For example, refrain from guaranteeing that this initiative will provide jobs for 100 community members.

It's essential to avoid raising false expectations in these conversations. Be thoughtful in your communication approach with the community.

● *Respectful engagement with Indigenous peoples necessitates seeking their permission before acquiring or utilizing their knowledge. It's essential to recognize that such interactions can be challenging and may not always be comfortable. This discomfort arises from the need to navigate complex cultural dynamics and historical sensitivities, making it crucial to approach these engagements with humility, empathy, and a willingness to listen and learn.*

Interview 2: Indigenous Designer #2

Alex and Vennice:

We would greatly appreciate your insights/experiences to community engagement and consultation when working with Indigenous communities

Indigenous Designer 2:

"nothing for us! without us!"

- An Indigenous People saying.

Should you be doing this type of work without Indigenous consultant on board?

Our knowledge is thousands of years old and passed on from generation to generation. This is not knowledge you can research and implement; it must be lived, it must be deeply understood, it must be carried and cared for. Are you going to do that?

Takeaway

When embarking on projects that involve indigenous knowledge or cultural sensitivity, prioritizing the hiring of an Indigenous Consultant or Indigenous Designers should be the foremost consideration. This approach demonstrates a commitment to respecting and valuing the expertise, perspectives, and cultural insights that Indigenous individuals bring to the table. It also ensures that the project is guided by a genuine understanding of the community's values, traditions, and needs, fostering a more inclusive and culturally sensitive outcome. By engaging with Indigenous experts, we not only promote diversity and inclusion but also enhance the project's authenticity and effectiveness.

Interview 3: Indigenous Designer #3

Alex and Vennice:

We would greatly appreciate your insights/experiences to community engagement and consultation when working with Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Designer 3:

Incorporating everyone into the conversation is essential. This can be achieved through a phased approach, starting with engaging leaders and Elders initially, followed by involving the staff, and ultimately including the users or community members.

When is the perfect time to do community engagement.

Do it or dont do it at all.

It is important to include community members at the beginning of the design process up till the end.

What are the ways in which Non-Indigenous Designers can engage in collaborative work with Indigenous Designers?

During the contract phase, it's important to explicitly outline the roles and responsibilities of each party involved in producing the final product.

Takeaway

Community Empowerment: Engaging all community members empowers them to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. This participation fosters a sense of ownership, pride, and cooperation, ultimately garnering greater community support and strengthening unity and self-determination.

Cultural Respect and Authenticity: It ensures that the building's design respects the cultural values, traditions, and perspectives of the indigenous community, resulting in an authentic representation of their heritage and avoiding cultural insensitivity.

Sustainable and Contextual Design: By engaging elders and community members, the design can benefit from their unique environmental and sustainability knowledge, leading to more sustainable and contextually appropriate building designs that harmonize with the natural environment.

Respect for Indigenous Expertise: Acknowledging the unique expertise and perspectives of Indigenous designers and community members is crucial. Clearly defined roles show respect for their contributions and ensure their input is valued and integrated into the project.

Interview 4: Non-Indigenous Designer #1

Alex and Vennice:

How was your experience working with an Indigenous Designer?

Non-Indigenous Designer 1:

It is a different process. Eladia and team handled the community engagement part.

If you were to start the entire process anew, what changes or adjustments would you make?

Comprehensive participation throughout the entire process, involving them even up to the Construction Document phase, including detailed aspects.

Takeaway

Eladia Smoke Architecture is an Indigenous design firm well-versed in engaging with Indigenous communities. Their expertise has greatly enriched the process of designing the Dawes Library, approaching it with a profound sensitivity and genuine respect for the clients' needs.

Active participation from both collaborators is crucial throughout the design process. It is essential to communicate these roles and expectations at the outset of the collaboration to ensure a more fulfilling and effective approach to the design.

Interview 5: Non-Indigenous Designer #2

Alex and Vennice:

How do you approach proper engagement within your firm?

Non-Indigenous Designer 2:

Collaborating with Indigenous firms should be your initial approach.

Comprehend the logistics and be ready to adapt. Ensure thorough community understanding before fully engaging.

It's crucial to be more specific and practical. It can be challenging, especially when community members are over tapped. Are you reaching out to the right individuals or everyone? Full understanding before fully engaging.

How do you start the conversation about this hard approach to community engagement?

Having a consolidated resources that values can be applied within bigger institutions.

Takeaway

Creating trust with the team you are working with should be a priority. Building that trust over the long term is essential. Not just with Indigenous designers but also the community itself.

Community members often find themselves with numerous commitments, stretched thin by various responsibilities. In such circumstances, it's imperative to approach engagement with readiness and adaptability, understanding that their time and resources may be limited. Flexibility emerges as a key attribute, allowing for responsiveness to the community's needs and preferences.

Guided Tour

Perkins and Will Toronto had the honor of conducting a guided tour on September 28th in observance of Truth and Reconciliation Day. This tour took place at the **Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT)**. A group of 25 members from our studio team visited the center, where Charlie and Vicky graciously provided us with an informative tour of their facilities. They shared their personal stories, enlightened us about the significance of the sacred fire, and discussed the various activities offered to Indigenous youth and other community members in the area.

In response to recommendations from interviews with Indigenous designers and community members, we were advised to initiate a more authentic relationship with Indigenous communities. This guided tour marked our initial effort to establish a connection with the local Indigenous community in the Toronto studio. Through this tour, our intention is to nurture and strengthen this relationship with the community, fostering opportunities for mutual learning, unlearning, and relearning to gain a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding collaboration with diverse communities.

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Native Canadian Centre
of Toronto Tour PW
2023, Exterior



Path to Indigenous Community Engagement

Educate Yourself 01

Before engaging with an Indigenous community, take the time to learn about their history, culture, and values. Understand the specific issues and challenges they face.

02 Cultural Competency

Develop cultural competency by attending cultural sensitivity training or working with experts who can guide you on appropriate behavior, language, and customs when interacting with Indigenous communities.

03 Consent & Permissions

Obtain informed consent for any data collection or research activities. Be clear about how the information will be used and who will have access to it.

04 Community Involvement

Involve community members from the start. Consult with elders, leaders, and other key figures to gain their insights and input. Respect the community's decision-making processes.

05 Listen Actively

Listen more than you speak. Pay attention to the concerns, needs, and aspirations of the community members. Value their opinions and genuinely be interested in what they have to say.

06 Timeline

Be flexible and respectful when engaging with Indigenous communities, without imposing a fixed timeline.

08 Customize

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to engaging with Indigenous communities. Tailor your engagement strategies to the specific community's needs, preferences, and protocols.

Traditions 07

Acknowledge the traditional knowledge of Indigenous communities, as they often possess a profound understanding of their environment and culture.

11 Collaboration

Encourage collaborative decision-making processes where community members have a say in the outcomes and are actively involved in the planning of projects.

10 Build Trust

Building trust takes time, patience and consistency. Engage in open and honest communication, and be transparent about your intentions and goals.

09 Communication

Avoid jargon and complex terminology. If you do not speak the community's native language, provide interpretation services when necessary.

Avoid Stereotyping 12

Do not stereotype Indigenous communities. Each community is unique, and individuals within those communities have diverse experiences and perspectives.

13 Long-Term Engagement

Focus on building long-term relationships rather than seeking short-term gains. Sustainable engagement can lead to more meaningful partnerships and positive outcomes.

Indigenous Leadership 14

Support Indigenous leadership within the community. Empower local leaders to take the lead in decision-making and project implementation.

15 Learn from Mistakes

If you make a mistake or inadvertently offend someone, be open to acknowledging it, apologizing, and learning from the experience. Mistakes can be valuable opportunities for growth and improved understanding.

Key Findings

After engaging with Indigenous community members, Indigenous designers, and non-Indigenous designers, several key findings regarding Indigenous placekeeping have emerged:

Cultural Significance: Indigenous placekeeping is deeply rooted in the cultural significance of respecting and maintaining the spiritual, historical, and ecological value of their land.

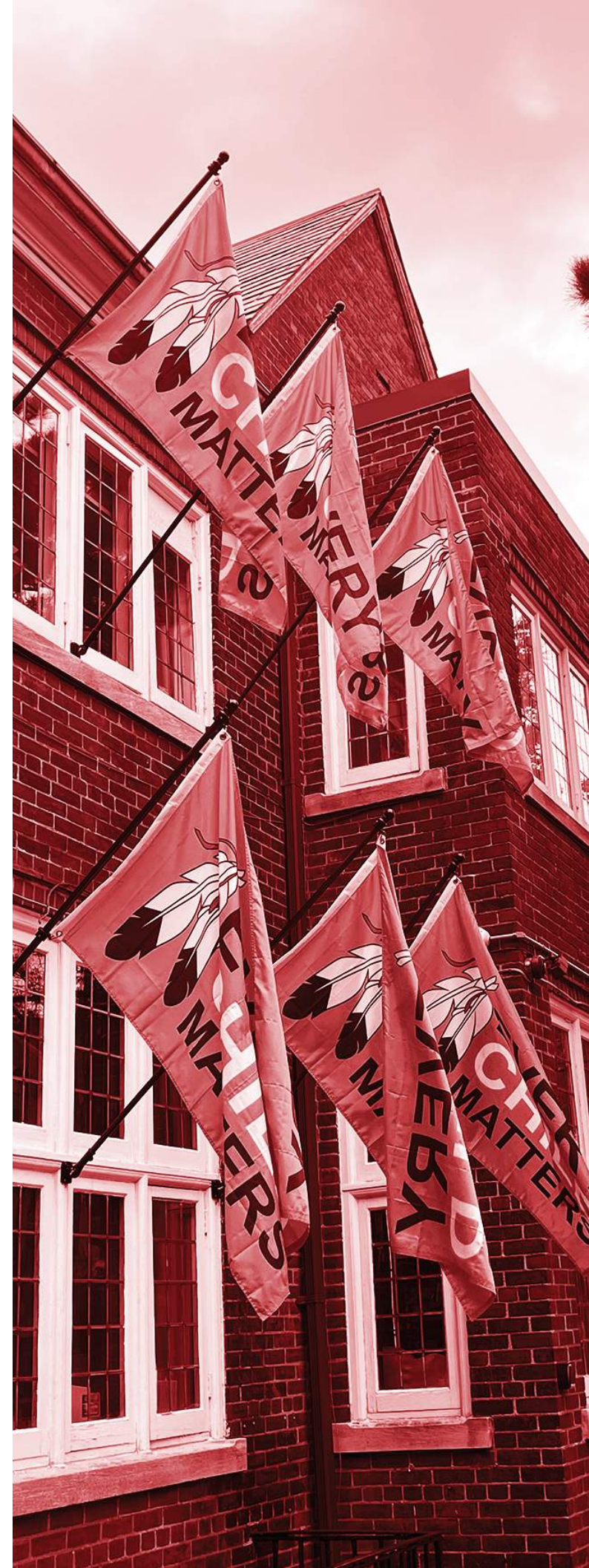
Interconnectedness: Indigenous perspectives highlight the interconnectedness of all elements within a place. This holistic view emphasizes the relationships between humans, nature, and the built environment.

Traditional Knowledge: Indigenous knowledge, passed down through generations, holds vital insights for integrating traditional practices, materials, and building techniques into contemporary designs to honor heritage and promote sustainability.

Collaboration and Consent: Meaningful engagement and obtaining informed consent were identified as fundamental steps in design process that involves Indigenous communities.

Representation & Identity: Placekeeping involves reflecting Indigenous identity in the design of spaces. Indigenous designers highlighted the importance of incorporating visual elements, symbols, and narratives that reflect their community's values and history.

→
Native Canadian Centre
of Toronto Tour PW 2023,
Every Child Matters Flags



Decolonization: Non-Indigenous designers recognized the need to challenge colonial attitudes and practices embedded in design. They emphasized the importance of decentering their perspectives and actively learning from Indigenous communities to avoid cultural appropriation.

Sustainability & Resilience: Indigenous placekeeping aligns with sustainable design principles. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers acknowledged the importance of creating resilient environments that mitigate environmental impacts and adapt to changing conditions.

Empowerment & Ownership: Indigenous community members expressed the desire for self-determination in design processes related to their territories. Empowering Indigenous communities to lead design initiatives fosters a sense of ownership and agency over their spaces.

Education & Awareness: Non-Indigenous designers recognized the need to educate themselves about Indigenous histories, worldviews, and contemporary issues. Building cultural competence and acknowledging historical injustices were identified as critical steps in responsible design.

Long-Term Commitment: Long-Term Commitment: Indigenous placekeeping is an ongoing commitment, not a one-time endeavor. It involves maintaining relationships with Indigenous communities and adapting designs over time to meet evolving needs and aspirations.

Allyship

Dos:

- Be receptive to listening and engaging with others.
- Be mindful of your implicit biases.
- Conduct research to grasp the history of the struggle you're engaging in.
- Undertake introspection to acknowledge your role in oppressive systems.
- Engage in active efforts to transform oppressive systems.
- Use your privilege to amplify suppressed voices.
- Cultivate the ability to accept criticism
- Dedicate yourself to daily growth as a better ally.

Don'ts:

- Don't anticipate being taught; take the initiative to learn from available resources.
- Avoid engaging in a competition to compare struggles.
- Refrain from acting as if you always have the superior knowledge or solutions.
- Don't claim credit for the work marginalized individuals did before your involvement.
- Do not presume that every member of an underrepresented community experiences sense of oppression.



↑
Kangiqsualujjuaq - Inuit
Village, Community
Engagement Studio, 2020

Conclusion

In conclusion, this Toolkit aspires to weave together a diverse tapestry of perspectives and voices, each contributing to the creation of spaces that honor Indigenous values, history, and sustainability goals. Its ambition is to offer a comprehensive resource that not only promotes collaborative, ethical, and culturally sensitive design practices but also serves as a catalyst for proactive and meaningful change in the architectural field.

At its core, this framework prioritizes the building of relationships based on trust, mutual learning, and co-creation. It advocates for professionals to approach projects with a profound respect for Indigenous knowledge systems and to involve Indigenous practitioners from project inception to completion. This holistic approach ensures that designs are deeply rooted in local contexts, cultural significance, and community needs, resulting in outcomes that are not only impactful but also sustainable over the long term.

The next essential step for this toolkit is to engage the expertise of an Indigenous consultant to proofread and validate its content. This consultant's role is crucial in ensuring that the toolkit respects and accurately represents Indigenous cultures, values, and knowledge. Their input will guarantee cultural sensitivity, authenticity, and the preservation of Indigenous traditions, making the toolkit a reliable resource for those seeking to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their work.



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Native Canadian Centre
of Toronto Tour PW 2023,
Medicine Wheel/Fire Pit

Resources

The best resources for Indigenous content are **Elders, knowledge-keepers, and subject experts from Indigenous communities**. They possess valuable knowledge systems rooted in experiential and cultural teachings, art, innovation methods, and governance models that can educate non-Indigenous individuals. To connect with these sources, consider urban friendship and cultural centers, cultural lodges, Indigenous Studies departments, Indigenous student services at universities, and Indigenous engagement staff at civic organizations. While seeking Indigenous content, it's essential to supplement Indigenous expertise with additional research, frameworks, and content.

- Ensure accurate and holistic portrayal of Indigenous peoples by selecting topics and resources aligned with your learning journey and partnerships.
- Prioritize Indigenous peoples who bring situated knowledge and lived experience to the topics, and carefully assess the authenticity of non-Indigenous experts in Indigenous studies.
- Embrace the diversity of Indigenous knowledge, applicable across different subject areas, by integrating it at all levels of your projects, showcasing your commitment to engagement and the richness of Indigenous wisdom.

Case Studies

- Building the Path Forward Lil'Wat Nation & the Village of Pemberton: Building the path Forward https://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Resolutions~and~Policy/Policy/Lilwat_Pemberton_20190909.pdf
- Squamish Nation & District of Squamish: Government-to- Government Collaboration [https://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Resolutions~and~Policy/Policy/UBCM-PATHWAYS_Squamish_Squamish\[1\].pdf](https://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Resolutions~and~Policy/Policy/UBCM-PATHWAYS_Squamish_Squamish[1].pdf)
- City of Kamloops and the First Nation of Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc: Growing Indigenous/Local Government Relations https://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Resolutions~and~Policy/Policy/UBCM-PATHWAYS_Tkemlups_Kamloops.pdf

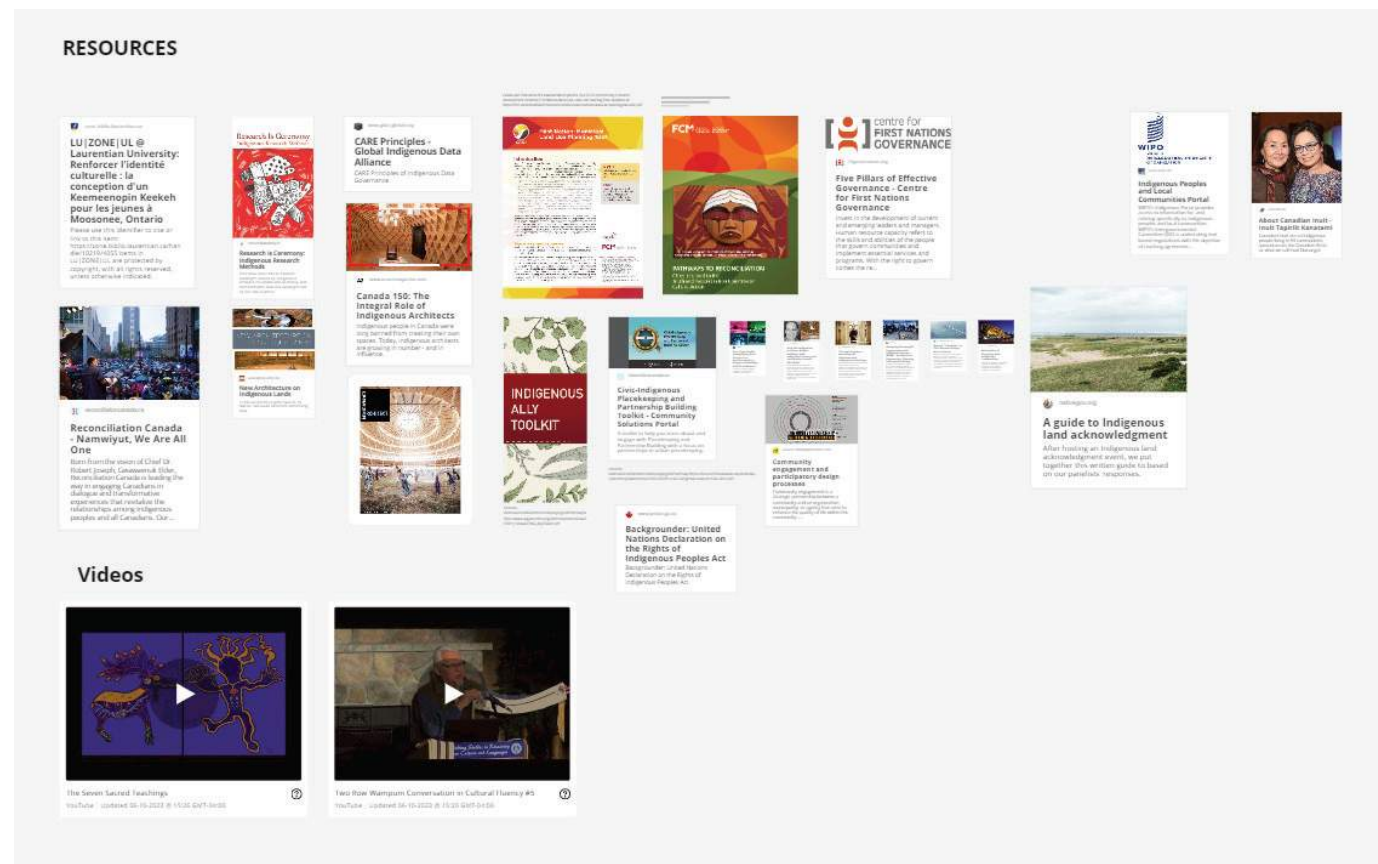
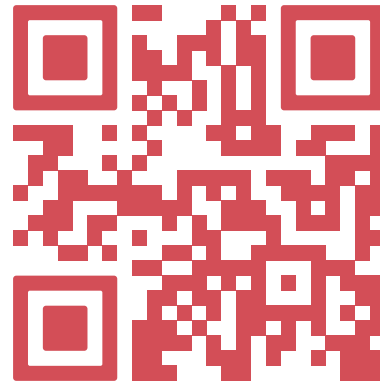
Videos

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As an integral component of our efforts to assemble various assets for our Innovation Incubator, we have leveraged the capabilities of Miro to compile and organize our collective ideas and research. If you are interested in delving into our Miro board, we warmly invite you to explore information and insights we've accumulated.

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Miro Board QR CODE



https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVMCJ-eKQ=?share_link_id=238948317803

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