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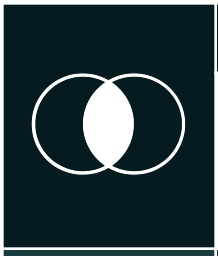
Indigenous Data Sovereignty & Governance Resource Bundle

Terms & Definitions



Ethical Space

A bridging concept, recognizing a space where different worldviews (in this case, Indigenous/local and non–Indigenous/settler) can determine an ethical process for sharing and dialogue with reciprocity and mutual respect. This requires learning about one another's unique stories and strengths, identifying and addressing tensions and injustices, and balancing existing power dynamics.[1,2]

Indigenous Peoples

"People of the land" holding intergenerational, familial ties of belonging and kinship to a community whose lifeways (such as language, natural resources, knowledges, cultural practices, etc.) both sustain and are sustained by their relationship to a particular place. Indigenous Peoples may identify themselves and their community members by different terms and criteria than colonial or national governments, as is their self-determined right.[3,4]

Indigenous Data (ID)

Information ("data"), in any form (oral, written, visual, digital, physical, etc.), that is generated from, or that impacts Indigenous Peoples' lives both at the individual or collective level. These data can include any facts, knowledge, or information about or from the nation/community, its citizens, lands, waters, resources, programs, etc.[5,6]

Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDSov)

The fundamental right of Indigenous Peoples to govern the collection, ownership, and application of their own data.[4]

Indigenous Data Governance (IDGov)

Mechanisms for enabling Indigenous data sovereignty–to define, collect, protect, interpret, manage, and apply data in ways that respect Indigenous ethics, values, and relational responsibilities.[2,3,5]

Indigenous Research Governance (IRGov)

Mechanisms for realizing and enabling Indigenous authority and self-determination in research processes.[3]

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[1] Ermine (2007). **The Ethical Space of Engagement.** Indigenous Law Journal.
[2] David-Chavez, et al. (2024). **A values-centered relational science model: Supporting Indigenous rights and reconciliation in research**. Ecology and Society.
[3] David-Chavez & Gavin. (2018). **A global assessment of Indigenous community engagement in climate research**. Environmental Research Letters.
[4] United Nations General Assembly. (2007). **United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples**. United Nations General Assembly.
[5] Rainie et al. (2017). **Indigenous Data Sovereignty in the United States**. Native Nations Institute, University of Arizona.
[6] Rainie et al. (2017, March 10). **Policy Brief: Data Governance for Native Nation Rebuilding (Version 2)**. Native Nations Institute, University of Arizona.

Prepared with support from:

MOUNTAIN SENTINELS

INDIGENOUS LAND & DATA STEWARDSHIP LAB

Collaboratory for Indigenous Data Governance
Research, Policy, and Practice for Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Tools & Resources

Below you will find foundational resources and tools that enable Indigenous data governance in research and practice, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*, the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance, and Local Contexts.

1. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is a prominent global framework that outlines the fundamental human rights and freedoms of Indigenous Peoples, as individuals and collectives, including their rights in research and data governance. In particular, Indigenous Peoples retain the following rights, as outlined in these select UNDRIP articles:

Art. 8.1: "right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture."

Art. 11.1: "right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature."

Art. 12.1: "right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites"... "right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects"

Art. 13: "right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons."

Art. 15.1: "right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information"

Art. 15.2: "take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the Indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among Indigenous peoples and all other segments of society."

Art. 24.1: "...right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals."

Art. 31: "right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora...."

**Also see the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labor Organization Convention 169.*

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2. CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance

Learn more here: GIDA-Global.org/care

The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance offers practical guidance for reaffirming Indigenous rights and self-determination through data practices, including by ensuring:

- **C**ollective benefit (Indigenous Peoples and their collective communities can continually access and benefit from data)
- **A**uthority to control (support for Indigenous Peoples' rights and interests in data, such as regarding use, sharing, and accuracy of data)
- **R**esponsibility (those working with Indigenous data support Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and beneficial data relationships)
- **E**thics (addressing Indigenous Peoples' rights and wellbeing, including Indigenous ethics for guiding decisions on harm, benefit, and data use).

These Principles are complemented by the CARE Data Maturity Model, which serves as a tool to iteratively assess and improve the strength of CARE implementation.

3. Local Contexts

Learn more here: LocalContexts.org

Local Contexts is a global initiative that supports Indigenous communities with tools (such as 'traditional knowledge labels') that can reassert cultural authority for existing and new data collections. By focusing on Indigenous cultural and intellectual property and Indigenous Data Sovereignty, Local Contexts helps Indigenous communities restore relationships with their knowledge and data, and gain control over how data is collected, managed, displayed, accessed, and used in the future.

For more resources on Indigenous Data Governance tools, guidance, and examples, visit this Resource Inventory: Tinyurl.com/IDSovEthics

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