

# POLICY-MAKER /RESEARCHER HANDBOOK

STAND CANADA

# HOW TO BE INCLUSIVE OF FIRST NATION, MÉTIS, AND INUIT COMMUNITIES

# STAND

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# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to identify some basic guidelines for researchers and policy makers wishing to engage meaningfully with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) communities, and provide some resources to begin the process of meaningful inclusion of FNMI voices in policy and research work.

In 2015, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) released Calls to Action specifying specific actions Canadians should take to begin the process of reconciliation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Researchers and policymakers have substantial opportunities to do the work of reconciliation when it comes to creating policies and conducting research in inclusive and respectful ways.

The TRC define reconciliation as “establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country” and in order to achieve this, “there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour”.

STAND believes that policymakers and researchers can contribute to reconciliation through concerted efforts to include FNMI voices in meaningful dialogue, engaging communities to co-develop policy and make room for FNMI ways of knowing.

# GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

"Indigenous peoples have the right to determine & develop priorities & strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing & determining health, housing & other economic & social programmes affecting them &, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions."

Article 23 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

**Nothing about us without us.** FNMI people have a right to self-determination and their participation in the development of policies that impact them is essential to dismantling the generational or intergenerational impacts of colonization, and create lasting, positive impacts within those communities. 'Nothing about us without us' means enabling FNMI communities to generate policies and solutions that will impact them. There is never an instance to create policy without the input of the people it involves.

**Distinctions matter.** The term 'Indigenous' is too broad. Making distinctions between the different groups in Canada; First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) is more inclusive of the different histories, customs and beliefs of each group. When possible, further distinguish the particular groups you are working with. Every nation, government, governing body, band and group is different and should be respected as such. In conducting research and communicating results, it is important to apply population-specific and distinction-based approaches.

**Consent is key.** This is a fundamental requirement of any work with FNMI communities. There are many ways to engage and create policy with FNMI groups, but this always requires *formal consent*. Most FNMI governments and Nations have informal or formal processes to approve engagement or research. There is a long and painful history of research and policy being imposed on FNMI communities, so seeking consent is a very important step in the policy making process.

# GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

researcher have a greater understanding and respect for the people and their strengths.

**Recognize Colonial Impacts.** Be mindful of the specific experiences of FNMI communities in Canada and why they may be reluctant or unwilling to engage with policy makers or researchers. Residential school policies, the impacts of reserves and/or scrip, the treatment of FNMI women and girls in Canada, and the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). FNMI communities are dealing with generational traumas from dealing with imposed policies and non-consensual research practices.

**Avoid a Deficit Discourse.** A step towards decolonizing policy and research is being aware of the tendency to disempower FNMI people by representing them as victims, or socially deficient, as a result of failures. Placing blame and responsibility on the communities and individuals ignores the long history of colonialism that has created pervasive structural and socio-economic disadvantages.

# BEST PRACTICES FOR POLICYMAKERS

**“There is a space for non-indigenous scholars but I think it has to be on the terms of the community and indigenous peoples more broadly”**

Dr. Monica Mulrennan; Department of Geography, Planning and Environment,  
Concordia University.

**Start Early.** It is imperative that policymakers engage with FNMI communities from the beginning of the policy making process, to let the communities define the issues and propose solutions. The best solutions are internally developed. FNMI communities should be involved in every step of the process, not simply tokenized at the end of the project to have an indigenous name on the work. Building meaningful relationships requires time and respect to ensure FNMI voices are heard and reflected.

**Engagement needs to be authentic relationship building.** All too often, FNMI communities are the last to be consulted on matters concerning them. Being respectful means following the proper channels to engage and listening to the communities involved. Relationships are not built overnight. This needs to be an ongoing process that could take years.

**Community and Respect.** Effective policies are community-driven and responsive to the complex needs of the diverse FNMI communities in Canada. Give proper respect to FNMI languages, values, cultures, and ways of knowing. See Appendix A for a brief summary of key terms to get you started.

**Truth and Reconciliation.** Read the reports created by the Truth & Reconciliation Commission. Strategically plan to implement their calls to action in your work. This needs to be strategic and planned in order to have an impact.

**Avoid a Deficit Discourse.** A step towards decolonizing policy and research is being aware of the tendency to disempower FNMI people by representing them as victims, or socially deficient, as a result of failures. Placing blame and responsibility on the communities and individuals ignores the long history of colonialism that has created pervasive structural and socio-economic disadvantages.

# EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE POLICY MAKING PRACTICES

As in Canada, indigenous communities in other countries have suffered a similar fate as a result of colonialism, forceful assimilation and the multiplier effects of these actions. Likewise, attempts are being made to heal the wounds of the past across climes.

***“There were dire warnings that The Rock belonged to everyone and fears that it would be taken away by Aboriginal people. As you can see, the rock is still here, people got their land rights and the sky hasn't fallen down”*** Gina Smith, Central Land Council, NT, after the Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park (including Uluru/Ayer's Rock) was returned by the Commonwealth government in the North territory to its aboriginal owners.

**Australia.** The Pitjantjatjara and Maralinga peoples, through the land right legislations passed by the South Australian government in 1981 have inalienable freehold title to their lands, are entitled to royalty payments for mining and arbitration over mining. In a further attempt at reconciliation, in 1998, the Australian government commenced the marking of a National Sorry Day, an event which commemorates the mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - The Stolen Generations - who were forcibly removed from their families and communities. In 2020, the high court upheld the Yindjibarndi people's native title rights over land that includes the site of a mining company which does not pay royalties over a mine that generates AUD\$6.5 billion per year.

**New Zealand.** In 1995, the Crown apologized to the Tainui people for “the loss of lives because of the hostilities arising from its invasion, and at the devastation of property and social life which resulted.” In 1996, with an apology from the government, the Whakatohea people and the Crown signed a Deed of Settlement “for misdeeds in 1865 when British colonisers confiscated 71 000 ha (708 sq kms) in the eastern Bay of Plenty with a payment of redress of about NZ\$40 million. (cont'd)

# EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE POLICY MAKING PRACTICES

The government of New Zealand has acknowledged its contradiction of colony treaty, offered apologies, paid out millions of NZ dollars in reparations due to land claims and instituted a curriculum that will ensure the relearning of the native language of the Maori people - Te Reo Māori.

**Norway.** Indigenous people have also been able to seek redress through the courts. In 1990, Norway's Chief Justice ascertained the Sámi people have rights to traditional resources, those living on coastal and fiord areas have fishing rights. In 2020, through a Lapland Court, Sami people in Girjas regained their rights to fish and hunt in the area without permits. In 1997, the King of Norway publicly apologized for the country's assimilation policies. Like Norway, Finland and Sweden have established self-governing and publicly-elected Sámi Parliaments to advise their governments on matters that are important to the community.

**Greenland.** Similar to the other countries where assimilation stripped the indigenous peoples of their culture, the government of Denmark apologized for the forced removal of the 22 Greenlandic Inuit children 1951 as a part of a social experiment to make them Danish. Greenlandic - Kalaallisut, Tunumiit oraasiat and Inuktun - has been reintroduced as an official language.



# BEST PRACTICES FOR RESEARCHERS

**“If we want to promote real change, I think we need to recognize our own subjectivity and work with it. So I always say that if research doesn’t change you as a person, then you’re not doing it right.”**

**Dr. Shawn Wilson, Gribi College Indigenous Australian Peoples, Southern Cross University.**

*Important Note: Until the recent past, any research that occurred in Canada regarding FNMI people was devised and conducted by largely non-indigenous people. The research, as a result, overlooked indigenous ways of knowing, and was often done to the detriment of indigenous communities. Thus, it is important to recognize this context to better understand the reticence of FNMI communities to engage in research that was conceived outside of their communities. This mistrust is deep-rooted in generations in longstanding colonial treatment.*

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At the center of research concerning humans are ethical concerns which are detailed in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical conduct for Research Involving Humans. Chapter 9 focuses on the FNMI community. In addition, checks and balances need to be put in place in order to achieve the purpose of research and ensure meaningful policymaking.

**Fact-checking.** The internet is a rich source of information for policy researchers and policymakers. However, online information is fluid and may not be complete and accurate. Online information may also not address the distinctions between particular groups in the FNMI community. As a result, it is important to fact-check online information with the owners. Doing so also has the potential of closing gaps in information and prop up contemporary issues.

**Watch out for Biases.** Recognize your own biases from being raised in a colonial society, and being immersed in a settler-culture. Furthermore, look for biases in secondary sources such as news stories, that may reinforce colonial values and eurocentric knowledge.

**Respect and understand data sovereignty.** In addition to consent, self-determination also means that communities have distinct ownership over any data generated on their land or from their people. While researchers may be given permission/consent to interviews or recordings of elders, the information must come back to the FNMI government or nation for review and finally to be stored. The First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP®) states that First Nations have control over data collection processes, and that they own and control how this information can be used. While OCAP is specific to First Nations communities, the same principles apply to Inuit and Métis communities across Canada, and should be used as a basis for best practice.

# BEST PRACTICES FOR RESEARCHERS

**Partnership.** Research that involves Aboriginal knowledge should be conducted under the auspices of partnerships between researchers and FNMI communities. This will ensure that additions to the body of knowledge are for the benefits of members of the community. For instance, the development of a new health legislation should draw knowledge from the indigenous practitioners within the community, particularly from experts in traditional healing practices.

**Academic Integrity and Disclosure.** It goes without saying that all such knowledge garnered from Aboriginal sources and research results be properly referenced by researchers and not presented as their own work. Direct quotes should be reflected as such and cited appropriately.

**Equity and Benefit Sharing.** Based on the principle of beneficial ownership, all benefits emanating from research findings or inventions based on Aboriginal knowledge should be shared equitably with the concerned FNMI community(ies).

**Empowerment.** Researchers have a responsibility to present their research findings informed by Aboriginal knowledge “as is” with context where applicable, and without any attempt to qualify or devalue such knowledge. The voices, potential and strengths of FNMI communities should be reflected through the presentation of research findings.

**Decolonizing Research.** A researcher who is conducting research on topics that affect or involve indigenous communities should be aware that indigenous knowledge is relational (researchers engages “with” and not “on ” knowledge holders), reciprocal (researcher and community could pursue different outcomes in an environment of mutual respect) and collectively held (stories within indigenous circles can be shared in indigenous ways through collective group process). In addition, a researcher should be aware that FNMI people have recently experienced colonial disruption of their interaction with the natural world and spiritual knowledge. Decolonizing research methods requires acknowledging that research is, in fact, Eurocentric, and tends to devalue non-European or non-settler knowledge and values, while marginalizing minority groups. An approach to decolonizing research can be to employ ethnography, a research method that values social relations and cultures as part of the research understanding.

# BEST PRACTICES FOR RESEARCHERS

**Community-Campus Partnership Research.** This approach bridges the gap between academics and FNMI communities. It allows for members of the community to serve as “lobby groups and gate-keepers”, where they choose the topics or subjects of research focus that are of most importance to them. A similar approach should be used by policymakers for engaging the communities throughout the lifecycle of projects.

**Research Protocols.** Throughout the lifecycle of a research project, protocols exist that specify roles of indigenous partners. These include ethical concerns, practical concerns, how to protect data confidentiality, time required to build community-level agreements and dissemination of results after project completion.

# WHAT TO DO: A CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCHERS

- Consider Biases
- Nothing about us without us - engage meaningfully
- Distinctions matter (FNMI)
- Always gain formal consent
- Avoid deficit discourse
- Understand data sovereignty
- Inform yourself of FNMI histories
- Ask for clarification if you are not sure - you are not expected to know everything about a culture that is not your own.
- Listen more than you speak
- Start early and maintain meaningful partnerships
- Respect academic integrity
- Keep benefits within the FNMI community: Equity and
- benefit sharing
- Decolonize your research
- Follow research protocols

# HELPFUL RESOURCES

Assembly Of First Nations: [First Nations Ethics First Nations Ethics Guide On Research And Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge](#)

Ball, J., & Janyst, P. (2008). [Enacting research ethics in partnerships with Indigenous communities in Canada: "Do it in a good way"](#). *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, 3(2), 33-51.

Canadian Institute for Health Information. [A Path Forward: Toward Respectful Governance of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Data Housed at CIHI](#). Updated August 2020. Ottawa, ON: CIHI; 2020.

Dow, C., & Gardiner-Garden, J. (1998). [Indigenous Affairs in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United States of America, Norway and Sweden](#). Social Policy Group, Background Paper 15.

Feir, D., & Hancock, R. L. (2016). [Answering the call: A guide to reconciliation for quantitative social scientists](#). *Canadian Public Policy*, 42(3), 350-365.

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.(nd) [Indigenous Peoples: A Guide to Terminology](#).

Memorial University. (2021). [For Researchers: Doing Indigenous Research in a Good Way](#)

Nickels, S., & Knotsch, C. (2011). [Inuit perspectives on research ethics: The work of Inuit Nipingit](#). *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 35(1-2), 57-81.

OCAP/PCAP. (nd). [The First Nations Principles of OCAP™](#)

Sahar, F. (2015). [How other countries have tried to reconcile with native peoples](#). *The Globe and Mail*.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2012). [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#). Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

UN General Assembly, [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#), 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295

# EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Fundamentals of OCAP (This course has a registration fee through Algonquin College)

University of Alberta free course 'Indigenous Canada'



# CONCLUSION

The Policy Maker/Researcher Handbook was developed by STAND to help establish best practices for policy makers and researchers who work with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities in Canada. The concept of “nothing about us without us” is the key starting point to meaningful and authentic policy setting.

There are various methods to engage with FNMI communities, governments, nations and groups. This handbook is only a starting point for policy makers and researchers who wish to begin their work in decolonizing their work practices and engaging in community-based, community-led movements that respect traditional knowledge.

For too long, policy making and research has taken a top-down, colonialist approach when setting priorities for FNMI communities. This has created traumatic and painful experiences for FNMI communities, and engendered a deep mistrust. We hope this handbook serves to build on the rich discussion of how to fulfill the Truth & Reconciliation calls to action, and the many publications about decolonizing policy and research.



# APPENDIX A

## KEY TERMINOLOGY

**Aboriginal Peoples:** A name used to describe the original people of North America and their descendants. The Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes three (3) groups as original peoples: Indian, Inuit and Métis. They are recognized as having different and diverse histories, cultures, languages and spiritual practices. The term ‘aboriginal’ is not considered culturally appropriate, and is better replaced by ‘indigenous’, or, better yet, FNMI (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), to further distinguish the diversity of the people.

**Band:** Members of First Nations self-government who have had lands and money held aside by the Crown. These have been declared ‘Indians’ according to the Indian Act. Today, the preferred terminology has evolved into ‘First Nation’ rather than Band. For example, the Batchewana Band now calls themselves the Batchewana First Nation.

**Elder(s):** This is a term to describe an indigenous/FNMI person who is respected in their community for their knowledge, wisdom, insight and experience. This is not necessarily an age marker, as it is a marker of experience and respect.

**Ethnohistory:** This is an anthropological way of interpreting history that is more commonly used with societies that do not have many written histories. The process involves studying and incorporating oral histories and different sources to compare and interpret history.

**First Nation(s):** A term used to replace the term ‘Indian’, which came out of common use in the 1970’s. First Nations refers to Treaty Indians, status and non-status. First Nation also replaced the word ‘band’ to describe a specific group of rights-bearing indigenous. The term First Nations is generally accepted, but has no legal meaning, as Canada’s legal documents still use the term ‘Indian’.

**First Peoples:** A term that generally describes the original inhabitants of Canada and their descendants.

**Indigenous Peoples:** Ethnic groups defined as “indigenous” according to one of several meanings of the term. Historically it refers to the original inhabitants of a territory. For this purpose, the term refers to people classified as indigenous under international law in such documents as the “Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”.



# APPENDIX A

**Inuit:** This is a term derived from the Inuktitut language, which means 'people'. It describes a group of people who live across the north of Canada/ Inuit Nunangat, including: the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador) land claim regions. The Inuit are recognized as one (1) of the three (3) original peoples of Canada according to Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

**Métis:** A term to define those who self-identify as Métis, who are neither First Nations or Inuit, and are descendants of the historic Métis communities/settlements. The Federal government called Métis people almost exclusively 'Half-breeds' in the 19th and 20th century in Canada, describing their mixed descent from European and original peoples of Canada. The Métis are one (1) of the three (3) recognized groups under Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

**Reserves:** A grouping of land for which the Canadian Federal Government/the Crown hold title and have granted to the benefit of specific 'Indian Bands' or First Nations. Some First Nations hold more than one reserve. Inuit and Métis people normally do not live on reserves, though some live in communities that are governed by land claims or self-government agreements.

**Scrip:** These were vouchers that were issued for either money or land, that were given to indigenous people in substitution to Crown reserve lands. In the Dominion Lands Act of 1879, Section 125 describes scrip as aiming to extinguish Indian title to land. In 1883, Métis people were permitted to gain scrip, which is part of a long and complicated history of why Métis people were denied land for large parts of history.

**Self-determination:** A term to more precisely describe that FNMI people who share a common cultural background have the right to self-government, and that they are best suited to develop policy for their people. The term is being used to replace 'self-government', as the latter term does not effectively describe the authority indigenous groups have over their own matters.

**Self-government:** a term used to describe how indigenous groups have the right to govern themselves. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development adopted the term and applied it to the Community-Based Self-Government Policy of 1984. Self-government describes indigenous people establishing, designing and administering their own affairs, under the auspices of the Canadian Constitution, which outlines how negotiations occur with all other levels of government (Federal, Provincial and Municipal, where applicable). This term is often used interchangeably with self-determination.