

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---



A GUIDING TOOL TO NAVIGATING CRGBA

---

## THE EQUITY COMPASS



Native Women's Association of Canada

---

L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada





## INTERSECTIONALITY

# THE EQUITY COMPASS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### THE EQUITY COMPASS: A GUIDING TOOL TO NAVIGATING CRGBA

Inspired by feedback from Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse+ (WG2STGD+) People across the Four Directions, NWAC developed *A Warrior's Briefcase: Tools for Engaging in Federal-Level Advocacy*. This resource helps develop accessible resources related to mobilizing Culturally-Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA) at the grassroots level, as well as how to engage in advocacy at the federal level and how to take effective care of oneself when doing so. In the development of this toolkit, we recognized a need to make language around CRGBA more accessible—sparking the development of a new name for the framework.

Also featured in *A Warrior's Briefcase*, this document seeks provide a summary of how CRGBA has been revitalized as the Equity Compass.

### WHAT IS CRGBA?

CRGBA is a tool to assess how policies and programs impact people differently, according to differences in our identities and ways of living. *CRGBA is comprised of the following five key concepts: Distinctions-based, intersectional, gender-diverse, Indigenous Knowledge, and trauma-informed.* Each concept is briefly outlined as follows:

- ⊕ A distinctions-based approach accounts for lived-experiences among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, *inclusive of on- and off-reserve, urban, and/or non-status Indigenous Peoples.*
- ⊕ Intersectionality means everyone has different and unique intersecting aspects of identity. These intersections of identity shape our experiences of privilege and/or oppression.
- ⊕ Accounting for gender diversity requires interrogation of colonial binaries of gender, along with reflecting on how current gender norms impact our lives and our work.
- ⊕ Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) have long been excluded in federal policy and program development—thus, CRGBA calls for ethical and equitable inclusion of IKS in any proposed policy intervention.
- ⊕ Policies and programs must consider how trauma, including intergenerational trauma, has impacted Indigenous Ways of Living—embodying a strengths-based, person-centered, and non-judgmental approach.
- ⊕ To learn more about CRGBA Framework, and how it has been applied across policy development and research, refer to our [Previous Publications](#).



#### WHERE WE'VE COME FROM: THE EVOLUTION OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS (CRGBA):

NWAC introduced the CRGBA Framework in 2007 as a response to gaps in the federal government's approach to gender-based policy analysis. CRGBA emphasized an alternative approach to reducing harm, by supporting policymakers from all backgrounds in thinking about policy in different ways. The CRGBA Framework helps policymakers consider different peoples' unique lived experiences when making policies and programs that impact communities, emphasizing a gender-inclusive, intersectional, distinctions-based, and trauma-informed approach. CRGBA also draws attention to an urgent need to center and reclaim different Indigenous Ways of Knowing and understanding within policy interventions impacting Indigenous Peoples' lived experience.

Since 2007, NWAC has undergone significant work to evolve the CRGBA Framework, ensuring its approach reflects grassroots community members' perspectives and wise practices across policy, research, and advocacy.

#### WHERE WE ARE: RENAMING THE CRGBA FRAMEWORK:

NWAC received ongoing capacity-building funding from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) to

increase NWAC's internal capacity around the CRGBA Framework, and to ensure NWAC's research and policy projects are informed by a robust CRGBA lens. For the first year of the project, we sought feedback on the CRGBA Framework from Indigenous WG2STGD+ People, including grassroots community members, advocates, activists, policymakers, and researchers. Using this feedback, NWAC sought to revise the CRGBA Framework as necessary to ensure alignment with community perspectives, wise practices, and the current evidence-base.

To this end, in March, June, and July 2022, NWAC held a series of virtual Sharing Circles with participants across the Four Directions. Sessions introduced participants to the current CRGBA Framework by briefly outlining the history behind the Framework, its rationale, current applications, and the five main concepts that comprise CRGBA. Broadly, participants agreed the CRGBA Framework is a promising tool and were eager to learn more about the Framework's utility in advocacy, policy development, and research.

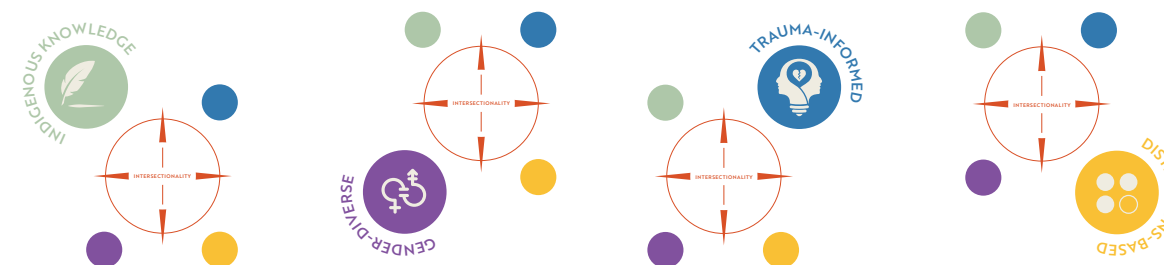
Participants emphasized the importance of fostering Indigenous self-determination, reclaiming and re-centering the roles and knowledge of Indigenous WG2STGD+ People, and resisting colonial oppression. To foster this, participants emphasized an ongoing need to take back their own narratives through community-based advocacy and activism. Consequently, participants recognized value in mobilizing the CRGBA Framework to achieve this,

noting its utility as a tool for communicating with federal actors in a way that centers Indigenous Ways of Knowing and perspectives.

#### WHERE WE ARE GOING: INTRODUCING THE EQUITY COMPASS:

The most significant and consistent feedback we received from all participants pertained to the name of the Framework. As we learned from participants, the phrase 'Culturally-Relevant Gender Based Analysis' provoked a range of uncomfortable feelings—some participants stated when they first heard the phrase, they didn't understand what it meant, despite holding significant knowledge around each concept, individually. Others said they didn't find the name to be particularly accessible or relevant in describing what it actually does. Of particular concern to participants was the fact that the language of CRGBA appeared to impose a colonial gaze onto Indigenous lived experience. Employing the language of 'analysis' inadvertently reduced complexities and distinct Indigenous experiences, Knowledge Systems, and Ways of Being in the world into arbitrary colonial constructs.

This feedback had also been echoed throughout previous conversations with community members and external stakeholders, and during internal discussions at NWAC. The consensus was clear: Even though the CRGBA Framework was, and continues to be, a useful tool for policy analysis, research, and advocacy, it needed to be reframed in a way that was reflective of, and accessible to, community perspectives that shape and use it.





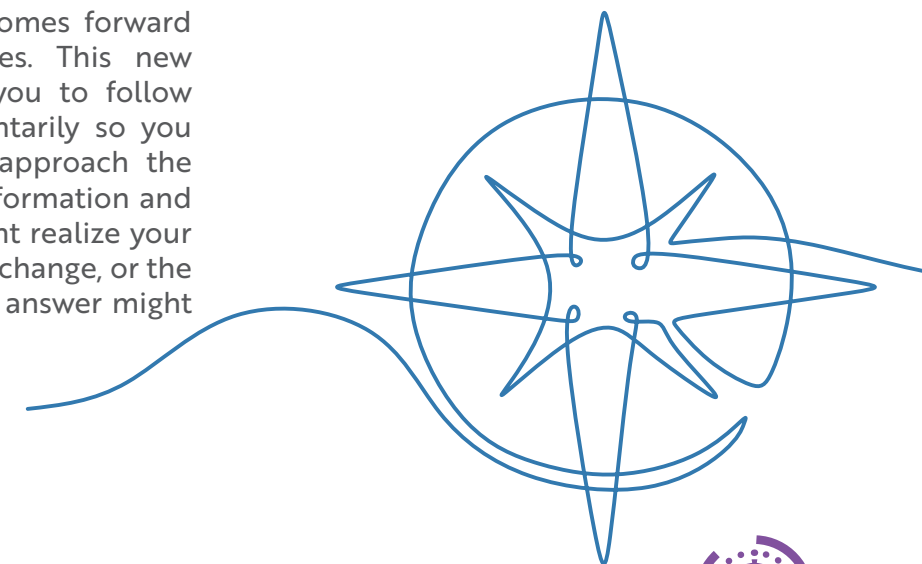


The Equity Compass is a renewed conceptualization of the CRGBA Framework. In previous publications, we described CRGBA as an ongoing journey. The process encourages us to discover gaps and biases in policies, programs, and research, while ensuring objectives are culturally grounded and relevant for communities they pertain to. As reiterated in the past, CRGBA is not just a form of analysis, it is a way of thinking, being, and doing—ensuring our thoughts and actions as policymakers, researchers, and advocates are aligned with perspectives of the Indigenous communities we are responsible to.

Within the Equity Compass, the five key concepts that underpin CRGBA are understood to be five different directions one will take on their CRGBA journey. One direction is not more important, or impactful, than the others—each direction requires an equitable level of attention and interrogation, bringing with it its own set of questions and considerations when applying that direction to policy, research, or advocacy. The journey is often not linear and may require doubling back as new information and feedback comes forward in informing your objectives. This new information might require you to follow a different direction momentarily so you can better decide how to approach the issue. Additionally, as new information and feedback is offered, you might realize your entire objective may need to change, or the questions you are seeking to answer might look different.

‘Equity’ refers to both a means and an outcome in the journey. The CRGBA Framework requires a person to approach all advocacy, research, and policy development according to the five guiding principles of Indigenous research: Relationships, Respect, Responsibility, Relevance, and Reciprocity.<sup>1</sup> Equity is central to this process because it requires balance, power-sharing, and dismantling binary thinking. This concept also extends beyond our relationships to each other, including relationships and responsibilities with/to the land and beings around us. As emphasized in the past, it is always better to learn, grow, and travel together.

The Equity Compass offers guidance on a CRGBA journey. It is a visual representation of how each concept, or direction, informs the other, while also shaping your journey. It is our hope that the Equity Compass will be useful for you, and your community, as you move forward in your advocacy journey.





### PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS:

- ✦ **NWAC. (2020). A Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA) Starter Kit: Introduction, Incorporation, and Illustration of Use.** <https://www.nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/A-Culturally-Relevant-Gender-Based-Analysis.pdf>
- ✦ **NWAC. (2022). The Native Women's Association of Canada Research Toolkit.** <https://www.nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/SPARK-NWAC-CRGBA-TOOLKIT-2022-EN1-3-Feb-15-2022.pdf>
- ✦ **NWAC. Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA): A Roadmap for Policy Development, 2023.**
  - NWAC. *Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA) Sharing Circle Fact Sheet*, 2023.
  - Duhamel, K., Trudell, A., & Blouin, C. *Evaluating GBA+ and CRGBA: A Literature Review*. Native Women's Association of Canada, 2021.







**EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY**

---

# THE EQUITY COMPASS