



Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis:
A Roadmap for Policy Development



Native Women's Association of Canada

L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada



ABOUT THE NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a national Indigenous organization representing political voices of Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse+ (WG2STGD+) People in Canada. NWAC is inclusive of First Nations—on- and off-reserve, status, non-status, and disenfranchised—Inuit, and Métis. An aggregate of Indigenous women's organizations from across the country, NWAC was founded on a collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of Indigenous WG2STGD+ People in their respective communities and Canadian societies.

Since 1974, NWAC has established strong and lasting governance structures, decision-making processes, financial policies and procedures, and networks, to achieve its overall mission, vision, and goals. Today, NWAC engages in national and international advocacy aimed at legislative and policy reforms to promote equality for Indigenous WG2STGD+ and LGBTQQAI+ People. Through advocacy, policy, and legislative analysis, NWAC works to preserve Indigenous culture and advance the wellbeing of all Indigenous WG2STGD People, as well as their families and communities.

MISSION STATEMENT

Advocate for and inspire women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and the families of many Indigenous nations.

VISION STATEMENT

We envision an inclusive world that understands and respects the diversity and uniqueness of all Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and families.

TABLE of CONTENTS

ABOUT THE NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA.....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	4
WHAT IS POLICY?.....	5
POLICY AS A TOOL FOR COLONIAL OPPRESSION: THE <i>INDIAN ACT</i>	5
CONSIDERING THE COMPLEXITIES.....	7
APPROACHES TO POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA.....	9
THE FEDERAL APPROACH: GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS+ (GBA+).....	9
CRGBA: A RESPONSE.....	9
CULTURALLY RELEVANT GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS: A GUIDING POLICY FRAMEWORK.....	10
PUTTING IT TOGETHER: THE CRGBA ROADMAP.....	11
CONCEPT 1: DISTINCTIONS-BASED.....	12
SEPARATION VERSUS SOLIDARITY.....	14
RESISTING SEPARATION, FOSTERING SOLIDARITY.....	15
THINKING ABOUT DISTINCTIONS IN POLICY.....	16
PUTTING IT TOGETHER: SHELTER SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE.....	19
THE PROPOSED RESPONSE: THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM.....	21
DEVELOPING A DISTINCTIONS-BASED POLICY INTERVENTION.....	22
CONCEPT 2: INTERSECTIONALITY.....	26
INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES TO POLICY IN CANADA.....	27
POSITIONALITY.....	28
MAPPING YOUR POSITIONALITY.....	30
THINKING IN THE INTERSECTIONS.....	31
CONCEPT 3: GENDER DIVERSITY.....	38
ACCOUNTING FOR GENDER DIVERSITY IN POLICY RESPONSES.....	39
ADDITIONAL HELPFUL RESOURCES.....	42
CASE STUDY: THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES.....	42
THINKING THROUGH CRGBA.....	44
CONCEPT 4: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE.....	46
GROUNDING POLICY WITHIN INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING.....	47
CONCEPT 5: TRAUMA-INFORMED.....	50
IMPLEMENTING TRAUMA-INFORMED POLICY ANALYSIS.....	52
CASE STUDY: THE FEDERAL APPROACH.....	55
CO-DEVELOPMENT FROM A CRGBA LENS: GUIDING PRINCIPLES.....	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	60



INTRODUCTION

The CRGBA Framework is at the foundation of NWAC’s work—across our policy projects, external advocacy, and research. By employing a culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA), we ensure our advocacy is rooted within our collective vision: *We envision an inclusive world that understands and respects the diversity and uniqueness of all Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and families.* The CRGBA Framework holds us accountable to this vision by emphasizing an intersectional, gender-diverse, Indigenous-focused and -led, and distinctions-based approach. This also ensures that we are role modelling an ethics of accountability and relationality to our stakeholders, including federal and provincial governments, who often turn to us as leaders and subject-matter experts in this work.

NWAC’s CRGBA Framework, developed in response to gaps in traditional GBA+, draws attention to the specific cultural, historical, and intersecting aspects of identity among Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people. Since its initial development in 2007, the CRGBA Framework is continuously evolving to reflect new data and wise practices. In June 2020, NWAC published *A Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA) Starter Kit: Introduction, Incorporation, and Illustrations of Use.*¹ This publication introduced the CRGBA Framework, including the historical context from which the Framework emerged, the evidence base and rationale behind its use, and its applications within social policy and advocacy. *Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA): A Roadmap for Policy Development* is a continuation of this work, intended to outline recent developments in practices and offer a practical guide for applying the CRGBA Framework across policy areas. Included in this document is a number of practical tools, activities, definitions, and further discussion around the CRGBA Framework, along with illustrative case studies.

This document was made possible through the health capacity funding stream from the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada.

¹ *A Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA) Starter Kit: Introduction, Incorporation, and Illustrations of Use.* Native Women’s Association of Canada, July 14, 2020. <https://www.nwac.ca/resource/a-culturally-relevant-gender-based-analysis/>

WHAT IS POLICY?

“POLICIES AND POLICY-MAKING ARE NOT NEUTRAL.”²

When we talk about policy, we may be referring to a number of things, including organizational policies (what you might find in your employee handbook) or public policies (policies outlined and enacted by federal, provincial, or municipal governments). Typically, policies are introduced to address a given issue or problem in a standardized and consistent way.

This roadmap is intended to guide policy-makers, researchers, and other relevant audiences in developing culturally relevant, inclusive, and holistic public policy. For the purposes of this document, **public policy** is defined as “both the general purpose of government action and the views on the best or preferred means of carrying it out.”³ Public policy shapes government decision-making and programming, and includes a broad range of policy areas such as social, economic, and foreign policy.⁴ Within the context of Canada, Indigenous policy is an integral public policy area and is the main area of focus within our advocacy, research, and policy analysis at NWAC.

POLICY AS A TOOL FOR COLONIAL OPPRESSION: THE *INDIAN ACT*

Public policy is important to critically analyze because it impacts Indigenous lived experience across the nation, both past and present. Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people experience the impacts of public policy every day, whether it’s influencing access to safe and reliable health care, clean drinking water, education, or job opportunities. Such impacts are rooted in both historic and contemporary policy responses, shaped by legislation and ongoing colonial oppression.

Public policies are also subject to influence by public opinion, advocacy groups, and/or the ideologies of different political parties,⁵ and can change to reflect the society around them. For example, think about the [evolution of the *Indian Act* within Canada](#) and its influence on past and present Indigenous policies:⁶

2 Evaluating GBA+ and CRGBA: A Literature Review, Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2021. [A-Culturally-Relevant-Gender-Based-Analysis.pdf \(nwac.ca\)](#)

3 André Bernard. “Public Policy.” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Last edited April 25, 2018. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/public-policy>

4 Bernard, 2014.

5 Ibid.

6 Adapted from “The *Indian Act* Said WHAT?” Native Women’s Association of Canada, January 1, 2018. <https://www.nwac.ca/resource/indian-act-timeline-en/>



POLICIES:

1. In 1876, the *Indian Act* is created, extinguishing any existing Indigenous self-government structures. An “Indian” is defined as ‘any male person of Indian blood’ and their children. Indigenous women with status lost their status if they married non-status men, and anyone with status who earned a degree also lost their status.
2. In 1880, Indigenous farmers were required to have permits to sell cattle, grain, hay, or produce and to buy groceries and clothes.
3. In 1884, public policy dictated that Indigenous children with status attend residential schools. As a result, children were stolen from their families, lands, and cultures. Only a year later, Indigenous ceremonies were completely banned, and Indigenous people were not allowed to leave their reserve without express permission.
4. In 1927, Indigenous Peoples required government approval to have legal representation regarding land claims.
5. In 1951, things change; bans on dancing, ceremony, and legal claims are removed, but an amendment enacts the ‘double mother rule,’ which removes the status of a person whose mother and grandmother received status through marriage.
6. In 1960, Indigenous Peoples are allowed to vote in federal elections.
7. In 1970 through to 1978, Indigenous women organizing and advocacy enforces Canada to acknowledge that the marrying-out rule is sexist, and in 1981, the UN Human Rights Committee finds the loss of status upon marriage to violate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
8. It will take until 1985 for the marrying-out rule to be removed with the introduction of Bill C-31. However, the removal is not without continued problems, including the Second-Generation Cut-Off Rule.⁷
9. To fully remove known sex-based inequities around Indian status, Bill S-3 was introduced in December 2017 and changes were implemented gradually. With the inception of Bill S-3, people whose mother, grandmother, or great-grandmother either (1) lost status due to marriage or (2) lost status due to their parent’s marriage to a non-entitled person were now entitled to status.⁸
10. Despite these changes, inequities remain. These include: the Second-Generation Cut-Off Rule, differential treatment on the basis of age and marital status, and an unfair burden of proof related to unknown or unstated parentage.⁹

7 *Inequality and the Indian Act: A History of Harm and the Healing Path Forward*, Native Women’s Association of Canada, April 8, 2022. https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SPARK-NWAC-EQUALITY_INDIAN_ACT-EN6-digital.-New.pdf

8 “Implementation of Bill S-3: Outreach on Recent Changes to Registration,” Government of Canada, June 10, 2021. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1619622534553/1619622552773>

9 Native Women’s Association of Canada, 11.



Interested in learning more about the current state of the Indian Act and Indigenous women's responses? Read NWAC's recently released report, **"Inequality and the Indian Act: A History of Harm and the Healing Path Forward."**

The *Indian Act* effectively shaped policy that enforced the assimilation and genocide of Indigenous Peoples. Reflecting on the development of the Canadian nation-state and the evolution of the *Indian Act*, we see how Indigenous Peoples, particularly Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people, have been disenfranchised and harmed by public policy. Indeed, the impact of these harms still persist today, influencing the many realities that Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people have had to navigate due to loss of status and, consequently, loss of the right to self-determination.

CONSIDERING THE COMPLEXITIES

However, as Pam Palmater, a Mi'kmaw lawyer, member of Eel River Bar First Nation, and chair of Indigenous governance at Toronto Metropolitan University argues, the *Indian Act* has since transformed to be both an incredibly racist as well as a potentially viable legislative accountability mechanism to ensure the government follows through on their legal responsibilities to Indigenous People.¹⁰ Palmater states:

“ This policy agenda to ‘get rid of the Indian problem’ has dominated successive federal governments despite their words to the contrary. The *Indian Act* is used as a target to deflect blame for racist decisions made by the federal government while at the same time being used as a clever guise under which to ultimately force the surrender of all First Nation rights.”

¹⁰ Pam Palmater. "Abolishing the *Indian Act* Means Eliminating First Nations' Rights," *Maclean's*, October 10, 2019, <https://www.macleans.ca/opinion/abolishing-the-indian-act-means-eliminating-first-nations-rights/>

¹¹ Palmater, para 10.



Thus, it becomes a lot more complicated than simply abolishing the *Indian Act*. Policy-makers considering how to engage with the impacts of the *Indian Act* must consider the complex relationship the Act has now shaped with Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people. This includes considering what purpose the resulting policies from the Act serve for Indigenous Peoples today. This also requires assessing what protections the Act may afford to Indigenous Peoples, given that the federal government has provided no alternative recourse or accountability mechanism to foster nation-to-nation engagement or Indigenous self-determination.

If equipped with a culturally grounded, inclusive, and distinctions-based lens, policy-makers can begin to analyze the impacts of the *Indian Act* on policy responses today, recognizing how its legacy has informed current social, health, economic, and other policy interventions.



Reflection

- What issues can you identify today that were influenced by the Indian Act?
- What policy responses exist that address these issues?
- In your opinion, are these policy responses effective or not? Why?

APPROACHES TO POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA

THE FEDERAL APPROACH: GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS+ (GBA+)

Gender-based analysis + (GBA+) evolved within the Canadian context through Status of Women Canada. The aim of GBA+ was to foster gender parity within the assessment and implementation of policy and legislation, evaluating the ways in which policies and programs are experienced differently according to gender.

In practice, GBA+ fails to critically engage with and evaluate the colonial systems of power, privilege, and oppression that structure it.¹² The current approach aligns Indigeneity as an adjacent variable to other racialized or ethnocultural backgrounds, rather than *centring* and analyzing the unique impacts that colonization has had on Indigenous experience. Consequently, it also fails to foster Indigenous self-determination and nation-to-nation reciprocity and respect.

Because GBA+ is meant to work within the bounds of existing systems by adding some diversity into the mix, in its implementation, it is not about addressing power and the unequal relationships underneath a given policy.¹³

CRGBA: A RESPONSE

CRGBA is a tool to assess how policies and programs impact people differently, according to differences in our identities and ways of living. NWAC introduced the CRGBA Framework as a response to gaps in the federal GBA+ framework, emphasizing its use to reduce harm and engage policy-makers from all backgrounds in a collaborative and reciprocal process. CRGBA conceptualizes gender diversity and intersectionality in a culturally grounded, distinctions-based way, prioritizing conceptualizations of differential lived experience in terms of Indigenous ways of knowing, governance, and value systems.

CRGBA is intended to build capacity across policy-makers and community members, drawing attention to the urgent need to centre and reclaim Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding within the policy interventions that impact Indigenous lived experience.

¹² Evaluating GBA+ and CRGBA: A Literature Review, Native Women's Association of Canada. 2021. [A-Culturally-Relevant-Gender-Based-Analysis.pdf \(nwac.ca\)](#)

¹³ Native Women's Association of Canada, 4.



CULTURALLY RELEVANT GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS: A GUIDING POLICY FRAMEWORK

CRGBA comprises the following **5** KEY CONCEPTS:

- DISTINCTIONS-BASED
- INTERSECTIONAL
- GENDER-DIVERSE
- INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE
- TRAUMA-INFORMED

The following sections will provide an outline of the key concepts that make up the CRGBA Framework.

This roadmap concludes with a step-by-step outline to policy analysis rooted through the lens of each concept.



Throughout this guide, there are a series of activities and tables to support you in applying culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA) to your work. Use these tables to identify how your proposed policy intervention or program demonstrates the five concepts, and write down clear indicators of how your policy or program meets (or does not meet) the identified objectives. If a question is not applicable, explain why. This will help keep you accountable to the CRGBA approach throughout the policy development process.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: THE CRGBA ROADMAP

Think of CRGBA as an **ongoing journey**. We engage in a CRGBA-informed approach to discover gaps and biases, and to ensure our policies and programs are relevant and culturally grounded. CRGBA encourages us to think in terms of growth and discovery, keeping an open mind as we learn about and listen to the distinct lived experiences of others. Remember that CRGBA is not just a form of analysis; it is a way of thinking, of being, and of doing. It can be applied to all aspects of policy, research, program development, and advocacy.

Use this roadmap to help guide your own journey through the policy process. Remember that the destination is not always as concrete as we may initially expect, and that the journey is intended to uncover aspects of our approach that we may not have considered before. Establish respectful, reciprocal relationships with those whose journeys you will be impacting with your policy, and meaningfully engage them in the process with you.

It's always better to learn, grow, and travel together.





CONCEPT 1: DISTINCTIONS-BASED



The concept of a distinctions-based approach to policy evolved out of an effort to resist employing a **pan-Indigenous lens**. To define a distinctions-based approach, the Government of Canada outlines the following:

“ The Government of Canada recognizes First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation as the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, consisting of distinct, rights-bearing communities with their own histories, including with the Crown. A distinctions-based approach ensures that the unique rights, interests, and circumstances of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented.¹⁴ ”

Pan-indigenizing is a “one size fits all” approach to developing policies and programs that impact Indigenous people. **Pan-indigenizing** approaches treat Indigenous people all the same and fail to recognize the distinctions and varied needs across Indigenous lived experience.

Their commitment to a distinctions-based approach is further outlined in Principle 10 of the Government of Canada’s *Principles: Respecting the Government of Canada’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples*:

“ The Government of Canada recognizes that a distinctions-based approach is needed to ensure that the unique rights, interests, and circumstances of the First Nations, the Métis Nation, and Inuit are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented.¹⁵ ”

¹⁴ Engagement Guide: Co-Developing Federal Distinctions-Based Indigenous Health Legislation, Government of Canada, February 22, 2022. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1626810643316/1626810705013#s4>

¹⁵ Principles: Respecting the Government of Canada’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples, Government of Canada, September 1, 2021. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/principles-principes.html>





When thinking about the Government of Canada's description of a distinctions-based approach to legislation, ask yourself the following:

- Who is included in this statement? Why were they included? Who benefits from this inclusion?
- Who is not included? Why do you think this is the case? Who benefits from their exclusion?

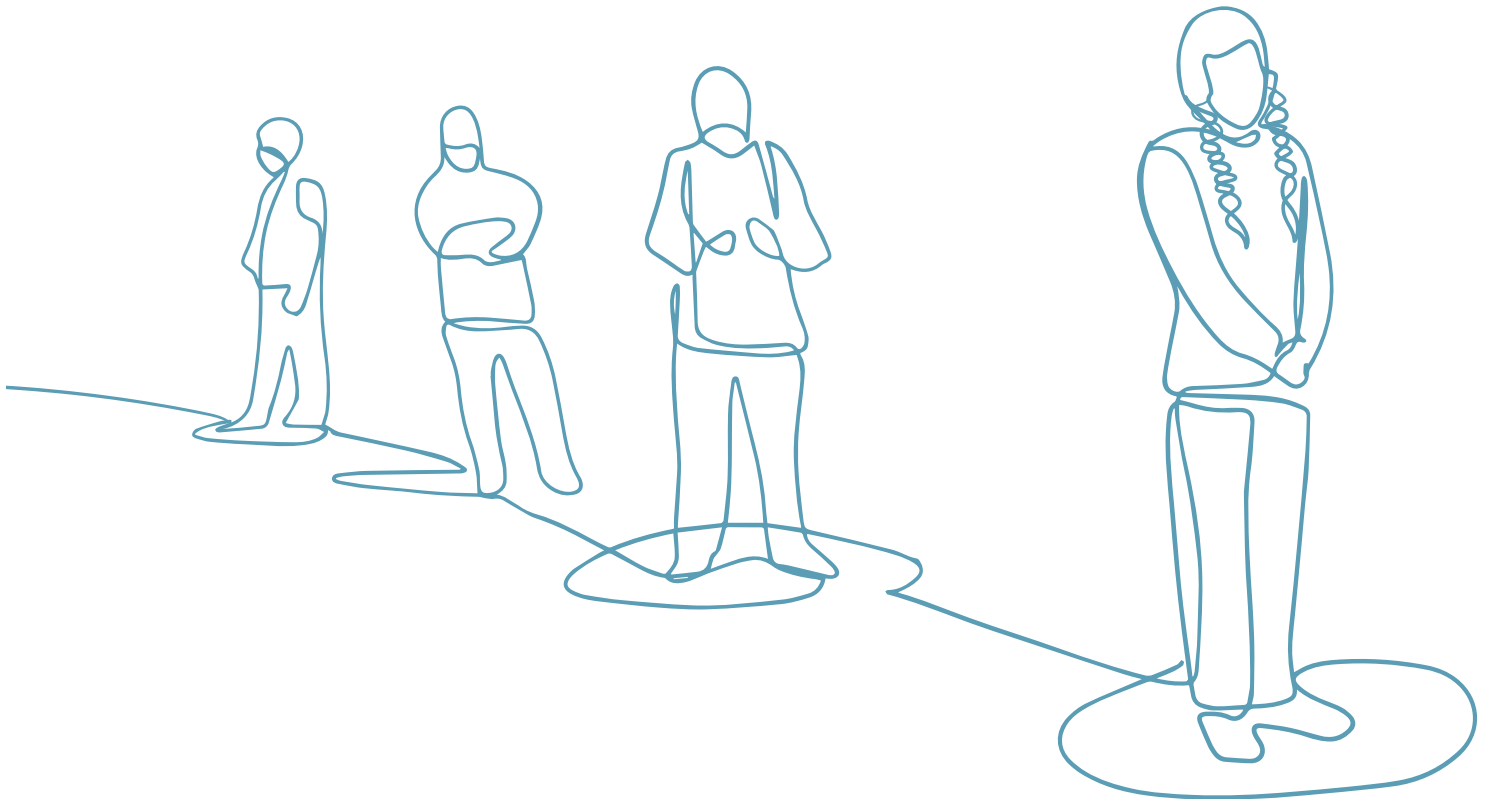
While the federal distinctions-based approach to legislation and policy development appears to be, in theory, a positive shift, there continue to be significant gaps in practice. Consider the following comments by NWAC's Eastern Regional Elder Alma Brooks, from her [editorial](#) featured in *The Hill Times*:

“

... when the Liberal government was grasping for easier ways to negotiate with the Indigenous Peoples of this country, it came up with this “distinctions-based” model that was never subjected to the gender-based analysis it promised to apply to its decision-making... the result of its omission is a flawed framework that takes no account of gender equality. ¹⁶

”

¹⁶ Alma Brooks. “Time to Rethink the Model: Distinctions-Based Framework is Colonial, Sexist, and Simply Doesn't Work,” *The Hill Times*, April 14, 2021. <https://www.hilltimes.com/2021/04/14/293100/293100>



SEPARATION VERSUS SOLIDARITY

Due to the increased focus on a distinction-based approach that emphasizes and defines Indigeneity along three discrete and separate categories, there is less room for self-identification of Indigenous experience that does not fit ‘within the box’—for example, displaced Indigenous people, people whose Indigeneity is not inherently tied to land claims, and Indigenous people who have been disenfranchised (without status). In doing so, the government has asserted power over how and what qualifies as an Indigenous identity.¹⁷

Additionally, the federal conceptualization of a distinctions-based approach emphasizes the federal government’s own legal interpretation of what constitutes Indigeneity, which ties Indigenous identity to land claims. This serves to reinforce colonial hierarchies of Indigeneity and imposes a worldview that is simply not compatible with Indigenous ways of knowing and being. This in turn threatens Indigenous solidarity, along with the principles of self-determination, reciprocity, mutual respect, and power sharing, by encouraging competition between groups over resources and recognition.¹⁸

¹⁷ “Distinctions-Based Approaches.” Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2021. [Insert Web Link]

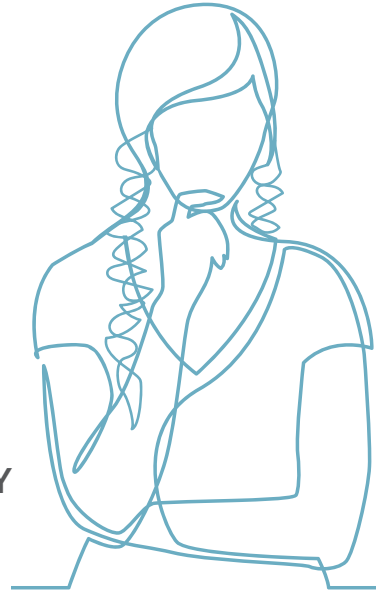
¹⁸ Ibid.

RESISTING SEPARATION, FOSTERING SOLIDARITY

As outlined by Elder Alma Brooks, NWAC contests the federal distinctions-based approach and instead employs an approach that critically engages with and responds to the gaps that exist within the federal model. We acknowledge how the federal distinctions-based approach furthers sexism and privileges communities tied to land claims, failing to account for urban, displaced, and/or non-status Indigenous community members.

To address these gaps, we have transformed the understanding of a distinctions-based approach to both resist pan-Indigenous approaches and to include communities that have been overlooked by the federal system. This approach contextualizes knowledge by community and accounts for distinctions between the lived experiences of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and on- and off-reserve, urban, and/or non-status Indigenous people.





THINKING ABOUT DISTINCTIONS IN POLICY

Ask Yourself:

Are the distinct lived experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis meaningfully represented?

Specifically:

Are First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people actually engaged in the co-development of this policy or program?

(Eg.) Indigenous community members are listed/cited as leading/co-leading this project.



Ask Yourself:

Have you also accounted for the experiences of on- versus off-reserve, rural versus urban, and status versus non-status Indigenous people?

Specifically:

Are they participating in the co-development of your proposed policy or program?
How might their circumstances shape their experience of your proposed policy or program?



How does this program impact all Indigenous women and gender-diverse persons, regardless of where they live?

Specifically:

Have the appropriate communities been meaningfully and equitably consulted?
This includes engagement beyond tribal councils.





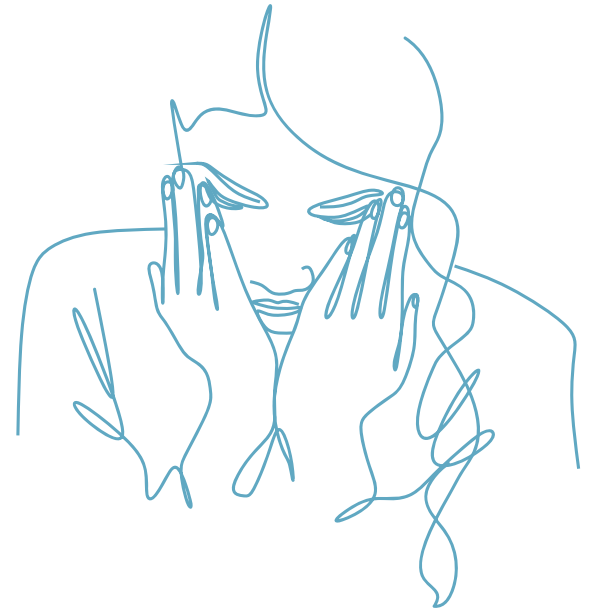
Ask Yourself:

Who is left out? Why?

Specifically:

Is there any way we could better incorporate voices who have been left out?





PUTTING IT TOGETHER: SHELTER SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

This case study will help you put the distinctions-based approach into practice in the context of shelter services for survivors of violence. Consider the following statement from Elder Alma Brooks:

“Consider a scenario in which a public service, like a shelter, is needed for Indigenous women in all major cities. Would we provide one for the First Nations, one for the Métis, and one for the Inuit? Of course not. But, [the federal government’s] distinctions-based framework could be proffered as an excuse to build nothing at all—leaving Indigenous women with nothing but a mainstream alternative that does not work for them.”¹⁹

Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people continue to face disproportionate experiences of violence across Canada, constituting an ongoing genocide against Indigenous Peoples. Consequently, emergency and transitional shelter services are facing increasing demands given their fundamental role in the frontline response to the genocide. Additionally, increased access to culturally appropriate and Indigenous-led shelter services was highlighted as a crucial need in 2019 by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which outlined in Call for Justice 4.7:

¹⁹ Alma Brooks. “Time to Rethink the Model: Distinctions-Based Framework is Colonial, Sexist, and Simply Doesn’t Work,” *The Hill Times*, April 14, 2021. <https://www.hilltimes.com/2021/04/14/293100/293100>



Call for Justice 4.7:

“We call upon all governments to support the establishment and long-term sustainable funding of Indigenous-led low-barrier shelters, safe spaces, transition homes, second-stage housing, and services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people who are homeless, near homeless, dealing with food insecurity, or in poverty, and who are fleeing violence or have been subjected to sexualized violence and exploitation. All governments must ensure that shelters, transitional housing, second-stage housing, and services are appropriate to cultural needs, and available wherever Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people reside.”²⁰

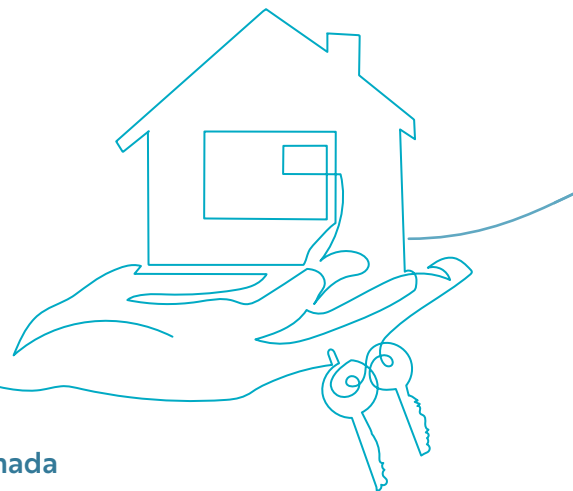
Currently, there are several different types of emergency shelter services in operation across Canada, each with different mandates, programs, eligibility requirements, and sources of funding. Given the broad range of geographical locations different services cover, there are also different needs in terms of programs, services, and approaches to practice depending on the community they serve.

Some shelters, including shelters located on-reserve, are funded either partially or in whole by the federal government. Other shelters are funded provincially, along with private donor funding and other forms of fundraised capital. It has been well documented that there is a significant disparity in access to funding between on-reserve and off-reserve shelter services, with on-reserve shelter services facing greater barriers to receiving sustainable, long-term funding and support.²¹ Additionally, some Indigenous service users may be unable to access certain services based on their geographical location.²²

20 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

21 Kaitlin Schwan et al. *Key Findings: The State of Women's Housing Need & Homelessness in Canada*. Edited by Arlene Hache et al. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press, 2020. <https://womenshomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/Key-Findings-State-of-Womens-Homelessness.pdf>

22 Ibid, 30.



THE PROPOSED RESPONSE: THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

To fulfill its commitment outlined within the [Federal Pathway to Address Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People](#) and to address the Calls for Justice, the federal government introduced the [Family Violence Prevention Program \(FVPP\)](#).

This program is intended to fund emergency gender-based violence services, develop culturally appropriate community-driven violence prevention activities, increase awareness of gender-based violence, produce research, and facilitate engagement with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people on culturally appropriate interventions to violence.²³

One component of the FVPP is the [Indigenous Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative](#). This initiative will allocate approximately \$724.1 million to:

1. **BUILD** new shelters and transitional housing across Canada for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people
2. **SUPPORT** the operational costs of new shelters and transition homes
3. **EXPAND** funding for culturally relevant violence prevention activities

Additionally, the federal government, in collaboration with Pauktuutit, committed separate funds for the construction and ongoing operation of new Inuit-specific shelters, which will be located across Inuit Nunangat and in urban settings.²⁴

The federal government has outlined specific eligibility criteria and deadlines for interested organizations and community-based parties to apply for the funding. To support applicants, they have developed an application guide, and offline applications can be made available upon request. The federal government has also outlined the selection process involved, indicating that if an application is not successful, it will automatically be considered in the next review phase.²⁵



²³ "Family Violence Prevention Program," Government of Canada, February 25, 2022. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100035253/1533304683142#sec2>

²⁴ "Government of Canada Commits to Fund Shelters for Inuit Women," Government of Canada, January 26, 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/news/2021/01/government-of-canada-commits-to-fund-shelters-for-inuit-women.html>

²⁵ *Indigenous Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative*, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Published May 3, 2022. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/project-funding-and-mortgage-financing/funding-programs/all-funding-programs/shelter-and-transitional-housing-initiative-for-indigenous>



DEVELOPING A DISTINCTIONS-BASED POLICY INTERVENTION

Given this information, how might you critically analyze the issue using a distinctions-based lens? Recall the following questions to guide you in your analysis:

It is useful to review a variety of sources when considering the impacts; consult both the academic and grey literature, as well as consider the narratives and testimonials of service users who have navigated the shelter system and service providers who work within those systems.



Ask Yourself:

Are the distinct lived experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis meaningfully represented?

Specifically:

Are First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people actually engaged in the co-development of this policy or program?



Lined writing area for user input.

Ask Yourself:

Have you also accounted for the experiences of on- versus off-reserve, rural versus urban, and status versus non-status Indigenous people?

Specifically:

Are they participating in the co-development of your proposed policy or program?

How might their circumstances shape their experience of your proposed policy or program? For example, how might a shelter program look different when taking into account the experiences of urban versus rural and on- and off-reserve service users?

What about status versus non-status people?

Who is disproportionately impacted by a lack of access to status?





Ask Yourself:

How does this program impact all Indigenous women and gender-diverse persons, regardless of where they live?

Specifically:

Have the appropriate communities been meaningfully and equitably consulted?



Ask Yourself:

Who is left out? Why?
Based on your analysis, what recommendations do you have?

Specifically:

Is there any way we could better incorporate voices who have been left out?



Based on your analysis, what recommendations do you have?

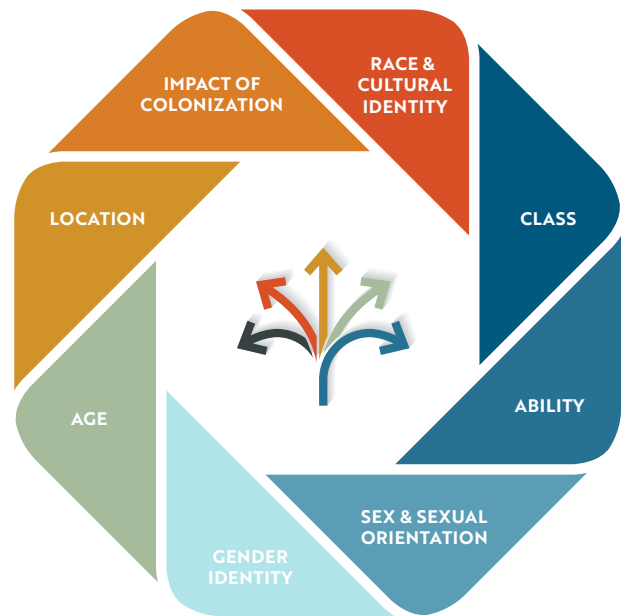


CONCEPT 2: INTERSECTIONALITY



// Where systems of race, gender, and class domination converge ... intervention strategies based solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds will be of limited help to women who because of race and class face different obstacles²⁶. //

African-American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term ‘intersectionality’ in 1991.²⁷ **Intersectionality** means that everyone has different and unique intersecting aspects of their identity, and these intersections of identity shape our experiences of privilege and/or oppression. In her seminal work, Crenshaw illustrated how multiple intersections of identity, such as race, class, and gender, shape the experiences of women of colour navigating domestic violence.²⁸ For example, women of colour often faced increased barriers to leaving abusive relationships due to experiences of racism when seeking support, as well as the compounded impacts of unemployment or underemployment, poverty, lack of safe, sustainable housing, and child care obligations—all of which were informed by sexism and racism.²⁹



²⁶ Kimberlé Crenshaw. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review*, 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–1300. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1241.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1245.

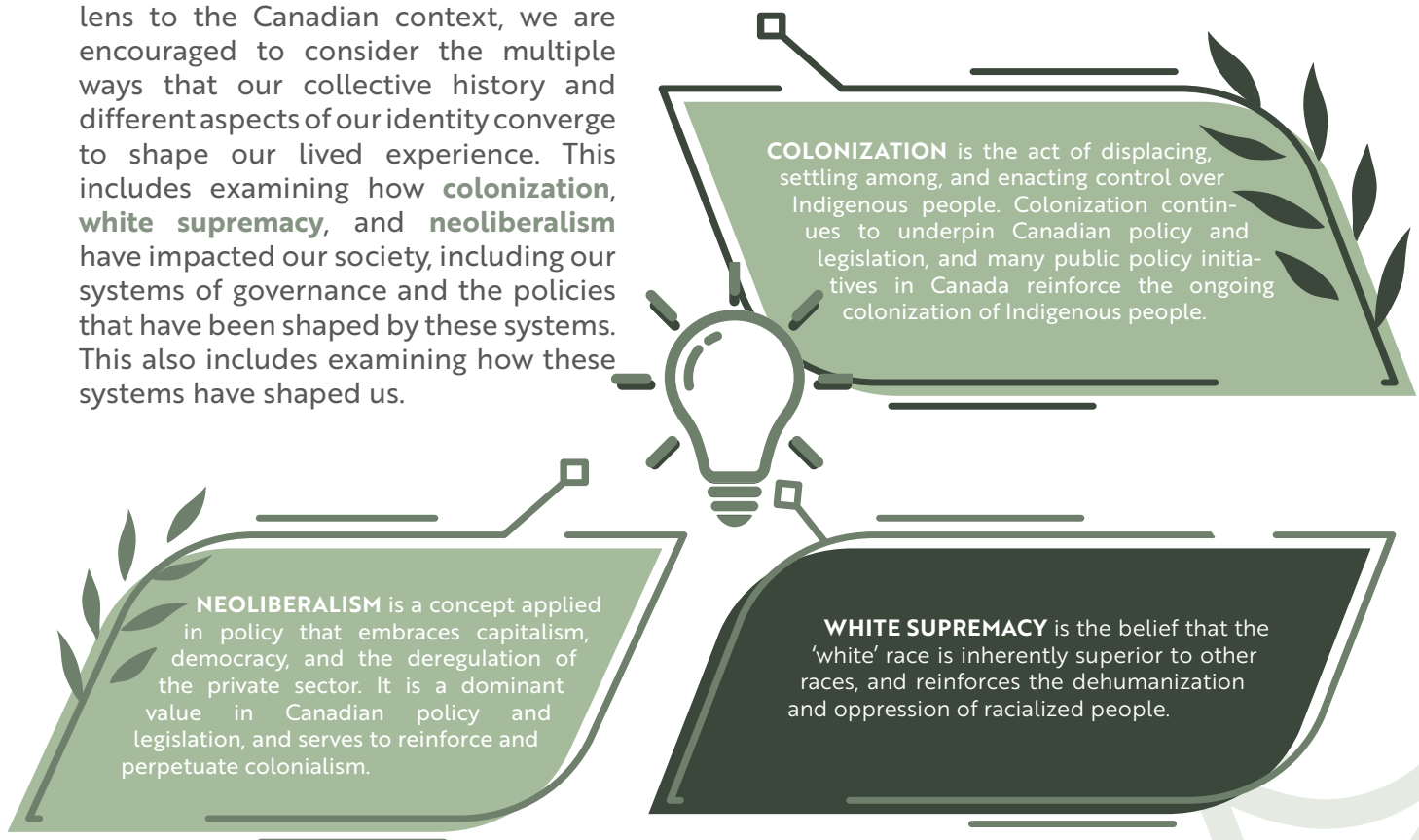
²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1246.

Simultaneously, people can also experience multiple forms of privilege, depending on how they identify or what their circumstances are. Consider your circumstances: think about whether you have access to safe housing, health care, stable employment or other sources of income, education, opportunities for economic advancement, and other basic needs. Then, going a step further, consider your identity: is your ethnocultural background, language, religious belief system, and/or gender identity or expression common or highly represented in your community? Are these aspects of your identity represented equally in our political systems and media?

If you answered yes, you likely experience some level of privilege according to different aspects of your identity. However, most people tend to experience a combination of different levels of privilege and oppression. It is the intersections of these experiences that an intersectional lens encourages us to interrogate.

INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES TO POLICY IN CANADA

When applying an intersectional lens to the Canadian context, we are encouraged to consider the multiple ways that our collective history and different aspects of our identity converge to shape our lived experience. This includes examining how **colonization**, **white supremacy**, and **neoliberalism** have impacted our society, including our systems of governance and the policies that have been shaped by these systems. This also includes examining how these systems have shaped us.



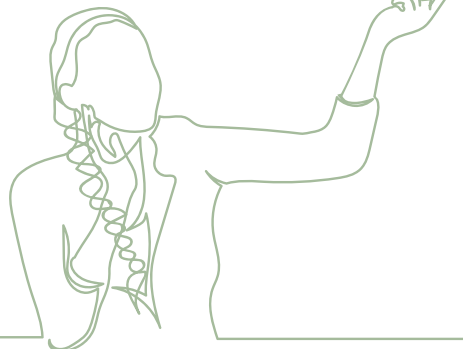


POSITIONALITY


The first step to implementing an intersectional approach to policy is to first reflect inward; as mentioned earlier, policy does not exist in a vacuum. Policy is heavily influenced by societal values, political ideology, and the actors involved in establishing the policies themselves. Thus, it is good practice to reflect on how your **positionality**³⁰ might inform how you approach policy development, including reflecting on how your values and beliefs influence your decision-making.

POSITIONALITY refers to how your different intersections of identity, personal values, views, and location in time and space (namely your different positions) influence how you understand the world. The term also shows that these social and spatial positions are not fixed—rather, they are fluid—shifting according to different contexts. Your positionality shapes both what kind of knowledge you have and what knowledge you produce.

By reflecting on your positionality and its influence in your approach to policy analysis and development, you can begin to unpack and address any biases that may inform your work. Reflecting on your positionality also helps you recognize the strengths and limitations of your knowledge. This can also be a useful way to identify who you need to engage in your consultation process.



30 Luis Sánchez. "Positionality." In *Encyclopedia of Geography*, edited by Barney Warf, 2258. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2010. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412939591.n913>



WHERE DO YOU FIT? Can you recall a time your identity impacted your ability to access healthcare, employment, or social welfare programs?

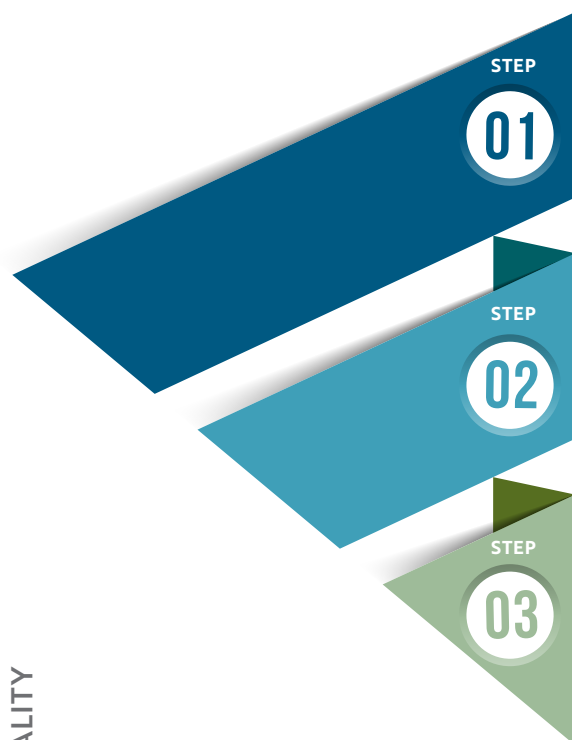




MAPPING YOUR POSITIONALITY

The following activity, the **Social Identity Map**,³¹ is adapted from [NWAC's Community Based Research Toolkit](#) and was originally developed by Jacobson and Mustafa for the purpose of fostering self-reflection in researchers. It has been re-introduced here as a way to guide policy-makers in applying a self-reflective, intersectional lens to policy analysis and development.

USING THE SOCIAL IDENTITY MAP



Record where you fit in terms of broader aspects of identity (e.g., class, race, gender). Not all categories will apply to you. Some categories may be missing since not everyone fits into just one box. Fill in or add to the categories in ways that make the most sense for you.

Record how these positions impact your life. For an example of this, refer to the sample completed on the Social Identity Map.

Identify the emotions, feelings, or values that may be tied to the impacts outlined in the second tier. Go a step further and think critically about how these feelings impact:

- How you engage with the people who will be impacted by your proposed policy or program. Consider your position as a policy-maker, and any power imbalances that exist between you and the community you are engaging.
- What issues you choose to address and why.
- How you approach engagement and policy research.
- How you interpret your results.

³¹ Danielle Jacobson and Nida Mustafa. (2019). "Social Identity Map: A Reflexivity Tool for Practicing Explicit Positionality in Critical Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 18 (2019): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1609406919870075>

Tier 1 POSITIONS

Tier 2 IMPACTS

Tier 3 EMOTIONS, FEELINGS, VALUES

Neurodivergent,
Able-Bodied

Cost of medication and mental health care, barriers to wellness

Able-bodied privilege, straight sized

- "Hidden disability," pass for neurotypical
- Costs associated with learning disability are extremely frustrating and feel limiting, exhausting
- Internalized fatphobia/body shaming due to societal norms and being raised as a girl – need to actively interrogate and dismantle this in my behaviour, thoughts, and feelings
- Access to many spaces, not judged based on size or ability

Mixed-Race - Chakma (Indigenous South Asian), Irish, First Generation "Canadian"

Proximity to whiteness, white/light skinned privilege, between worlds, settler

Colonial violence, multigenerational trauma, displaced colonial subject

- Complicit in ongoing occupation of Indigenous lands, replicating colonial violence
- Complicated, racial microaggressions depending on space, ethnically ambiguous, complicated identity, sense of belonging – who am I? Which communities claim me?
- Loss of culture, language, lands, and identity, no connection to Chakma territory
- Experiences of disownment, parents' trauma and assimilation
- Irish poverty and multigenerational trauma, addictions, mental illness

University Educated (Postgraduate)

Access to upwards economic mobility

Incapacitating student loan debt

- Fortunate to be able to pursue more fulfilling and better career opportunities
- Stressful having such a significant amount of student loan debt, worried about being unable to pay it off
Still an investment into my future

Queer, Cis Woman

Cis privilege, lived experience as a woman

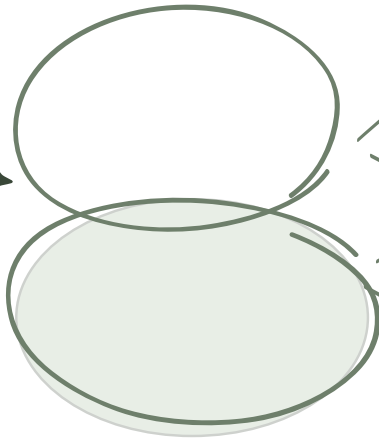
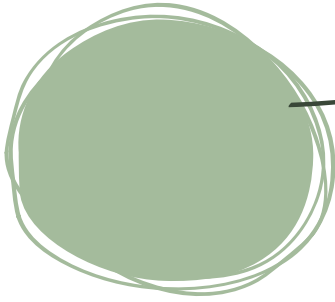
Passing for straight, internalized queerphobia

- I am able to access many resources due to my positionality – for example, I don't need to worry about being unable to find a bathroom or fitting room to use
- Raised Catholic, internalized heteronormative, colonial values that I am trying to unlearn
- Don't feel seen or represented authentically in many spaces

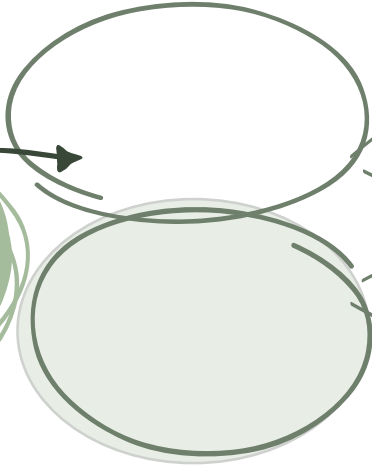
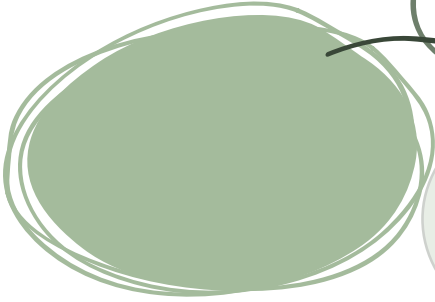
Tier 1
POSITIONS

Tier 2 IMPACTS

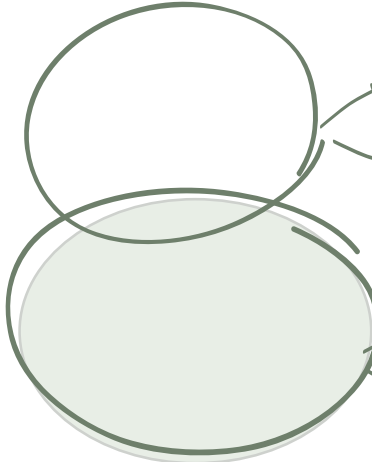
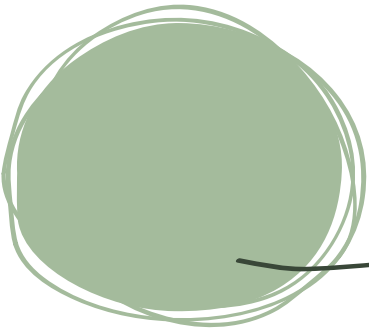
Tier 3 EMOTIONS, FEELINGS, VALUES



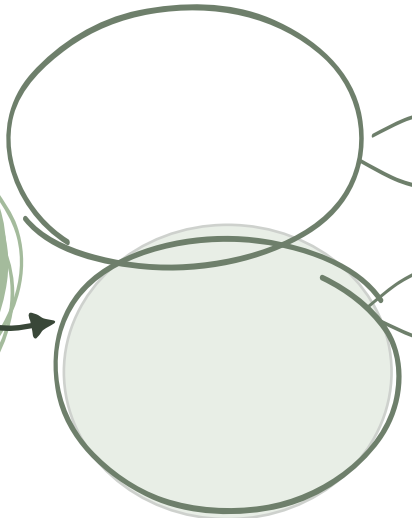
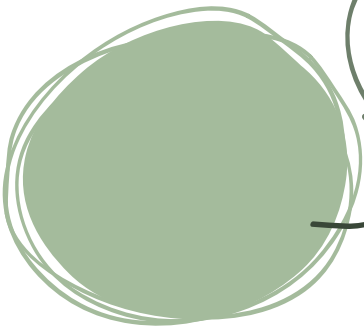
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THINKING IN THE INTERSECTIONS

Our intersections of identity shape whether we have access to certain policies and programs, and how we experience them.

Use this table to identify how your proposed policy intervention or program demonstrates an intersectional approach. Write down clear indicators of how your policy or program meets (or does not meet) this objective. If a question does not apply, explain why. This will help keep you accountable to an intersectional approach throughout the policy development process.

Ask Yourself:

Does the program or policy account for how intersecting identities shape access and experiences of policies and programs?

For Example:

- Is this policy or program accessible?
- Who is it accessible to? Who is left out and why?



Ask Yourself:

Does this program or policy account for the impacts of colonization?

For Example:

- Have you considered the experiences of Indigenous people, including disenfranchised, displaced, and/or non-status people?
- What about urban or off-reserve people?



Have you ethically engaged with the community that this policy will impact?

For Example:

- How are community voices centred?
- How have you compensated community for their contributions?



Are there specific eligibility requirements or means testing that communities or applicants are expected to meet?

For Example:

- If so, why are these requirements in place?
- Do you have sufficient evidence and rationale to back up these requirements?
- Do these requirements improve the policy or program?





Ask Yourself:

How does your positionality, or intersections of identity, impact your approach to policy and program development?

For Example:

- What is your frame of reference or how do you experience social policy?
- How will you ethically engage other frames of reference or people with different lived experiences in your policy development?



Reflection

What other questions would you ask yourself to ensure your approach is grounded in an intersectional lens?



CONCEPT 3: GENDER DIVERSITY



Colonization has severely impacted the way we currently experience and express **gender** and **sexuality**. We were not always exclusively men and women. Before contact with Europeans, Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people held important roles and were valued equally. Indigenous nations as a whole were self-determining and autonomous, and principles of respect, reciprocity, and interdependence were held.

GENDER refers to the ways that masculinity and femininity are viewed and defined, socially or culturally.

It is important to note that gender and sex are different; sex is biological, referring to someone's chromosomes, genitalia, reproductive organs, and other physical sex characteristics. Sex and gender are not equivalent.



SEXUALITY refers to a person's emotional, romantic, physical, and/or sexual attraction to others. Sexuality is fluid and exists on a spectrum, and can change throughout one's life.



Upon first contact with settlers, Indigenous Peoples were forced to assimilate and adopt colonized notions of gender and sexuality, including the introduction of gender and sexuality binaries. Such attitudes were heavily reinforced through both legislation and policy responses (for example, within the *Indian Act*), as well as the impacts of gender-segregated residential schools, which delineated and reinforced strict gender roles.³²

³² Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. *We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt77c>



ACCOUNTING FOR GENDER DIVERSITY IN POLICY RESPONSES

Ask Yourself

Is the program or policy gender-inclusive and non-binary, recognizing that gender, sex, and sexuality are spectrums?

Specifically:

Whose perspectives are being represented by this program or policy?
Who has been left out? Why?

Does this program or policy centre heteronormative, trans-exclusionary, or binary values or ways of being?

Specifically:

What can be done to disrupt this?

HETERONORMATIVITY refers to the assumption or predominant social understanding that heterosexuality is the 'norm.' However, a decolonized understanding of sexuality recognizes that sexuality, like gender, exists on a spectrum and is differently experienced by everyone.



Ask Yourself: _____

Considering the impacts of colonization, what are the contemporary lived realities of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender and gender-diverse people in this specific cultural/community context?

Specifically:

Does the proposed policy intervention address these realities? How?



Are Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people's distinct knowledge, ways of being, and roles incorporated or reclaimed within this policy response?

Specifically:

Have you engaged in appropriate consultation or involved the right people to begin reclaiming this knowledge?



Colonization continues to influence how people feel they should look, think, and act, and any variation from socially acceptable expressions of sexuality and gender are punished. The impacts of this oppression are also felt laterally (within and among Indigenous Peoples), as many young Indigenous people were prohibited from learning decolonized notions of gender. Indigenous queer, trans, gender-diverse, and Two-Spirit people continue to face ongoing systemic and direct violence and oppression, including disproportionate rates of violence and socioeconomic inequity.³³

Reflection

Consider the perspectives featured in the following video and ask yourself:

1. How might the systems, policies, and rules around me look different if gender fluidity were the norm? For example, think about washrooms, sports teams, and other gender-segregated spaces.
2. What role does policy play in shaping social attitudes towards gender diversity? What are the impacts of these attitudes for Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people?



BBC World Service. (July 31, 2020). Gender Identity: 'How Colonialism Killed My Culture's Gender Fluidity' [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqEgsHGik-s>

³³ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. (2019). <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL RESOURCES

[RESTORING THE CIRCLE](#)

NWAC recently released “Restoring the Circle,” an e-learning program on providing trauma-informed, culturally safe, and intersectional services for, to, and with 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous people with lived experience of gender-based violence. It is intended for service providers and is divided into two self-led courses that allow you to work at your own pace. The training focuses on recognizing and celebrating the diversity of human sexuality and gender identity, as well as developing understanding around the histories, cultural strengths, resilience, and challenges faced by 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous people due to colonization and intersectional discrimination. It also explores the impacts of intersectional discrimination on 2SLGBTQ+ people in the context of service provision, and provides frameworks and tools to help service providers mitigate these impacts.

[OUTSASKATOON QUEER TERMS](#)

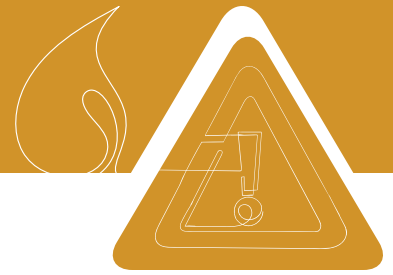
OutSaskatoon has compiled a comprehensive list of commonly used terms and definitions to support people in learning the language around gender identity, sexuality, and expression.

CASE STUDY: THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES

A [drinking water advisory](#) is issued by the federal government to prevent communities from consuming water when it is contaminated and/or unsafe to use or drink. This experience, unfortunately, has been an ongoing concern for numerous Indigenous communities across Canada. Many families are left having to boil their water before consumption, or refrain from using it at all. This also impacts the ability of Indigenous people, particularly caregivers and mothers, to care for their families—from washing clothes to showering. Indeed, a lack of consistent access to safe water has continued to be a major crisis.

Canada is known to be one of the most water-rich countries in the world. In a country that prides itself on its first world innovations and multiculturalism, why are Indigenous communities still lacking the basic human right to access safe, clean, and reliable drinking water?





ISSUES AND FACTS:

- ❧ Despite promises from the federal government to end long-term water advisories by 2021, 34 drinking water advisories remain in 29 communities across Canada as of March 21, 2022.³⁴
- ❧ There are seven remaining long-term water advisories in six communities in Saskatchewan, three in three communities in Manitoba, and 24 in 20 communities in Ontario.³⁵
- ❧ Many communities have been left unable to fetch water from local lakes and waterways, as their ancestors previously did, because of ongoing pollution. This issue has persisted and become worse through generations.³⁶
- ❧ Water insecurity in Indigenous communities goes far beyond water quality. Accessibility, management of water waste and sewage, and piped water supplies are also an issue.³⁷
- ❧ In severe cases, people can be evacuated from their homes and forced to live in hotels for an uncertain amount of time.³⁸
- ❧ Children and adults alike suffer from different types of skin diseases such as atopic dermatitis, rashes, and scabs.³⁹

Funding for infrastructure is a long and complicated process that gets held up in lines. The government does not make this an urgent request; therefore, feasibility studies and project proposals provided by Indigenous communities become obsolete and the situation deteriorates.⁴⁰

Consequently, communities are impelled to hire the lowest bidder to work on infrastructure projects, putting the lowest cost above quality management.



34 "Ending Long-Term Drinking Water Advisories," Government of Canada, April 29, 2022. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1506514143353/1533317130660>

35 Government of Canada, 2022.

36 Deborah McGregor, "Indigenous Women, Water Justice and Zaagidowin (Love)," *Canadian Woman Studies* 30, no. 2/3 (2014): 71–78. <https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/article/viewFile/37455/34003>

37 Atanu Sarkar, Maura Hanrahan, and Amy Hudson. "Water Insecurity in Canadian Indigenous Communities: Some Inconvenient Truths," *Rural and Remote Health* 15, no. 4 (2015): 3354. <https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH3354>

38 "The New Reality: Why Are Some First Nations Still Without Clean Drinking Water?" *Global News*. February 20, 2021. Video, 22:03. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5zYtlwMJ2Y>

39 *Global News*, 2021.

40 *Ibid.*



The government’s negligence in providing clean water results in children appearing to be unhygienic. This in turn causes fear that children will be taken into the child welfare system, and away from their families and traditions.

THINKING THROUGH CRGBA

CONSIDER: Many policies and approaches announced by the government do not address the historical trauma that is experienced by the water, the land, or the relationship that Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people have with water.

“ Indigenous women’s traditional roles have been disrupted and interrupted by colonization.” Indigenous women are considered to be protectors of the land and traditional healers, however, their account and knowledge on water justice issues are disparaged.⁴¹ ”

CONSIDER: Think of how lack of access to safe, clean water can impact people who are menstruating or people who have children.

“ Some women fear being reported to child welfare because their children’s clothes are dirty—but they don’t have access to clean water to be able to wash their children’s clothes to begin with. What are we supposed to do?⁴² ”

Consider: Indigenous ways of knowing and being are largely excluded from policy and program development and tend to rely heavily on Western-centred approaches. For example, the loss of knowledge sharing through creation stories has had detrimental impacts on the identities of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.

⁴¹ Mary Kate Dennis and Finn McLafferty Bell. “Indigenous Women, Water Protectors, and Reciprocal Responsibilities,” *Social Work* 65, no. 4 (2020): 378–386. doi:10.1093/sw/swaa033

⁴² Quote from a participant during the CRGBA Sharing Circles held March 21–23, 2022.



“An Indigenous woman’s identity is established through her particularized land-based identity that uniquely situates Indigenous knowledge in a specific waterscape and creates attentive responsibilities to water, which is tied to a creation story.”⁴³

There are initiatives that seek to engage women in addressing the issue—for example, by hiring women and gender-diverse people as operators or technicians in water treatment facilities). However, in some instances, Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender and gender-diverse people engaged in these projects are subjected to ongoing racism and sexism by their colleagues⁴⁴

Reflection

Based on the above considerations, what recommendations would you make to policy-makers attempting to address this issue? For example:

1. Support Indigenous communities in developing capacity and building the infrastructure to come up with solutions that work for them.
2. Prioritize consultation with women and gender-diverse people in addressing the water crisis, and build safety mechanisms to foster and sustain their ongoing involvement.

43 Patricia Hania. “Revitalizing Indigenous Women’s Water Governance Roles in Impact and Benefit Agreement Processes Through Indigenous Legal Orders and Water Stories,” *Les Cahiers de droit* 60, no. 2 (2019): 519–556. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1060985ar>

44 “The New Reality: Why Are Some First Nations Still Without Clean Drinking Water?” Global News. February 20, 2021. Video, 22:03. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5zYtlwMJ2Y>



CONCEPT 4: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

“As soon as we say that it’s all about analysis, we fall into the trap of a Western gaze and to think ‘oh, this is just about making sure that we have enough data points of men and women in our analysis’ and that’s only a small part of it. It’s also about positionality, relationships, practice, and commitments.”⁴⁵

CRGBA is grounded first and foremost in relationality. Central to an Indigenous worldview, our relationships to each other and to the land are foundational in fostering mutual respect and reciprocity. This translates into policy through the practice of relationship-building, both formally and informally.

CRGBA evolved as a response to the federal framework, a framework that was grounded in colonial categories of exclusion. The CRGBA Framework transformed this approach with its intent to reduce harm and foster inclusion within federal approaches to policy-making. We employ the language of analysis to merge both Western and Indigenous ways of knowing, facilitating a concrete dialogue with policy-makers and researchers.

⁴⁵ Carlos E. Sanchez-Pimienta et al. “Implementing Indigenous Gender-Based Analysis in Research: Principles, Practices, and Lessons Learned,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, (2021): 11572. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182111572>



GROUNDING POLICY WITHIN INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

Ask Yourself:



Does the program or policy place value on non-Western ways of knowing and transmitting knowledge?

Specifically:

Does the program or policy meaningfully incorporate storytelling, ceremonies, sharing circles, or land-based learning?

Have Indigenous knowledge holders contributed to and/or meaningfully engaged in the policy process?

Have you consulted sources outside of the Western gaze?

THE WESTERN GAZE, OR THE COLONIAL GAZE, refers to the ways that colonialism and Eurocentrism influence how we perceive others. This includes other peoples identities, practices, ways of knowing and ways of being in the world.

The Western Gaze tends to reinforce the myth that purely academic or institutional knowledge (like academic research) is the only objective or valid form of knowledge creation and sharing. To resist the Western Gaze, we must begin to shift our focus and place value on other ways of knowing – including land-based and relationally grounded learning.





Ask Yourself: _____

Are the principles of Indigenous centred on self-determination?

Specifically:

Have you made time for relationship-building?

What is the intention behind this work?

How will this policy intervention foster Indigenous self-determination?



What were this specific community's kinship relationships, understandings of sexuality, gender, governance structures, legal traditions, and cultural values prior to colonization?

Specifically:

What are some of the ways we can work to restore social, cultural, political, and economic balance and well-being in these communities?




Ask Yourself: 

How were pre-existing community structures and ideologies changed through processes of colonization?

Specifically:

Does the proposed policy intervention address these considerations?
How?





CONCEPT 5: TRAUMA-INFORMED



Through the legacy of the *Indian Act*, we have seen how social policy has been weaponized by the Canadian government as a tool for furthering colonial violence. Thus, policies and programs must consider how trauma, including **intergenerational trauma**, has impacted Indigenous ways of knowing and living. At a systemic and personal level, intergenerational trauma continues to impact Indigenous lived experience; it is a direct legacy of residential schools and ongoing colonial violence in Canada.

Intergenerational trauma occurs when trauma is transferred inadvertently to subsequent generations of people through biological, psychological, environmental and social means. One well documented example of this, as evidenced by Indigenous survivors across the nation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, is the legacy of residential schools.

Residential schools in Canada deliberately subjected Indigenous people to multiple forms of violence, robbing Indigenous people of their language, cultural values, relationships with each other and with the land, and ways of knowing and being in the world. Children who grew into adults within this system were impacted to such an extent that this residual trauma was transferred to their children, to their children's children, and so on.

However, Indigenous resistance has persisted across the nation. To this day, Indigenous resurgence, self-determination, and reclamation of knowledge continue to address the legacy of residential schools.



Adapted from Bowen & Murshid, a [trauma-informed approach to policy](#)⁴⁶ requires an explicit focus on:

SAFETY

- Policy initiatives must account for the impacts of trauma, mitigating the risk of re-traumatization. Policy responses focus on **reducing harm** and prioritizing the safety of impacted communities.

TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRANSPARENCY

- This calls for mutual **respect, reciprocity, and fully informed, consensual engagement.**

COLLABORATION AND PEER SUPPORT

- Policy initiatives employ a non-judgmental approach, which involves meeting people where they are at without any expectations or assumptions around what they need.
- Policy-makers engage those with lived experience to both lead the work and ensure they are properly compensated and recognized for their contributions.

EMPOWERMENT

- Emphasis is placed on Indigenous Peoples' **strengths.** Policy-makers must recognize the former and current uses of policy as a tool for colonial violence, and seek to outline Indigenous self-determination and resilience rather than typifying Indigenous Peoples as products of trauma.

CHOICE

- To facilitate choice, policies and programs should be **person-centred.** This means centring the needs, perspectives, and voices of the impacted community, ensuring community autonomy is fostered throughout the policy development and implementation process.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth A. Bowen and Nadine Shaanta Murshid, "Trauma-Informed Social Policy: A Conceptual Framework for Policy Analysis and Advocacy," *American Journal of Public Health* 106, no. 2 (2016): 223–220. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2105%2FAJPH.2015.302970>

IMPLEMENTING TRAUMA-INFORMED POLICY ANALYSIS

A trauma-informed approach focuses on solutions that create safety and empowerment for Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people in terms of their strengths, and the individual and community resources available to them.

Ask Yourself: _____

Has consideration been given to the role that social policy plays in perpetuating intergenerational trauma?

Specifically:

Does the proposed policy intervention address this?



Ask Yourself: _____

Does your policy or program promote safety?

Specifically:

Does it reduce or prevent harm? How?

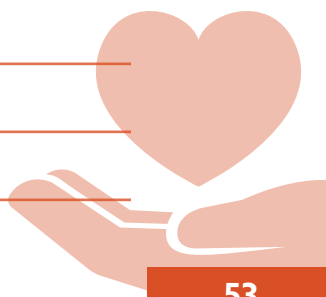


Is your policy preventative or responsive?

Specifically:

Considering the issue you are trying to address, would a preventative approach or a responsive approach fit better?





Ask Yourself: _____

Have you considered how trauma may impact someone's ability to engage with or access your policy or program?

Specifically:

What information must be obtained to assess program eligibility for applicants or participants?

Are there safeguards or other coordinated information-sharing practices that can be used to reduce how often a person must repeat their circumstances?



For example, if you are writing policies to implement a funding program and your target demographic is rural Indigenous health service providers, have you considered the administrative burden the service or community may have in meeting the expectations around your funding application? Are community members required to demonstrate evidence of their hardship? Can you identify ways to streamline the application process that will alleviate the administrative burden on the applicants and reduce the amount of repetition of community stories?

Instead of having applicants provide an application for funding every year, you could consider mobilizing a longer-term funding model, or keeping longer-term records from which applicant's information can be stored and referred to where relevant.



CASE STUDY: THE FEDERAL APPROACH

“ The goal is to minimize harm, not to treat trauma ... the focus is to minimize the potential for harm and re-traumatization, and to enhance safety, control, and resilience for all clients involved with systems or programs.⁴⁷ ”

The emergence of trauma-informed discourse has started to become a standard of practice within the Government of Canada’s approach, which is a promising indicator of change. The federal government has outlined **three important reasons** to implement trauma and violence-informed approaches within policy and practice, outlined below:

- 🐾 To increase attention of the impact of violence on people’s lives and well-being, recognizing the relationship between violence and trauma, and the connections between trauma and broader systems.
- 🐾 To reduce harm, whether intentional or unintentional, by increasing awareness around the risks of re-traumatization and triggers and acting to mitigate such risks.
- 🐾 To improve system responses for everyone, embedding universal trauma precautions into policy and practice and mitigating the need to disclose or amount of times that disclosure of trauma or violence is necessary.⁴⁸



47 *Trauma and Violence-Informed Approaches to Policy and Practice*, Government of Canada, February 2, 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/health-risks-safety/trauma-violence-informed-approaches-policy-practice.html#s7>

48 Ibid.



Reflective Activity:

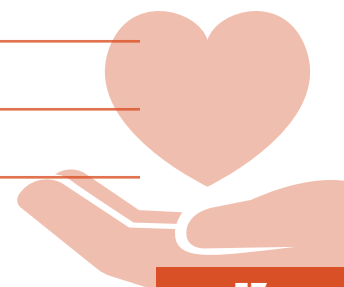
Take some time to review the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Trauma and Violence-Informed Approaches to Policy and Practice. After, ask yourself:

👤 How might these recommendations apply to other areas of policy and program development; for example, environment, justice, economic development initiatives?

👤 What would a set of ‘universal trauma precautions’ look like in your proposed policy or program?

👤 **Does this approach complement an Indigenous approach, or are they incompatible? Why?**

👤 **How might these recommendations become more culturally relevant?**





CO-DEVELOPMENT FROM A CRGBA LENS: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

WHAT IS CO-DEVELOPMENT?

Broadly, co-development is an approach to legislation and policy development that is grounded in collaboration and partnership between Indigenous Peoples and the federal government. In an effort to fully implement [Joyce's Principle](#), the federal government recently announced its commitment to co-developing distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation with the aim of improving access to safe, culturally relevant health services. The federal government describes co-development as "a collaborative approach that acknowledges the distinct nature and lived experience of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis."⁴⁹

For NWAC, we take this approach a step further and advocate for a co-development model that is grounded in the principles and ethics of CRGBA. This includes:

CENTRING INDIGENOUS SELF-DETERMINATION

- Requires interrogating and resisting government-ascribed categories of identification and honouring Indigenous-led and -defined lived experience and governance systems.
- We also resist tokenizing Indigeneity, ensuring appropriate representation across the diverse lived experience and capacities of Indigenous people. This means not only consulting select groups or representatives, and resisting the assumption that one Indigenous person or collective can advocate on behalf of the perspectives of all Indigenous Peoples.

ENSURE ENGAGEMENT IS ETHICAL, BEING MINDFUL OF POWER DYNAMICS AND DIFFERENTIAL CAPACITIES.

- If approaching the co-development process from a position of power, take steps to acknowledge and address power differentials.
- Take meaningful steps to establish and maintain free, prior, informed, and ongoing consent.
- Be conscientious of the administrative and emotional burden that engagement can have on community members and take action to reduce or ideally prevent this burden.

⁴⁹ Co-Developing Distinctions-Based Indigenous Health Legislation, Government of Canada, February 22, 2022. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1611843547229/1611844047055#chp1>

PRIORITIZE AND INVEST TIME IN RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING.

- Ensure your timelines consider community-based or collective decision-making and account for this in advance.

ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITIES AUTHENTICALLY AND TRANSPARENTLY.

- Recognize your own scope and limitations.
- Clearly communicate mutual expectations, and ensure these expectations are realistic and appropriate to your own scope and approach.

EMBRACE YOUR ROLE AS A PARTNER, AN ONGOING LEARNER, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, A LISTENER IN THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS.

- Emphasize capacity-building and support participants in engaging fully by offering adequate compensation for their time, knowledge, and efforts.





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CRGBA



Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis:
A Roadmap for Policy Development



Native Women's Association of Canada

L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada