

MAMAWI - GATHERING THE PEOPLE

Building Relationships With Indigenous Communities and People



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Mino Bimaadiziwin

Mino Bimaadiziwin is Anishinaabe for “the good life.” In this guide, we will start to build an understanding - Who are the Indigenous peoples, and how we can build relationships. Mino Bimaadiziwin isn’t a programme or ideology. It is how we can come to walk in a good way.

Many Indigenous peoples have principles of a “good life.” In this simple term, we include seven principles for living with authenticity.

Anishinaabemowin - Language and how we speak

Anshinaabe Inaadiwziwin - Behaviour and original values - personhood

Anishinaabe Inendamowin - Original way of thinking, philosophy, and connections

Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin - Original knowledge, our worldview

Anishinaabe Izhichigewin - Original way of doing things - taking action, and building and using skills

Anishinaabe Enawendiwin - Our way of relating to spirit, each other, and all of creation. Interconnection and responsibility

Gidakiiminaan - Relationship to the land and all of creation. This is the foundation of role, responsibility and all relationships

It is through these concepts that we come to know ourselves, each other, and all of creation. This guide asks you not to shift your own worldview, but instead to learn about ours.

This resource can’t tell you everything. It can open questions and curiosity, a desire to learn more, to help you walk *in a good way*.

More about Mino Bimaadiziwin: <https://treaty2.ca/circles/>

The Nations

The Indigenous Peoples

Anishinaabe (ah-nish-shi-nah-bee) is a reference to specific nations that share common cultural practice and values. The Anishinaabe are the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Odawa (these are the Three Fires Council), Mississauga, Nipissing, and Algonquin peoples. The word means "The Lowered People" - referring to a traditional story that we were lowered from the sky to this land.



Anishinaabe Nation Flag
Animikii - The Thunderbird

Haudenosaunee (hoh-deh-noh-show-nee) refers to the confederacy of the Six Nations. Beyond being a reserve in Ontario, this is a people who have existed in ancient treaty which was used as the formation of modern democracy. The Haudenosaunee are the Mohawk, Oneida, Tuscarora, Seneca, Cayuga, and Onondaga. The word means "People of the Longhouse" referring to their traditional living and gathering spaces.



Haudenosaunee
Confederation Flag - The
Hiawatha Flag

Many people struggle with the names of nations, but learning correct pronunciation is a crucial part of establishing a welcoming space for Indigenous peoples.

The Neutral Nations

The Neutral Nations of this region are represented by the Tionontati (Petun) and a group frequently referred to as the Attawandaron. This was a name given to them by other tribal peoples that meant "People who speak differently". The Neutral Nations here called themselves the Chinnonton -The People Who Herd Deer.

The Neutral Nations were decimated by early contact spread of disease. The people were not totally exterminated however, as their bloodlines live in other nearby nations through practices of adoption.

Wampum Belts One Dish, One Spoon



One Dish, One Spoon is an agreement that stretches back to at least 1142CE between Indigenous nations. It was used as a phrase in the Treaty of Montreal in 1701 by the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee - The Dish With One Spoon.

One Dish, One Spoon is an agreement still upheld in our nations that states that we will treat and share the land like we share a single dish and a single spoon. The land gives us everything we need to survive at the agreement and upholding our responsibilities to protect the land all of its relations.

One Dish, One Spoon also is a demonstration of our original life ways - that we are all related, we are all interconnected, and that this consideration must be extended to the land.

Learn more about A Dish With One Spoon:

<https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/a-dish-with-one-spoon>

Treaties - A relationship with Canada

When Canada created the Indian Act they created the reserve systems. Indigenous people went from vast shared territories (One Dish, One Spoon), to being moved onto 0.36% of land formed into reserves. When reading about treaties, it is important to keep in mind that the idea of land ownership, or even ceding land did not exist in our cultures.

Learn more: <https://treatyঃmap.yellowheadinstitute.org/>

Huron County is on two treaty territories - Treaty 29 (Huron Tract), and Treaty 45 ½ (Saugeen Treaty).

More can be learned about these treaties at:

<https://www.huroncountymuseum.ca/treaties-huron-county/>

Educational toolkit about the Indian Act:

<https://education.afn.ca/afntoolkit/web-modules/plain-talk-5-indian-act/introduction-to-the-indian-act/>

Kettle and Stony Point First Nation is the nearest First Nation reserve to Huron County. It is important to learn about the history and modern context of Indigenous people from Kettle and Stony Point First Nations members, and include them in any consultations.

To learn more: <https://kettlepoint.org/>

Cities, towns, villages, and rural areas will include many other First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples as well!

Indigenous people have our own treaties with each other, our own agreements with the land.

Explore Native Land map to learn more about shared territory -
<https://native-land.ca/maps/native-land>

Frameworks of Hope

Truth and Reconciliation



The realities of residential schools shocked and horrified many Canadians. The result was a broad and deep inquiry that resulted in the Calls to Action for Truth and Reconciliation. Senator and Elder, the Honourable Murray Sinclair declared them to be referred to as "Calls to Action", as necessary steps for all Canadian governments, organizations, businesses, and people.

To learn more about Indian Residential Schools

<https://nctr.ca/exhibits/>



These calls to action reflect what Canadians *must* do to establish any advancement towards ending the violence and injustices perpetrated against Indigenous peoples. In working towards projects and consultations with Indigenous Peoples, read the Calls to Action, and reflect on goals, and desired outcomes. Implicate Knowledge Keepers and Elders into laying out goals and frameworks to centre Indigenous voice.



To learn more, read the Truth and Reconciliation report, and learn about the 94 Calls to Action. Projects created within these Calls to Action take us steps closer to building good relationships.

<https://nctr.ca/about/history-of-the-trc/truth-and-reconciliation-commission-of-canada-calls-to-action/>

Creating cultural care in your organization



There are many ways you can create space for greater cultural inclusion. Some are symbolic and stand like an open door. Learn our local traditional medicines.

Sage - depicted above, is a traditional smoke cleanser that we use as "smudge". We use this in a ceremony to clean our spiritual selves - to open our hearts and senses to listen and learn with generosity



Sweetgrass is a kindness medicine that is used for smudge. We have deep teachings about the braiding of sweetgrass.

For many of us, tobacco was the first plant, the first medicine in our cosmology. Tobacco is used to build verbal agreements and covenants.



Cedar is a protector. We have a relationship with cedar in our physical health - in our lodges, and as a healing tea.



In the last years, First Nations, Inuit, and Metis have had a cultural resurgence. With great efforts, much rebuilding and strengthening of our peoples, our traditions, and our spiritual practices has been undertaken with great support from our elders and knowledge keepers.

The 4 Rs of Indigenous Relationships



The 4 Rs of relationships can guide ethical engagement with Indigenous people. No single aspect is more important, they exist in a balanced circle. The circle also does not have an end point. Relationship building is an iterative process.

Relevance - Am I paying attention to the voices, the people, and the needs of the community? Does this work commit to positive change?

Reciprocity - Am I building capacity in a sustainable way? Am I unlearning and listening? Is this a two-way process?

Respect - Am I being respectful to the People and the Land? Am I listening to the stories and giving full attention? Why am I doing this work - what is the purpose, and am I the right person to do it?

Responsibility - Have I learned about the People and Land first? Am I being ethical and accountable in my work, and clear in my communication? Does this work honour the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

Building Connections

“Nothing about us, without us”

Working with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and collaborators can inform and enrich any project, but must be at the forefront when considering any work with Indigenous communities.

- Build a relationship with the Elder or Knowledge Keeper before the event
- Silence does not mean “no.” Allow for time for consideration and decision making. Some of our knowledge requires a process of consent within our own communities
- Learn what protocols (tobacco ties, tea, smudge) are appropriate for exchange, learn why these matter
- Create an environment of care. Our stories and knowledge are community based. We serve coffee and tea, and food to our Knowledge Keepers and Elders
- Keep Indigenous guests in the loop: ask for their input on agenda, timing, setup
- Pay an appropriate honorarium. Consider paying cash, and having the honorarium ready immediately after the work is done. This is best presented in an envelope with a card, and with little fanfare. Indigenous Knowledge is wide and deep and reflects more than lived experience of the individual. Our tradition includes a gifted bundle for work done
- Allow for time - Indigenous Knowledge takes time, questions, sensitivity, and holding space
- Hold a feedback session and work to listen. We only strengthen by working through feedback with accountability and honesty
- Maintain this relationship with the Knowledge Keeper or Elder in an ongoing way - include them in future projects, consultations, and work within your organization

Learn more: <https://www.kh-cdc.ca/en/resources/guides/guide4/index.html>

Maintaining Relationships

In building relationships with Indigenous Peoples, it is important to remember that Indigenous Peoples are not a special interest group. Indigenous Peoples are the original title holders of the land.

Trust - In building any relationship, trust is key. With Indigenous Peoples, this trust has been through some difficult paces both historically and in contemporary times. Trust is slow, it requires integrity and accountability, and it takes time and commitment.

Respect - Being prepared first is a key to maintaining respect. "Doing the work" means learning about the communities and their challenges to meet the individuals as the key stakeholders in any work is necessary.

Engagement - Ongoing engagement in Indigenous realities is a must. Follow-up conversations, ongoing commitment to individuals and the work they have done builds ongoing relationships. Work with individuals outside of leadership circles - attend open events like feasts and powwows. Learn the protocols and extend the relationship outside of career obligations.

Follow-up - Create meaningful consultation by debriefing with individuals on their experiences with your project or organization. Bring in an Indigenous person to host circles for conversations about any feedback.

Accountability - Hold space for mistakes. Indigenous people will bring their truth and integrity to projects and organizations. Hold their criticism as an act of love and care. If a Knowledge Keeper or Elder provides feedback, create an action plan and reinforcements to do better.

More Resources

The Yellowhead Institute provides research, toolkits, and several resources online

<https://yellowheadinstitute.org/>

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation provides research, educational materials, resources, and the Calls to Action

<https://nctr.ca/>

The National Inquiry for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls provides information, resources, and the MMIW report

<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/>

150 Acts of Reconciliation

<https://activehistory.ca/blog/2017/08/04/150-acts-of-reconciliation-for-the-last-150-days-of-canadas-150/>

On Indigenous worldview: ***Braiding Sweetgrass*** by Robin Wall Kimmerer

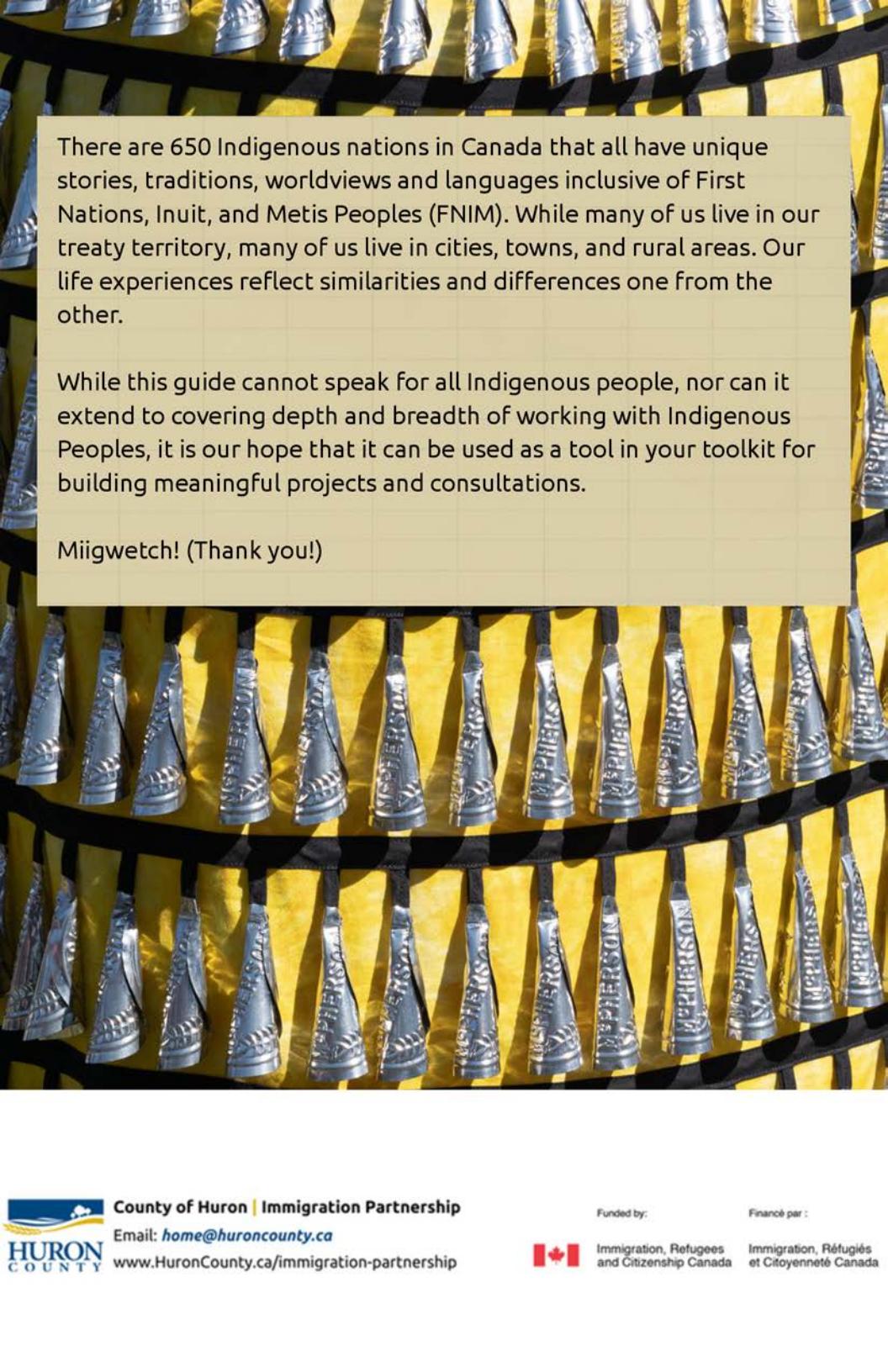
On Indigenous reciprocity: ***The Serviceberry*** by Robin Wall Kimmerer

21 Things You May Not Know About The Indian Act - by Bob Joseph

The Reconciliation Manifesto - By Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson

All Our Relations - Finding The Path Forward - Tanya Talaga

Truth Telling - Seven Conversations About Indigenous Life in Canada - Michelle Good



There are 650 Indigenous nations in Canada that all have unique stories, traditions, worldviews and languages inclusive of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Peoples (FNIM). While many of us live in our treaty territory, many of us live in cities, towns, and rural areas. Our life experiences reflect similarities and differences one from the other.

While this guide cannot speak for all Indigenous people, nor can it extend to covering depth and breadth of working with Indigenous Peoples, it is our hope that it can be used as a tool in your toolkit for building meaningful projects and consultations.

Miigwetch! (Thank you!)



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www.HuronCounty.ca/immigration-partnership

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