BUILDING INDIGENOUS-LED ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORKS

Report on the Dialogue on Indigenous Data, Information and Records (*Summary*)
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Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond (Aki-kwe)
UBC RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL HISTORY AND DIALOGUE CENTRE

Lerato Chondoma
UBC INDIGENOUS RESEARCH SUPPORT INITIATIVE

We respectfully acknowledge that the University of British Columbia (UBC) is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the hənq̓əmin̓əm̓-**speaking** xʷməθkʷəy̓əm **(Musqueam) people.**

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

About the Residential School History & Dialogue Centre

The Residential School History & Dialogue Centre (RSHDC) is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓-speaking xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. With a mandate to support access to Residential School records for Survivors, their families, and communities, the RSHDC works to generate inclusive dialogue that is transparent and trauma-informed. This approach to dialogue is essential to the Centre's work building on information practices, research, and education around Residential Schools and related systems. With a framework that privileges respectful, equitable, and Indigenous-informed access to records and information, the RSHDC is developing digital systems and spaces of inquiry to model a new platform for information stewardship.

About the Indigenous Research Support Initiative

The Indigenous Research Support Initiative (IRSI) at UBC is based on the premise that more effective research and greater mutual understanding can be developed from identifying, developing, and supporting research practices that proceed from respectful relations between researchers and Indigenous communities. IRSI provides professional support and services to Indigenous communities and university researchers to undertake collaborative projects based on community-led interests, reciprocal relationships and principles of mutual accountability.

Executive Summary

Increasingly, Indigenous communities around the world are reclaiming the Indigenous data, information and records that have been constructed about them (e.g. Anderson 2005). Indigenous data sovereignty, information governance and records repatriation are directly associated with increased self-determination and assertion of rights and freedoms for many Indigenous Nations. Historically, Indigenous communities have been separated and displaced from archival documentation and materials relating to history, culture, language, songs, lands, resources, heritage and communities (e.g. Fourmile 1989; Anderson 2005; Gardiner and Thorpe 2014). These practices have resulted in governments, academic researchers and churches creating, collecting and governing the large amounts of information about Indigenous people and their cultures that are held in archives and libraries (e.g. Anderson 2005; Nakata and Langton 2005, 13; Callison, Roy, LeCheminant 2016).

The Residential School History and Dialogue Centre (RSHDC), the Indigenous Research Support Initiative (IRSI) at UBC, and Gwen Phillips as regional champion of the BC First Nations Data Governance Initiative, are collaborating to address and prevent some of these issues in university research and in the use of Residential School materials. Part of this collaboration is a dialogue series focused on engaging academic and community collaborators around issues of data, information and records to ensure that policies, practices, systems and protocols are collaboratively developed with Indigenous community partners. At the heart of this dialogue series is a call to change the culture around Indigenous data, information and records. The goal is for these dialogues to develop a model of engagement that is collaboratively and iteratively developed and tested for Indigenous data, information and records housed at UBC, the RSHDC, and beyond.

The first dialogue was held January 21 at UBC and brought together nearly 70 Indigenous and non-Indigenous experts, researchers, community members and practitioners working directly on matters related to Indigenous information, records management and collection, as well as Indigenous research. Participants shared experiences and insights about engagement practices and principles that are being utilized, and explored critical issues and challenges.

Throughout the dialogue, participants provided guidance about what is required at this moment for institutions to relearn how to engage with Survivors, Indigenous Peoples and Nations regarding Indigenous data, information and records. Institutions must be willing to demonstrate that they are serious, and are doing the internal work necessary to transition out of past and colonial patterns. In addition to identifying key principles and practices for engagement, this guidance has provided a foundation for re-conceptualizing the design of the future steps and phases for RSHDC and IRSI. Seven foundational themes emerged from discussions at the dialogue, these serve as the basis for future engagement and dialogues. These themes are integral in the development of SSHRC's Strategic Plan on engagement and partnership, particularly in fostering mutually respectful relationships. These themes should form the basis for organizations like RSHDC, IRSI and SSHRC to partner with Indigenous Peoples.

Future reports, developed in co-operation and collaboration with additional partners, will identify approaches to engagement as they evolve through an Indigenous-led process.

Key Definitions

The phrase "Indigenous data, information, and records" appears throughout this document. These terms are not neutrally defined and can be interpreted in a variety of ways. In order to provide context, we have provided definitions of each of these components from library, archival and information studies literature.

• "Data" refers to a tangible or electronic record of raw information (measurements, statistics or information in numerical form that can be digitally transmitted or processed) used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation and must be processed or analyzed to be meaningful.

• "Research data" refers to data that are used as primary sources to support technical or scientific enquiry, research, scholarship, or artistic activity, and that are used as evidence in the research process and/or are commonly accepted in the research community as necessary to validate research findings and results. Research data may include experimental data, observational data, operational data, third-party data, public sector data, monitoring data, processed data or re-purposed data.

• "Information" refers to the analysis, collection, classification, manipulation, storage, retrieval, movement and dissemination of information.

• "Records" refers to any recorded information made or received by an organization.

• Indigenous data, information and records can include all of the above, and be both by, and about, Indigenous Peoples.

Core Themes

Seven foundational themes emerged at the dialogue through the presentations and collaborative knowledge generation. These themes provide guidance for developing an approach to engagement regarding Indigenous data, information and records. These themes, as well as specific insights from the dialogue, will inform the remainder of Phase 1 and Phase 2, and should inform SSHRC's approach to fostering mutually respectful relationships in its new
Strategic Plan.

1 Developing Indigenous-led frameworks requires Indigenous-led processes and engagement

The goal of a proper framework for Indigenous data, information, and records can only be achieved through an appropriate process of engagement. Such a process must be grounded in recognition of Indigenous peoples and protocols, be reflective and respectful of Indigenous laws, jurisdictions, and governments, and be designed and implemented in full co-operation and collaboration with Indigenous peoples. As one participant commented "the 'how' is critical." The group collectively emphasized all of the essential yet often "missing Indigenous voices" that have been ignored or ostracized throughout colonial history — Elders, Knowledge-holders, Survivors, youth — must not only be included, but also in lead.

Participants touched on many dimensions of demonstrating proper recognition and respect. These included: careful consideration of language and how terms are used and deployed, including language such as "stakeholders," "consultation," "co-development," and "engagement;" properly considering and following protocols about who one should be engaging with; approaching Survivors, Knowledge-holders, and Indigenous Peoples at the earliest stages, and with the right intentions; and ensuring the structure and aspects of the process are defined and determined with Indigenous partners, around their vision, goals, and priorities, consistent with the standard of self-determination, respectful and safe.

This theme also manifested itself in observations and commentary about the dialogue itself. It was noted that a number of essential voices were not in the room and part of the process yet, and that it is critical that these voices are helping shape the path forward from the beginning. It is in understanding of this necessity that the upcoming steps
in Phase 1 will entirely focus on working directly with Survivors, Indigenous Peoples and Nations, and receiving their guidance about principles and practices for engagement.

2 Engagement approaches and methodologies must be 'inside-out' rather than 'outside-in,' rooted in Indigenous worldviews, cultures, and norms

Many participants shared the common experience of being approached by individuals and organizations that have preset agendas and expectations, often making improper assumptions, and reflecting self-motivated intentions. One participant described a typical way Nations and Indigenous Peoples are approached to share information or be a part of research processes as "How will this benefit me or my organization?" Other participants shared examples of how individuals sometimes just show up, with little or no knowledge of, or relationship with, the community (from the outside, looking in). Sometimes these individuals have strong conceptions of their own value and importance, and are looking to share information or to conduct research. Such examples illustrate deeply entrenched processes and ideas, where Indigenous information is taken, used and controlled by others.

These experiences can be characterized as an 'outside-in' understanding and approach to Indigenous data, information, and records, where the intentions, methodologies and objectives are driven and set externally from Survivors, individuals, peoples and Nations. Institutional partners need to develop their work using an 'inside-out' process, based on the visions, priorities, protocols and goals of Indigenous Peoples. An 'inside-out' transformation is vital for work regarding Indigenous data, information and records.

Participants provided examples of how this shift from 'outside-in' to 'inside-out' was beginning to accelerate. Many personal stories were shared of how researchers would arrive in an 'outside-in' approach, and through education and guidance, they would transform into a more appropriate 'inside-out' approach. As well, institutions shared some of their own struggles and efforts to move from one approach to the other –
recognizing that making the shift is
still a work in progress. As one example, University of Northern British Columbia shared how they have built formal

agreements grounded in standards that Nations have developed. Since then, the institution has been able to advance the internal work of shifting its own systems and practices to be more 'inside-out' in nature.

Participants also noted how in certain ways the dialogue itself may reflect more 'outside-in' than 'inside-out' approaches, which emphasized the centrality of the institution and its interests in relation to data, information, and records it holds.

3 Indigenous laws, protocols, and standards of data sovereignty must be met in development of any frameworks for Indigenous data, information and records

Engagement and any frameworks regarding Indigenous data, information, and records, must acknowledge as a starting point that there are existing Indigenous laws and protocols that govern these matters. These existing laws and protocols must be the foundation for moving forward based on co-operation and collaboration. Of course, systems of Indigenous laws and protocols are plural, reflecting the distinctiveness that exists amongst and between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. As such, a learning approach is always required both to ensure that the distinct Indigenous legal orders and protocols of Nations are being respected, and that these are appropriately shaping the approaches taken.

UNDRIP reinforces the centrality of Indigenous laws and protocols, as well as the meaning of proper Nation-to-Nation relationships. Throughout the dialogue the standard of free, prior, and informed consent was emphasized as essential, and examples were given of how institutions have begun incorporating it as the basis for how Indigenous data, information, and records are treated. Directly related to this was examination of the need to seek understanding and demonstrate respect for the internal decision-making processes Nations use, including the varying ways consensus operates and will play a role, and how to confirm when authorization and consent from a Nation may be achieved.

Indigenous organizations are doing important work to support Nations in implementing their laws and protocols in relation to Indigenous data, information, and records. This has included the development of core standards such as OCAP™ which delineate basic premises around which frameworks should be built. It is also captured in the concept of 'data sovereignty' as a rubric through which partnerships between institutions of learning and Indigenous Peoples and Nations are to be built. In its most foundational sense, the work of reconciliation is that of structuring proper relations between Indigenous sovereignty and the assumed sovereignty of the Crown, or other governing bodies. This includes Indigenous sovereignty over their knowledge and information resources, which are expressions of their distinct peoples, cultures and societies.

4 Authentic relationships and human approaches must be at the core when working with Indigenous Peoples - they need to be Survivor-centred, support capacity development, and demonstrate care for others and oneself

"Authentic long-term relationships are the essential foundation," commented one participant, an insight that was reinforced throughout the day. However, just as crucial is deep exploration about what 'authentic' means. Relations concerning Indigenous data, information, and records have always been characterized by unequal power dynamics. These dynamics have been embedded within, and are reflective of, broader colonial dynamics that have created significant impacts and trauma, and perpetuated deep conditions of mistrust. Establishing that trust requires long-term relationship building to transform those dynamics and to ensure processes are safe and respectful.

An understanding emerged of a substantive and deeply human-centred vision of authentic relations, characterized by the values of equality and fairness, care for self and others, substantive capacity and other support, and always adopting a learning stance. It is necessary to start engagement in the right way, taking steps to address these imbalances of power from the outset —including through critical capacity supports — and to always be ready to shift and make adjustments that continue to address these challenges.

Innovative efforts regarding capacity support were also highlighted. For example, Indigitization grants (Indigitization 2018) provide a capacity building approach that has been successful and generated support because it was built out of and in response to proper dialogue with Indigenous Peoples. This work is not administratively cumbersome or burdensome, and can advance Nation-driven initiatives and approaches. Critically, it avoids the challenge of many capacity support models that typically require public disclosure of information.

The vital contexts in which this work arises was also emphasized – in particular those where significant trauma and

harm has occurred. Survivor-centred approaches that are comprehensively guided and shaped through work with Survivors is critical, ensuring that matters related to privacy, and the care and well-being of all involved is paramount.

5 There is no 'one size fits all' model and engagement must be designed to ensure past and existing wrongs are not perpetuated or reproduced

Many institutions privilege the transferability of models and frameworks from one project or illustration to another, including systems of information management and collection. Such an approach is not appropriate or viable in relation to Indigenous data, information, and records. There is no "one size fits all' approach or methodology – rather plural approaches and methodologies must be built with Indigenous Peoples, Nations and Survivors, guided by the context and realities of the situation, distinct Indigenous laws and protocols, the particular types of information in question, and the patterns of relations that may exist.

Another critical reason for rejecting 'one size fits all' models is ensuring that one is not perpetuating and reinforcing misrepresentations and misinformation from the past. An example was shared to illustrate how the use of metadata can reinforce colonial attitudes and assumptions, and as such the practice of relying on approaches and models already in place can reinforce past wrongs. A transformative approach is to begin work together based on guiding principles and values that help start an ethical engagement, but without preconditions or preset agendas, and without reliance on what might have been done elsewhere or in the past. Some institutions are learning to use these approaches in partnership but more can be done.

There are also many tensions and challenges that speak to the necessity to carefully consider the particular contexts and realities in which engagement occurs. For example, the tensions between individual and collective rights, roles and responsibilities was recurrently noted, such as individual privacy, autonomy, and well-being on the one hand, and the collective role and interest in stewarding and sharing certain information on the other. Such tensions are typically not treated through generalizations and meta-approaches, and require careful attention and to the specific contexts in which they arise.

6 Engagement and frameworks must be driven by needs set by individuals and Nations, and should be responsive to changing contexts and realities

"All documents and agreements must be living" one participant shared. This captures the insight expressed throughout the dialogue that the work of engaging and partnering with respect to Indigenous data, records, and information is always dynamic, and never static. Stories were shared of individuals who at a certain time and context authorized a particular use of their records, but as their life circumstances and perspectives changed, their views regarding those records also shifted. Similarly, many shared examples of how communities and Nations over time may shift the direction in which work and partnerships move as a result of many factors including the further implementation and development of their own laws, protocols, and systems regarding data, information, and records, or changes in leadership and priorities.

As such, engagement must be flexible and adaptable, and it never should be considered to be done, even where a so-called 'outcome' (such as an agreement) has been achieved. Processes must be open, built with partners and updated on an on-going basis. A 'framework' in the form of a guideline or checklist will never be appropriate or respectful. One also needs to be prepared to take substantive steps that are available when shifts do occur. For example, participants provided examples of actions they had taken to remove records from public view, change access protocols, or other steps when consents and authorizations had changed when it was identified by Indigenous partners that additional factors or context needed to be considered.

7 Institutions of learning must get their own house in order in significant ways to engage with individuals and Nations appropriately

Institutions of learning must change the patterns they have with regards to Indigenous data, information, and records, and get their own house in order to approach Indigenous Peoples, Nations and Survivors, in new and proper ways that can build trust. It is necessary that these institutions demonstrate they are serious about doing the internal work needed to shift out of past and colonial patterns. In this regard, as a number of participants echoed in various ways,

"Indigenous-led" does not mean the burdens and responsibilities for change lies disproportionately or primarily on the shoulders of Indigenous Peoples. 'Engagement fatigue' is a reality. To start, the foundations on which institutions, researchers, and non-Indigenous experts approach work and engagement must change.

Many examples were shared of how institutions can and should be striving to change. These included:

- the need for more Indigenous peoples within the institution, and reconsideration of the processes and approaches for identifying and recruiting Indigenous staff;
- doing the groundwork of properly identifying what Indigenous data, collections and records within the institution, and tracing back Indigenous ownership and authorization as best possible;
- learning the proper ways to begin engagement and with whom, including through guidance from Elders and Knowledge-holders;
- recognizing how the time for engagement and partnering with Indigenous individuals and Nations must be determined by them, and not the institution; and
- establishing one's own internal mechanisms and processes to support and facilitate appropriate engagement and constantly recognizing the contexts of trauma and harm in which many issues related to Indigenous data, information and records arise.

Institutions must also reconsider their mindset and orientation towards their very role in this work. A number of examples were given of how institutions need to reconceptualize their work in terms of a service ethic, particularly those institutions that support the work and direction of Indigenous Peoples such as Survivors and Elders. Such an ethic supports the application of key standards discussed earlier relating to consent and authorization and makes clear how matters of access should be dealt with. This also helps focus the longer-term work that might be done in partnership such as where the priorities lie.

The term "disruption" arose throughout the dialogue, in reference to different contexts. There is a need to 'disrupt' the status quo patterns within institutions regarding Indigenous data, information, records – with such disruption, the necessary internal changes can accelerate and advance in a timely way.

Conclusion

Throughout the dialogue, important guidance was generated about what is required at this moment for institutions to relearn how to engage with Survivors, Elders, Indigenous Peoples and Nations regarding Indigenous data, information and records. These institutions must be willing to demonstrate that they are serious, and are doing the internal work necessary to transition out of past and colonial patterns. In addition to identifying key principles and practices for engagement, this guidance has provided a foundation for re-conceptualizing the design of the future steps and phases to for RSHDC and IRSI. In particular, future dialogues will be community and Nation-based to reflect the need for co-design. Future reports, developed in co-operation and collaboration, will identify approaches to engagement as they evolve through an Indigenous-led process. These themes are integral in the development of SSHRC's Strategic Plan on engagement and partnership, and should form the basis for organizations such as SSHRC to engage and partner with Indigenous Peoples.

There is a need to 'disrupt' the status quo patterns within institutions regarding Indigenous data, information, records. Given the ownership and control rights that Indigenous communities and Nations have over their research data and information, it is clear that existing institutional strategies, policies, practices and protocols with respect to Indigenous data and information will need to undergo dramatic changes. Planning and initiating this work will begin in the next phase of the dialogues.

Upcoming dialogues are designed for Indigenous and non-Indigenous practitioners to share their guidance about protocols for co-operation and collaboration regarding Indigenous data, information, and records, as well as models of partnership between institutions of learning and Survivors, Knowledge-holders, Indigenous Peoples and Nations.